

# Jobs campaign sows seed for career in plants

By MICHELLE HOCTOR

WHEN it comes to planting seeds for growth, Geoff Bailey is a pro.

Mr Bailey (pictured), who is director of award-winning Jamberoo Native Nursery, has joined the Project Kickstart campaign, offering a four year apprenticeship in horticulture.

Project Kickstart is a joint initiative of the Federal Government and the *Illawarra Mercury*, a campaign which seeks to give the region's young unemployed a start in life by finding apprenticeship positions.

It coincides with greater incentives for employers who take on apprentices before the end of February.

Under the Federal Government's Apprentice Kickstart plan, the first-year bonus paid to employers will be more than tripled for those taking on an apprentice over summer.

So far, more than 100 intending apprentices have signed up for the program and will be featured in a special edition of *MyCareer* in next Wednesday's *Mercury*.

Applications to join the apprenticeship drive close this Friday.

Mr Bailey, who started his business 14 years ago with a workforce of three, today employs 15 full-time staff and is looking to expand.

"Our aim is to employ one apprentice each year as part of our ongoing commitment to the local community," he said.

"While we're keen to consider anyone with a demonstrated interest in horticulture, it would be great to see more women in the industry."

The apprenticeship will include three years' study at TAFE, undertaking a course specifically designed in conjunction with Jamberoo Native Nursery.

The business is a production (wholesale) nursery growing Australian plants and has won the Best Medium Production Nursery in NSW award for the past four years.

Mr Bailey praised the campaign and encouraged other employers to join the initiative.



## EDITORIAL

Leading the way: Page 20

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## **Apprentices aplenty, ready and waiting**

**CONGRATULATIONS** to Jamberoo nurseryman Geoff Bailey, who has wholeheartedly embraced Project Kickstart by offering to take on a horticulture apprentice.

The project, a joint initiative of the Federal Government and the *Illawarra Mercury*, aims to find 500 apprenticeships for young unemployed in the region.

For too long the Illawarra's youth unemployment rate has been through the roof, well above state and national averages.

Judging by the response to the campaign, there is no shortage of potential apprentices, with more than 100 already registering their interest.

What is clear from reading their stories is that finding that elusive job is no easy task.

Some have been unemployed for months and even years despite undertaking TAFE courses and work experience wherever possible.

The common theme among them is the lack of apprenticeship positions in the Illawarra.

Geoff Bailey is one employer who is determined to change that situation.

He recognises the value of the