

Students putting business skills to the test

Iain Gillespie

There's no shortage of budding entrepreneurs with bright ideas among Australia's secondary students, as a "Plan Your Own Enterprise" national competition held by Business Educators Australasia shows.

Entries have included a drone service allowing farmers to survey their properties from the comfort of home, an online used clothes business that went on to make substantial profits, and a pet collar with a GPS tracker that allows owners to monitor their pet's location, behaviour and health.

Hope Pham, a year 12 student at Meriden Anglican School for Girls in NSW, won second place in last year's state finals with her business plan for a brilliantly designed app that enables users to locate artworks that suit the style and decor of their home.

"It's an online shopping app that shows a range of paintings, sculptures and mixed-media designs," she says. "Consumers can swipe on any design that's suitable for their space, and the ones they think are good go into a 'like' category they can view later. They can also choose the proximity of the art's location."

"Working out the business plan and budget was an exercise in reality, and it would take a lot of financing to launch. Right now I'm flat out studying for



Meriden student Hope Pham, who won second place in last year's state finals of the Plan Your Own Enterprise competition, with head of social science Anita Kondichetty.

exams, but if I go ahead with the idea, I'd like to expand the app to include furniture and fabrics."

Anita Kondichetty, Meriden School's head of social science, says her students enter the competition each year, and that she's been amazed by their original ideas and creativity.

"Most of our teaching is not just equipping students with the knowledge they need to pass exams, it's to prepare them for life after school. So the competition is a good opportunity for students to test their business skills in real-life scenarios."

Business Educators Australasia (BEA) president Tony Kuc says the

competition has been running for more than 30 years.

"Students' business plans have become more sophisticated over the years, and rely increasingly on social media and apps as tools to run and market their proposed products and services," he says.

"One entry was to set up a business called Asperger's Support, created by a ... student with a clinical diagnosis of Asperger's syndrome. The aim was to provide assistance and support to youth with AS and their families, drawing on personal real-life experiences."

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with its affiliates provides advocacy and resources in the areas of accounting, business, civics and citizenship, economics, financial

literacy, law-related education and work-related education.

Affiliates include Economics and Business Educators NSW, the Victorian Commercial Teachers Association, Economics Teachers of South Australia and Business Educators Queensland to name just a few.

Kuc says that although the business world and students face an indeterminate future in terms of the economy and rapidly advancing technology, the future is not as uncertain as it may seem.

"There's a degree of certainty to the uncertainty," he says. "These things tend to run in cycles."