Learning takes a big leap into the future

By BRIAN WOOD

MAKING learning fun was the name of the game at Kelso High last week.

Casey Featon and John Burfoot from Macquarie University were in town to take staff at the Denison College campus through their paces to familiarise them with the LEAP (Learning, Education, Aspiration, Participation) Links program.

LEAP features robotic Lego machines which students build from scratch, including developing computer-based programs which give the robot the ability to follow certain tasks.

It’s an initiative funded by the Commonwealth Government where selected schools are loaned a kit worth $10,000 each which includes 15 robots and all the gear needed to operate them.

According to Ms Featon they have six separate kits, each loaned to a high school for a duration of one month to enable the program to be completed.

"Today we have staff from Kelso High, Canowindra High and Canobolas Rural Technology High learning how to roll out LEAP Links," she said.

"Once the teachers are trained they commence the program, but the first session includes a video-link with John (Burfoot) to start things off.

"From there the students build and program the robots to do simple tasks such as following a line, turning a corner or staying within a square."

Ms Featon said it is all about getting the students to think about problem solving and to overcome challenges they may face.

"The good thing is it ties in with a variety of subjects such as science, technology, computing and maths," she said.

"It’s a fun, hands on way to learn. Teacher feedback tells us that students who may have not much interest in certain subject areas get right into the robotics and as a result are able to learn skills they might not normally embrace."

Kelso High teacher Dave Kelly was being put through his paces at yesterday’s learning session.

He said the initiative is a different way to tackle education and looked forward to the coming month implementing the LEAP Links program.

"I think the kids are going to have a ball," he said.

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