



NO UNI ... NO PROBLEM

The idea of an apprenticeship is expanding as other sectors realise its benefits. Lauren Ahwan reports

JOBS once reserved for university graduates increasingly will be available to those pursuing vocational education following the introduction of higher-level apprenticeships.

A pilot program designed to encourage those without a university education to take up careers in the professional, business, IT and financial services sectors has resulted in more than 160 people recently starting an 18-month apprenticeship.

The apprentices will undertake diploma, advanced diploma or associate degree qualifications as part of their training although Sara Caplan, national skills leader with program developer PricewaterhouseCoopers, believes bachelor degree qualifications may be offered in future years.

As well as PwC, other organisations to take apprentices include Woolworths, Gold Coast University Hospital, the Bank of Melbourne, the Bank of South Australia, CSIRO, the ACT Government and several IT and mining companies.

Caplan says the program, based on a similar scheme operating in the UK, provides greater career options for those who prefer to go straight into work after school instead of going to university.

"This is for people that thought

they couldn't aspire to these jobs and career options because they haven't been to university," Caplan says. "(It is) also for people that want to move from a frontline job to a managerial or supervisory or leadership role.

"This is about saying that if you're not the person that wants to go to uni, you can do it (enter a profession) a different way."

Skilling Australia Foundation chief executive Nicholas Wyman says higher-level apprenticeships are popular in the UK and provide an important opportunity for hands-on learning.

Alicia Luck, 29, is among the first cohort of higher-level apprentices, undertaking a Diploma in Management at Woolworths.

Luck, who started with the retail giant while she was still at school, says university was never an option for her and her career would have stalled without the apprenticeship.

"(At school), I was definitely not an A-plus student by any means," says Luck, who is currently an assistant store manager.

"Completing this apprenticeship will allow me to progress my career while I still get to do what I love.

"It also upskills talent Woolworths already has, instead of recruiting candidates who may have a Diploma in Management but not necessarily the relevant retail experience."



WORK SHE LOVES: Alicia Luck is doing a higher-level apprenticeship through Woolworths. Picture: CARLY EARL