

MEDIA RELEASE

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Job exchanges boost school-industry relationships

KERANG Technical High School teacher Helen Williams won't be rushing off to pursue a career in politics, but she's now better equipped to talk to students about how the Victorian parliament works.

Ms Williams spent a day in Melbourne shadowing Member for Swan Hill Peter Walsh as part of the Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network's (MMLLEN) Teacher into Industry Program.

The English, history and legal studies teacher said it was a fascinating experience.

After a tour of the 158-year-old building, Ms Williams watched the opening of the day's parliamentary session, question time, and sat in on meetings with groups developing a policy on recreational hunting and changes to legislation regulating puppy farms.

"I talked with Mr Walsh and his staff about how the department worked and watched the passage of some bills through parliament," she said.

By the time Ms Williams arrived at security at 8.45am, Mr Walsh – who also is Deputy Leader of The Nationals, Minister for Agriculture and Food Security and Minister for Water – had already been in his office for two hours and was not expected to leave until 11pm.

Ms Williams said she was surprised by how busy the day was.

"There was no time for reflection or rest, he was going from meeting to meeting and having discussions with individuals who stopped him in the corridor," she said.

"He said he's got a good memory, which is essential because his portfolio covers water and agriculture and he has to swap from one topic to the next and be completely up to date on what's happening. It's astonishing the amount of knowledge he must have."

Ms Williams said she had since spoken with students about the parliamentary tradition of theatre, with "people insulting each other backwards and forwards" across the chamber, and the years of hard work behind the scenes that can go into drafting new legislation.

"Even though it only provided a brief snapshot of a day in the life of parliament, it will be valuable being able to speak from a firsthand visit (when) I teach legal studies," she said.

"I thank Peter Walsh for making the time available, especially now I know how busy he is, and his staff for their help. Taking part in this program was a really valuable experience and I encourage other teachers to take part as well."

MMLLEN senior project officer Mark Deckert said the aim of the Teacher into Industry Program was for teachers to spend a day in the industry of their choice, experiencing the world of work so they could be more informed when talking to students.

Mr Deckert said it was hoped that people from those businesses would later spend a day at school, providing students with knowledge about their industry and pathways into careers in the field.

“This will reinforce the information the teacher brings back and help build relationships between the school community and local industries,” he said.

Up to 30 teachers from the region’s high schools will take part in the program during 2014.

Mr Deckert said teachers had applied to spend a day at an abattoir, a funeral home, working with information technology and at a sports training organisation.

But none had indicated an interest in the health, finance or agriculture sectors.

Applications for the program closed in May, but Mr Deckert said late applications from teachers were now being accepted.

Offers of industry places also were welcome, he said.

For more details, phone Mr Deckert on (03) 5033 2017.

(Ends)

CAPTION:

Kerang teacher Helen Williams (left) and Member for Swan Hill Peter Walsh in the Legislative Assembly before the opening of the day’s session.

Issued by Sandra Godwin, Murray Mallee Local Learning and Employment Network Communications Officer (03) 5033 2017

Further information about MMLLEN is available at the website www.mmllen.com.au