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**OUTSTANDING:** Marcellin Technical College Year 12 students Doug Brook and Australian Training Awards finalist Mitchell Silk.



# School apprentice gets a jump start

Cara Jenkin

**Y**EAR 12 student Mitchell Silk already has made a head start on his career by undertaking his apprenticeship while at school.

The 17-year-old electrical apprentice also is being recognised as one of the best school-based apprentices in the nation, as he vies for the national title next month.

Mitchell, who attends Marcellin Technical College, the former Australian Technical College - Adelaide South, is a finalist in the Australian Training Awards to be held in Canberra on November 19.

He was named the state's School-based Apprentice of the Year at the South Australian Training Awards in September to qualify to compete in the national award.

He said the college was helping him into his dream job through his electrical apprenticeship with Ned Kelly Electrical.

He said completing the first year of his apprenticeship while at school was like fast-tracking his career, by giving him a head start on the traditional time period while also allowing him to complete his SACE. "Starting a school-based apprentice-

ship is one of the smartest things I have done," he said. "I have always enjoyed practical work and have always been interested in a career in the electrical field.

"I was very pleased to get the award."

Mitchell had to write an essay, attend interviews and make a presentation about his experiences to apply for the award, which also has given him work skills beyond the basics of being an electrician.

Mitchell's employer recognises the opportunity a head start in an apprenticeship can give a young worker in his career, as he himself is still aged under 30.

Matt Whitford, 26, started up his own electrical business, Ned Kelly Electrical, in late 2008.

Mitchell initially completed work experience at the company but he was taken on as an apprentice in February because of his talent.

Mr Whitford said Mitchell had shown outstanding personal attributes and training skills during his work-experience period.

"As the owner of a fast-growing business, I really want to balance my workforce with my business growth, which is why Mitchell, being a school-based apprentice, suited me," he said.

"This year, Mitchell is finishing a Year 12 SACE course, which is tailored to his apprenticeship, but it also has allowed me the flexibility of having him work with me for up to four days a week, while he completed the first year of his apprenticeship."

The Australian Training Awards are the peak national awards for vocational education and training and recognise innovation and excellence in the training sector on a business and individual level.

Winners from each state and territory compete in the national finals.

The categories for students and apprentices are the Australian School-based Apprentice of the Year, Vocational Student of the Year, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Student of the Year, Australian Apprentice (Trainee) of the Year and Australian Apprentice of the Year.

Fellow Marcellin Technical College student Doug Brook also was a finalist in the SA school-based Apprenticeship of the Year.

Marcellin Technical College principal Jim Fenoughty said the success of the college's apprenticeship program had been recognised with two students nominated as finalists for the state award.