State schools miss out on grants but our independents ...

Top the class

By Mal Gill

TWO Margaret River independent schools will each receive $48,000 in start-up funding to join a Federal Government Empowering Local Schools initiative, aimed at improving school governance, management and planning.

However, according to WA Senator Chris Evans, who announced the successful funding applicants on Friday, local government schools were denied the opportunity by the State Government to join the initiative, despite more than $5 million in Federal funding being offered. WA was the only state not to take up the offer for its government schools, Senator Evans said.

Margaret River Independent School and Margaret River Montessori School were among 32 WA independent and Catholic schools to share $2.1 million aimed at providing them with greater autonomy.

Phase one of the initiative, to run over the 2012-13 school years, will provide funding to help schools improve decision-making and management structures in areas such as managing school finances and budgets, infrastructure planning, school leadership and parental and community engagement. Targeted training and professional development for principals and school communities will also be funded.

Acting School Education Minister, Senator Evans, took a swipe at Premier Colin Barnett on Friday for not taking up Federal funding available for government schools.

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Schools win grants

From Page 1

“These non-government schools (Margaret River Independent and Montessori) are now benefiting from more decision-making power, including greater control over school budgets, staffing and governance,” Senator Evans said. “Premier Colin Barnett decided not to take advantage of more than $5 million in available funding for government schools and he will need to explain this decision to parents and teachers of government school students.

“Every other state and territory has agreed to take part in our Empowering Local Schools initiative because they know it will improve student results and support local schools to make more effective decisions and reduce the bureaucratic burden on schools.”

Margaret River Independent School treasurer, Jessica Worrall, said the school was very pleased to be selected to participate in phase one of the ELS.

“In recent years, and as the school has grown, we have moved from decision-making by a full school council to a governance model with a governing body, predominantly made up of parents, providing governance and direction, while staff led by our principal manage the school,” Ms Worrall said.

“The ELS funding will help provide governance and finance training for governing body members, together with professional development for key staff. It will assist us to ensure sustainable school growth is planned for and well managed, while maintaining our small-school philosophy.

“We will be working on better ways to communicate with existing and potential students and families, as well as the wider community.”

Margaret River Montessori School principal, Gail Cresswell, said the ELS grant came at a time when the school council “continues to engage in strategic planning and visioning.”

The school, which celebrates its 20th year next year, has begun a quality assurance process with Montessori Australia and aims to have all its policies and procedures available to the public online, she said.

“The grant will ensure that all aspects of the school’s education provision ... will be showcased and it will enable the school to access professional development for staff and school council members.”

The school was also investigating the possibility of a high school class in the future, she said.
WE’VE GOT A GRANT: Margaret River Independent School principal Wendy Roediger with Ella Bigelow, year 4, Sholto Armstrong and Charlie Murray, year 1, and Lilly Ladd-McGovern, year 5. ABOVE RIGHT: Margaret River Montessori School principal Gail Cresswell with students.
Top unis keen to cash in on prestige

Joanna Mather

Elite universities would increase degree prices if they were allowed to operate in a deregulated fee environment, education bureaucrats have told the government.

A briefing paper prepared for federal Tertiary Education Minister Chris Evans by departmental staff says the Group of Eight coalition of leading universities was responsible for the greatest fee rises under the Coalition’s full fees for degrees policy, which ended in 2009.

“Go8 universities consistently charged substantially higher fees than other providers, an average of $20,461 per year in 2008 compared to $15,239 across all institutions,” the paper says.

As the government faces off against the Go8 over fresh calls for deregulation, the paper advises that some universities would take the opportunity to “capitalise on their prestige and market power to charge high fees above costs”.

University of NSW vice-chancellor and Go8 chairman Fred Hilmer has called for fee deregulation for students entering professions where they can expect to earn high salaries. Senator Evans has ruled out any such change.
St Joseph’s set to receive funds

ST JOSEPH’S Catholic School Northam is one of 32 Western Australian schools that will benefit from more than $2.1 million in federal government funding.

The funding is part of the Government’s commitment of almost $64 million over the next two years for the Empowering Local Schools initiative, which is being rolled out across up to 1000 schools nationally from this year.

Acting Minister for School Education Chris Evans announced last Friday the 32 WA Catholic and independent schools set to take part in the scheme.

“These non-government schools are now benefiting from more decision making power, including greater control over school budgets, staffing and governance,” he said.

The Catholic Education Office of WA will use the funding to work on two projects, the first will be refining the current model of school board governance, which will help more parents to get involved in school decision-making by improving the current practices of school boards.

The second project will be the management of financial resources and infrastructure in primary and new schools, which will help schools employ a business manager to work with several primary schools to improve their financial management processes and decision making.

Independent schools participating in the initiative will be able to pursue activities in areas such as the management of school finances and budgets, infrastructure planning, school leadership and parental and community engagement.

Each participating school will receive a start-up grant of between $40,000 and $50,000 to help them manage their increased decision-making responsibilities.

This will see the federal government providing WA with more than $800,000 in grants to the participating Catholic schools and more than $700,000 in grants for independent schools.

Funding will also be provided for targeted training and professional development for principals and school communities, with more than $59,000 allocated for Catholic schools and more than $52,000 for independent schools.
ACU to receive funding for health research

THE Australian Catholic University will receive $7.9 million to go towards future cardiovascular health research.

The university, with six campuses across Australia, will be in partnership with the University of Melbourne, St Vincent’s health and the O’Brien Institute for the project.

ACU Associate Head of the School of Nursing, Midwifery and Paramedicine Val Goodwin said the grant was a great boost to research activity – that it was a strong grant and a lucrative grant.

“It won’t specifically target Ballarat but it has great potential spin off and will have great impacts for our researchers,” Dr Goodwin said.

“We don’t know where the location will be yet. Right now, it’s really about the potential of the new facility.”

“ACU has an agenda to increase its research profile. This funding from the Commonwealth will enhance participation in research.”

The funding was announced late last week, as part of the Gillard Government’s Collaborative Research Networks program.

Three less research-intensive regional universities will receive $19.6 million in federal government funding to improve their research capacity and drive stronger performance outcomes.

Minister for Tertiary education, skills, science and research Senator Chris Evans said the funding fostered partnerships between regional universities and large organisations with more established research capacity.

“The funding program is going a long way to help smaller and regional universities learn and benefit from our larger more established providers in areas of common interest,” he said.
Doubts about long-term future of training

TAFE Ag courses are safe for now

NICOLE CAIRNS AND AMELIA SIEBRING

Agriculture courses may be safe despite cuts to TAFE funding announced earlier this year by the Victorian government.

The Victorian Farmers Federation met with representatives of the office of the Minister for Higher Education and skills to discuss the future of agriculture's TAFE education in Victoria.

AVFF spokesman said the group was assured that agriculture courses in Victoria will continue, but funding to certificate II courses have been reduced.

University of Ballarat agriculture teacher Mark Daffey said Ballarat agriculture courses are safe for now, but he isn't confident in its future.

"Bendigo have dropped Cert II in Agriculture already and so have Gordon," Mr Daffey said.

"And as to whether (courses in agriculture) are safe, I'm not sure."

Mr Daffey said the decision to cut courses is ultimately up to the uni, not the government.

Ballarat University has kept up appeal in agriculture with tractor courses, front-end loaders and quad bikes, however Mr Daffey says the number of students could drop significantly if fees are raised.

"Sometimes the students just won't be able to afford it."

The Acting Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Martin Dixon said much of the $1 billion announced in May for the state's training, over the next four years, will go to better support courses that provide higher level training – such as apprenticeships - areas of skills shortages, or areas that make an important contribution to the Victorian economy and Victorians' chances of gaining meaningful employment.

"The government has maintained a high level of investment in vocational training in agriculture and is supporting the delivery of these courses regionally through an additional five per cent loading to all subsidised training delivered in a non-metropolitan area," Mr Dixon said.

Victoria's farmers and agricultural producers are recognised as being among the best in the world and the coalition government is committed to supporting this vitally important industry.

VFF president Peter Tuohey said it is reassuring that the government intends to provide greater funding for students wishing to undertake study in Certificate 3 and 4 agriculture courses.

"Unfortunately funding for the base entry course into agriculture, Certificate 2, will see a reduction in funding."

Mr Tuohey said country TAFEs and private training colleges provide an essential service for regional communities and should be protected.
Teen work ethic recognised

Mount Gambier youths juggle school studies with full-time careers

ANELIA BLACKIE
Email: anelia@thw.com.au

High School student - complete Year 11 and 12 in six months as an external student at Tenison Woods College, while studying two TAFE courses and working full-time as accounts and administration clerk at Liz Moriarty’s counselling services.

As if that was not enough for Vicki to focus on, a wedding followed earlier this year and in a few months she will become a mother for the first time.

But the straight A-student is determined not to be slowed down by the demands of motherhood.

“I want to do a diploma in management and later a degree at university,” she said.

Vicki was nominated by Tenison Woods College and her employer Liz Moriarty for the award.

“Vicki started working for me in 2010 when she was 16-years-old,” Ms Moriarty said.

“I was amazed at her ability and hunger to learn and she showed great motivation and drive.”

For Lauren, 2011 was so busy that she used her lunch breaks at work to catch up with teachers at Mount Gambier High School.

She was working as a full-time dental assistant at Ferrers Dental Clinic while studying a Certificate III in Dental Assisting and Year 12 as an external student.

Somehow Lauren also found time to participate in athletics and to play soccer.

So impressed were her employer and school teachers with her ability to cope with all the responsibilities that they nominated Lauren for the award.

And while Lauren is settling into a new house, which she bought with her partner last year, she is contemplating her future.

“I am planning on going to university to study dentistry,” she said.
STUDENTS, staff and the wider community have joined in a protest against the state government’s $300 million cuts to TAFE funding.

A rally held at the Victoria University Nicholson Street campus in Footscray last Tuesday sent a loud message that the cuts would have a devastating impact on education and training in Melbourne’s west.

The Weekly has reported a number of courses will be slashed, fees will skyrocket and more than 50 jobs will go as Victoria University — the largest education provider in the western suburbs — scrambles to deal with a $32 million funding black hole.

Community development teacher Margarita Windisch, one of the protest’s organisers, said the job losses and course cuts were devastating and would force down quality.

Higher Education and Skills Minister Peter Hall says the cuts are part of government changes to help more people receive training overall.

Western Metropolitan Greens MP Colleen Hartland says half of Victoria University’s TAFE students are on low incomes.

She used last week’s rally to launch a new postcard campaign against the cuts.

“The postcards send a message to Premier [Ted] Baillieu that TAFE education changes lives for the better and that $300 million in funding cuts affecting 80 per cent of courses is unacceptable to us,” she said.

The Save TAFE postcards can be found at vicmps@greens.org.au/SaveTAFEpostcard
CIT enrolments firm in new market

By Emma Macdonald
Education Editor

The Canberra Institute of Technology has managed to hold onto enrolments this year despite unprecedented competition for students from the University of Canberra and Australian National University.

CIT chief executive Adrian Marron said first semester enrolments had fallen by just under 1 per cent but CIT was expecting to make up the shortfall in the second semester to hold steady at about 23,000 students.

Under a new national policy of uncapped university places recommended by the Bradley Review of Australian Higher Education and fully implemented at the start of this year, both the UC and ANU have expanded their intake.

Mr Marron said the results could have been “much worse” for the CIT in terms of losing students to universities – potentially costing it as much as 6 per cent of its enrolment share. “That would have been a worse-case scenario,” he said. “Instead it is gratifying the CIT has been able to maintain its service to the community in these times of fierce competition.”

International student numbers were down by 50 students on last year, to 1350. But Mr Marron said 79 students who had been accepted had visa delays and most of those were coming through in second semester.

“We set our targets this year to hold onto the same number of students as last year and we could be slightly above that. Our international performance is well above the national average given some quite significant drops across the VET sector in the other states,” Mr Marron said.

Meanwhile, a separate Bradley review last year of the UC and CIT recommended last year that the two institutions merge. CIT and the Australian Education Union largely resisted the merger and it was rejected by the ACT government.

Professor Bradley’s fall-back recommendation was to decrease CIT reliance on the ACT government – a suggestion ACT Chief Minister Katy Gallagher said yesterday would be her preference for the future.

With the CIT embroiled in claims of a pervasive bullying culture and subject to investigations by both WorkSafe ACT and the ACT Commissioner for Public Administration, Ms Gallagher said the industrial issues needed to be thoroughly addressed before any governance reforms were introduced.

But an ACT Treasury report – prepared last year during the Bradley review deliberations – suggested CIT could save $7 million in taxpayer funding a year through greater autonomy. The savings would be made through course consolidation, rationalising staff costs, reducing duplication and restructuring management.

Ms Gallagher said such changes would not be simple to navigate. “We would like to see the CIT become more independent, more transparent and more accountable.

“But it will still require public money, and need to meet public expectations as a training provider.”

Ms Gallagher said the CIT also had a vital role catering to disadvantaged students, students with disabilities and those from non-English speaking backgrounds. “CIT will always have to deliver on a social equity level even while it becomes more competitive,” she said.

Mr Marron said greater autonomy would “come through degrees of devolution rather than one big change”.

CIT was working on remodelling the structure of its governance board, procurement processes and financial management, although Mr Marron said no changes were imminent. “We are doing work on demonstrating how we could benefit from a degree of devolution rather than autonomy – a word that tends to polarise people.

“We are increasingly being drawn into more a market domain but we operate under a public service model, so we are looking at how we can move forward in a more competitive way.”
Policy to secure future of universities

By KIM BARTLEY

THE student population of Dubbo’s Charles Sturt University (CSU) campus could grow with the development of government policy for regional universities, suggests Australian Senator Fiona Nash.

The inclusion of a tertiary access allowance in such a policy could help Western NSW residents take the higher education leap in Dubbo, she says.

Ms Nash said more enrolments at the campus would increase its economic and social contribution to the city, already playing its part in firming up the regional workforce.

The senator, from country NSW, contends that the mooted policy would seek to address the unique challenges faced by regional universities that were "vital to Australia’s education fabric and make an enormous contribution to regional Australia, its sustainable future, and therefore the nation".

"The economic and social contribution of these universities to their region is extensive, but, more importantly, students who study there are demonstrably far more likely to go on to pursue a career in regional Australia," Ms Nash said.

"If we agree that regional universities are quite different and that it is in the national interest to secure their future, it follows that we need a distinct regional universities policy from government."

Ms Nash, the federal opposition spokeswoman for regional education, is throwing open the door to debate, even though she cannot currently promise the opposition will form a regional universities policy if elected to government.

CSU Vice-Chancellor Professor Andrew Vann has been among the first to speak up.

"Charles Sturt University supports the comments by Senator Fiona Nash," he said.

"Regionally-based universities play a critical role in facilitating economic, cultural and social development in their communities."

Professor Vann said in the United States the term "anchor institution" was used to describe some of its universities.

"We think this captures the contribution very well," he said.

"There is a distinct difference in communities that have their own university and a very clear return on this investment."

The professor gave as an example the four public dentists and 12 oral therapists who had begun working at Orange hospital since the CSU dental school was established in the city.

"This is an example of how investing in regional education builds regional capacity across a diverse range of areas, making these communities attractive places in which to live and work, and addressing social disadvantage," he said.
Ag courses still available

Agricultural courses will continue to be offered despite cuts being made to the TAFE sector across Victoria, Victorian Farmers Federation President Peter Tuohey has confirmed.

The assurance that courses would continue was given at a meeting last week with the Office of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills.

The Victorian Farmers Federation (VFF) has been assured that agricultural courses are here to stay with many courses in regional areas receiving a five per cent loading.

The VFF has expressed concerns that as enrolments have dropped for these course, cuts to TAFE funding could see agricultural courses disappear, causing a continuing employment problem for the agricultural sector.

“It is therefore reassuring that the government intends to provide greater funding for students wishing to undertake study in certificate 3 and 4 agriculture courses,” Mr Tuohey said. “Unfortunately, funding for the base entry course into agriculture certificate 2 will see a reduction in funding.”

Mr Tuohey reinforced to government at the meeting the need to have ongoing regional training providers offer agricultural courses, to ensure a skilled work force for the future.

He also called on all students to consider a career in agriculture where there are many opportunities for employment and advancement.

The VFF will be monitoring the future funding of TAFE’s to ensure agriculture courses continue to be provided at acceptable funding levels.

Mr Tuohey said country TAFEs and private training colleges provide an essential service for regional communities and should be protected.
THE TAFE system is being punished by Higher Education and Skills Minister Peter Hall, Premier Ted Baillieu and the National and Liberal parties.

To have your fees set by government is a distinct disadvantage in what is supposed to be a contestable marketplace.

Private registered training organisations must be laughing all the way to the bank.

For example, to have your skills assessed for a qualification via recognised prior learning has been a free service if you are eligible. Now a fee has been imposed, which is the same as if you were studying at TAFE, about $2500 in skills shortage trades.

I thought we were trying to get people qualified in this state, but under this government this is certainly not the case.

Alan Long, Moe.
Swinburne’s shock

MANY comments have been made and letters written about Swinburne’s sudden shock decision to close their Lilydale University and TAFE campus.

I would like to clarify that Swinburne alone has made the decision to close their Lilydale campus, not the government.

Since the removal of a Lilydale-based Deputy Vice-Chancellor in 2006, there has been a very obvious lack of interest and subsequent lack of marketing from Swinburne in the Lilydale campus. The effect of this lack of interest has been notable, with total enrolments stagnating for the last five years and a 16 per cent decline in university enrolments this year.

Further to this, half of the Lilydale campus is a university and unaffected by TAFE funding reforms. Recent reforms by the Baillieu Government have increased training funding by $1 billion over the next four years. Nearly 40 per cent of courses will now receive more funding than previously, including all apprenticeships and all fields experiencing skills shortages. Many of the courses currently taught at Lilydale including automotive, horticultural, land management and nursing studies will receive this top tier state government funding. This increase in funding will ensure our young people are being trained in areas where there are real job vacancies.

Changes had to be made - too many providers had been encouraging young people to sign up for courses that had very little or no job prospects at the end and at great cost to the taxpayer.

I believe it is important that we have a higher education facility in Lilydale. I will continue to work hard with the Minister for Higher Education and Skills, Yarra Ranges Council and other stakeholders to find a way forward.

Christine Fyffe MP,
Deputy Speaker of the Legislative Assembly,
State Member for Evelyn
Farm TAFE ‘safe’, VFF

VICTORIAN agricultural courses will continue to be offered despite cuts being made to the Technical And Further Education sector across Victoria, according to Victorian Farmers Federation president, Peter Tuohey.

The assurance that courses would continue was given at a meeting last week with the Office of the Minister for Higher Education and Skills.

The VFF has expressed concerns that as enrolments have dropped for these courses, cuts to TAFE funding could see agricultural courses disappear, causing a continuing employment problem for the agricultural sector.

“It is therefore reassuring that the government intends to provide greater funding for students wishing to undertake study in Certificate III and IV Agriculture courses. Unfortunately funding for the base entry course into Agriculture Certificate II will see a reduction in funding,” Mr Tuohey said.

Mr Tuohey reinforced to government at the meeting the need to have ongoing regional training providers offer agricultural courses, to ensure a skilled workforce for the future.

He also called on all students to consider a career in agriculture where there are many opportunities for employment and advancement.

The VFF will be monitoring the future funding of TAFE’s to ensure agriculture courses continue to be provided at acceptable funding levels.

Mr Tuohey said country TAFEs and private training colleges provide an essential service for regional communities and should be protected.
EX-LOCALS are enjoying changes to Youth Allowance and Austudy which aim to make life easier for students.

More than 315,000 students who receive Youth Allowance or Austudy are now able to earn more from part-time and casual work without impacting on their payments thanks to Federal Government changes that came into effect on July 1.

Changes to the student income support system mean students will be able to earn $400 a fortnight - up from the current threshold of $236 - before there is any impact on their student payments.

First year university student Chelsey Rothall said receiving Youth Allowance had helped her cope with city life.

“My first year has been really demanding,” she said.

“I haven’t had to work, and have been living off my savings and allowance, which has meant I can focus on my studies more.

“I think if I had a job at the moment I would have not done so well this semester.

“This increase means I could still work if I wanted and be able to earn a decent wage.”

Third year university student Emma Golding comes back to Robe to work during her holidays and said the increased threshold would make working more viable.

“It wasn’t worth working before because you would lose too much money and then get cut off, which would mean you would have to reapply,” she said.

“This increase would make it a lot easier to juggle work with university studies.”

Minister for Tertiary Education Senator Chris Evans said the government was making it easier for students to supplement their income support payment with earnings from part-time or casual employment.

“We know living costs can be a barrier for students, and this change to the income threshold will allow students to earn more each week before their payments are reduced,” Senator Evans said.

“We are proud to see the number of students attending university once again on the increase.

“Having more students with the qualifications they need for tomorrow’s jobs will be of huge benefit to regional businesses, industry and the economy.”

The Parliamentary Secretary for Higher Education and Skills, Sharon Bird said in addition, the government was raising the Student Income Bank from $6000 to $10,000.

The Student Income Bank is a way for students to ‘bank’ any unused part of their fortnightly personal income threshold to be used later.

“The accumulated credit can be used to offset higher income earned in other fortnights, for example, if students increase their work hours during university holidays,” Ms Bird said.

“(The) changes will mean students will be better supported to manage their ongoing study and living costs.”

To maintain the real value of these changes, both measures will be indexed annually to the Consumer Price Index.

The Government is also delivering extra assistance to students through the Household Assistance Package.

Payments of up to $190 for eligible students were made this month ahead of the introduction of the carbon price.

Student income support recipients will also receive the twice-yearly Supplementary Allowance of a total $210 for single people and $175 for a member of a couple.

These changes come on top of the Government’s earlier reforms which have boosted the number of higher education students receiving Youth Allowance by 21 per cent.

The Youth Allowance reforms have given more students access to income support and contributed to the rise in the number of students enrolling at university by breaking down the financial barriers to education.
Fight for funds

By CHARLENE MACAULAY

VICTORIA University has stepped up its fight to re-claim TAFE funding across its campuses in the West.

Staff, students and representatives from the Australian Education Union and National Tertiary Education Union came out in force last week rallying at VU’s Footscray Nicholson campus. They were calling for the State Government to repeal its decision to cut more than $200 million in TAFE funding Victoria.

The budget cuts will remove differential funding for all 18 of Victoria’s TAFE institutes by January 2013.

Victoria University Vice-Chancellor Peter Dawkins said their projections showed reductions to TAFE funding would mean a $29 million cut to Victoria University’s annual vocational education funding and would bring about a fundamental change to the way vocational education was being delivered.

The aftershocks are already being felt, with 50 redundancies for ongoing and would bring about a fundamental change to the way vocational education was being delivered.

The aftershocks are already being felt, with 50 redundancies for ongoing positions announced so far at Victoria University alone.

Greg Barclay from the AEU said the rally was one of many events happening across regional and metropolitan Victoria, with plans to stage a mass rally outside the State Library on 16 August.

“People are fairly outraged and angry,” Mr Barclay said.

“(Victoria University) is the major TAFE provider in the West, so any cuts mean cuts to jobs and courses in the West.”

Mr Barclay said students in the West shouldn’t have to travel to the East to access TAFE services.

Greens MLC Colleen Hartland used the rally to launch a TAFE postcard campaign. Ms Hartland plans to present the postcards to Premier Ted Baillieu in Parliament next month.

Meanwhile, Maribyrnong City Council has called on the State Government to reverse its decision and has vowed to support campaigns being run by the Australian Education Union and the National Tertiary Education Union.

The council is concerned that the cuts will put up to 1500 jobs at risk and appear designed to divert public resources into private training organisations.
Overhaul the export strategy or fall behind

Leveraging online and a multinational model aimed at China are keys

SEAN GALLAGHER
GEOFFREY GARRETT

AUSTRALIAN universities have been big winners from the Asian gold rush of full-fee paying international students for almost two decades, turning higher education into the country’s third largest export earner. With federal funding for domestic students in short supply, international student fees have cross-subsidised the education of Australians and the research output of our universities.

But this highly successful model is being battered on many fronts.

The first is lateral, from universities in other countries aggressively trying to take export market share from Australia.

Big global brand US institutions such as University of California, Berkeley, University of California, Los Angeles, and Washington are desperately seeking new revenue streams in the wake of the global financial crisis and the consequential big cuts to state funding. From the west coast to the midwest and New York, America’s finest public universities are desperate to new students in short supply.

US campuses rose by a staggering 43 per cent last year alone.

At the same time, Asian universities are not only educating more of their own, they are also looking to international markets. China, for example, has set the ambitious target of doubling its international student intake to more than 500,000 by 2020.

The second threat comes from above as ambitious private US universities such as Duke and New York enter into joint ventures with Chinese partners to create new multinational universities.

These multinationals are combining Chinese cash with US cachet to create new models of universities. Their educational offerings don’t look much like those on the branch campuses of Australian universities. Multinational universities also are using new infrastructure and lower cost but high-quality talent to do cutting-edge research on frontier issues vital to emerging Asia’s transition into the mass middle class.

The final threat is from below and the brave new world of massive open online courses, delivering high quality but low-cost (even free) higher education by computer, iPad or smartphone to hundreds of thousands of students at a time around the world.

It’s not only new private companies such as Coursera, Udemy and Udacity but also to centuries-old scions such as Harvard and Massachusetts Institute of Technology marketing their online classes under the edX banner. And the biggest market for massive open online courses seems to be emerging Asia.

No surprise, then, that the boom times for Australian international higher education have ended, with the highwater mark being reached a couple of years ago at 25 per cent of all undergraduates and 40 per cent of all postgraduates. And it isn’t just the post-GFC global swoon and the high Australian dollar at work.

Chances are the global market for conventional higher education is close to saturation; demand from Asia has peaked and limits to Australian supply have been reached.

The time is now for Australia to rethink the business model of its universities, including how to best leverage online opportunities.

But the more pressing challenge is to rethink the value proposition of our traditional higher education. In our new report on the internationalisation of higher education for the US Studies Centre at the University of Sydney, we offer two pathways in increasing order of desirability, but also of difficulty.

First, Australian universities need to move upmarket by improving the on-campus, in-class experience. This could include: more residential opportunities and better integrated student life; more interactive modes of teaching; better integration between teaching and research; more experiential learning...
opportunities through internships; and enhanced international opportunities that are better integrated into the at-home curriculum. Second, Australia’s best universities need to move closer to the global frontier by adopting the multinational university model, focusing first on China.

Australian universities were pioneers in overseas branch campuses in Southeast Asia. What they must do now is to upgrade the branch campus model through real partnerships, with Chinese institutions the likeliest targets. Multinational universities will have to tailor their teaching and research to what is in highest demand in China, currying real favour and generating real value.

Ironically, it’s also likely to help Australian universities in China feed back the best students, the best research and the best organisation practices to enrich the home campus and buttress the export model.

If neither pathway is followed, Australian universities will have little choice but to move down market, by lowering prices, increasing student numbers or reducing degree requirements.

Globalisation provided the chance for Australia’s universities to turbocharge their internationalisation in only two decades. Now it threatens to undermine the export model. Universities that do not quickly respond to the new global challenge will do so at their peril.

Sean Gallagher and Geoffrey Garrett are authors of the report From University Exports to the Multinational University: The Internationalisation of Higher Education in Australia and the United States. Go to usc.edu.au.

Universities need to move upmarket by improving the on-campus experience
Funds study labelled ‘simplistic’

JULIE HARE

A REPORT commissioned by the government, that found universities to be $1200 better off for each student enrolled in 2012 than had the status quo been maintained after the 2007 election, has been described as accurate but simplistic.

The Ernst & Young report, released on Monday, also estimated additional per-student funding of nearly $2000 a student in 2013.

But higher education expert Simon Marginson, of the University of Melbourne, said while the government had put additional money into the system, most importantly improved indexation and funding for equity measures, it was just part of the Bradley review package of recommendations.

“It is not an alternative to properly considering the base funding review report,” Professor Marginson said. “That was meant to be by July 2012 so we are entitled to ask what’s happening.”

Ernst & Young estimated that funding for teaching, learning and research will have increased by 10.1 per cent between 2008-2013 and for teaching and learning by 8.4 per cent.

It factored into its equation money for commonwealth supported grants, HECS, indexation, teaching and learning program funding, and research funding. But the actual amount the government had delivered relative to the Bradley review recommendations was only 30-45 per cent of the total, Professor Marginson said.

Fred Hilmer, vice-chancellor of the University of NSW, said Ernst & Young’s lack of historical perspective did not take into account “real funding per student”. “It merely says we are better off than we would have been if the Bradley reforms on indexation hadn’t happened,” Professor Hilmer said.

While the new indexation rate had helped ameliorate the decline that had happened in the 1990s, he said a Group of Eight analysis showed that, in real terms, funding for teaching and learning had not improved.

“The Lomax-Smith review of base funding, like the Bradley review before it, found the average levels of base funding are too low and that indexation alone would not remedy the problem.”

The Ernst & Young paper compares two scenarios: the first assumes the same programs and funding models had been maintained since 2008, while the second factors in policy changes and funding injections stemming from the 2008 Bradley report.

The paper shows that if programs for students and teaching, but not research, are taken into account, this year universities would have received $17,522 per student under the first scenario rising to $18,074 in 2013.

But it shows that under the government’s reform program, per-student funding in 2012 was $18,709 rising to $19,600 next year — an increase of 8.4 per cent since 2008.

Last week, Professor Hilmer told the National Press Club that: “Every review of universities in recent years has found that we are underfunded and overly dependent on international student income.”

He said that deregulation of student fees was the only viable way of getting more money into universities, an idea the government has rejected.

Tertiary Education Minister Chris Evans said the Ernst & Young paper disproved the myth that no additional money for students had been forthcoming.

“For every student today, there are more university places and more money for each of those places,” he said.

Professor Marginson said the paper proved that there was “improved resources for core functions”, even if it wasn’t at the levels recommended by the Bradley review.

He said the question was whether universities were using that to subsidise research activity.

“Global research performance is the main driver of ranking and hence reputation and pulling power in relation to students, high-quality staff, industry support and so on,” he said.
Science of solving the maths skills gap

JILL ROWBOTHAM

WHEN Kelly Matthews won a grant to investigate how universities should teach quantitative skills to science undergraduates, she thought it would be relatively simple to flush out some examples of best practice that could be used or adapted elsewhere.

Three years later she and her group have confirmed a disturbing lack of planning for the high-level numeracy that should enable science courses.

Her $220,000 Office of Teaching and Learning project found different approaches at each of the 11 Australian universities they studied, which included half the Group of Eight.

"It was funded under the assumption that science higher education was facing an issue with mathematics and the diversity of students coming in with various levels of mathematics," said Ms Matthews, a higher education lecturer and PhD candidate at the University of Queensland.

"We were trying to look at innovative science curricula that were addressing it, to spread the news and help out everyone who was struggling with this issue."

The first finding was confirmation that students could enrol in science degrees at some universities without having taken senior maths at high school: hence science departments were dealing with a range of skills at undergraduate level.

This general lack of maths skills has been picked up in concerns about teacher training, specifically in NSW, where the state government announced yesterday that it wanted to make senior maths a prerequisite for undergraduates in teaching courses. Ms Matthews also found that the way quantitative skills were taught depended largely on subject lecturers.

"A lot of individual lecturers and scientists were trying to solve the problem in their unit, but we did not find any evidence of a whole-of-program approach to solving the problem," she said.

"We weren’t seeing any type of a deliberate or designed approach to building students’ quantitative skills, say, across a biology or life sciences major."

While academics agreed that it was essential science graduates acquired the skills, they differed on, or were vague about, the specific skills needed. And no one was taking responsibility for ensuring undergraduates acquired them.

"We found very little sustainable, ongoing communication, say, across mathematics and biology departments. ’Mathematics might be service-taught to biology students and mathematicians largely would feel they were doing a good job (of it). But when we talked to the biologists they felt that mathematicians were not doing a good job, that it needed more context put around it. However, a mathematician can’t put context around biology; they don’t know biology.’"

At several institutions, biologists were unaware there was a mathematics learning centre where they could send students who were struggling. And in some cases biology lecturers were not confident enough of their own quantitative skills to be comfortable about teaching them to undergraduates. "The good news is that everyone we approached was willing to engage with us, they acknowledged it was an issue; they felt they didn’t have much to contribute, but were looking forward to us giving them some strategies."

Ms Matthews has proposed projects to address the issues, including getting academics to agree on what skills are required for university undergraduates, programs to bridge the skills gap between high school maths and what is required at university, and assessing skills as students progress through their degrees.

Wary of sounding too bleak, Ms Matthews noted poor quantitative skills was also a problem in the US and Britain.
Quality not limited to top-ranked unis

JILL ROWBOTHAM

DRAWING a line under the Group of Eight universities risks "failing to portray internationally the true strengths and depth of Australia’s world-class higher education system”.

And the issue goes beyond Australia.

Rankings commentator Tony Sheil, from Griffith University, argues in the HES today that coalitions such as Australia’s Go8, Britain’s Russell Group and the Association of American Universities should be regarded as fluid at the margins.

In Australia, for example, while Go8 members have been listed in the top 400 of the prestigious Academic Rankings of World Universities every year since its 2003 inception, so have Macquarie University and the University of Newcastle.

Mr Sheil is deputy director of research policy at Griffith, which is part of the Intensive Research Universities of Australia group.

His analysis coincides with today’s expansion of the Russell Group to 24, with the inclusion of Durham, Exeter, Queen Mary and York universities.

The Canadian elite grouping, U15, began as the U10 in 1991, with its most recent expansion last year.

Mr Sheil said he was not calling on the Go8 to expand, but the Russell Group and U15 expansions were “signals to the global community . . . that the UK and Canadian systems of higher education are vibrant and evolving,” he said.

“The takeaway message is to continually question the arbitrary divide between the ‘elite’ institutions and the rest.”

Newcastle is also on a par with the Russell Group and the U15 in performance on a range of research indicators including Web of Science indexed outputs.

Conversely, if Go8 standards were applied to the Russell Group its membership would shrink to 15 members, Mr Sheil said.

“My argument is that Australia is doing well at the top level — the rankings show that — because we have a strong base, with funding distributed across all universities and not, as a matter of policy, concentrated on the upper tier.”

Rankings season looms, with the 10th annual publication of the ARWU index due in the middle of the month and the Times Higher Education and QS results also expected.

Mr Sheil said Griffith was completing an analysis of 10 years of ARWU results with the aim of measuring the Australian sector’s performance. “So far, it indicates that commonwealth government investment into university research is yielding positive results both for our ‘flagship’ research universities and the top 20 or so universities,” he said.

While four Australian universities — the Australian National University and the universities of Melbourne, Sydney and Queensland — were listed in the ARWU top 100 last year, up from two (ANU and Melbourne) in 2003, there were 19 universities in its top 500, compared to 13 in 2003.

TONY SHEIL P17
Rankings commentator Tony Shell says Australia is doing well at the top level because funding is distributed across all universities.
Plea for outreach focus

ANDREW TROUNSON

EQUITY practitioners yesterday called for better evaluation of school outreach programs so universities know what works and what doesn’t.

Practitioners are acutely aware that a similar British outreach program, named Aimhigher, paid the price for not compiling evaluation data, making it easier for the Cameron government to axe it.

The Gillard government allocated $180 million for school outreach over five years to 2014 under its Higher Education Participation and Partnerships Program. Yesterday, the Equity Practitioners in Higher Education Australasia group urged universities to co-operate to work out ways to better evaluate progress in school outreach.

Evaluation is tricky because such programs aim to build university aspiration at school among under-represented demographics and results are necessarily long term. At a meeting at Deakin University last week, EPHEA suggested that a national evaluation program could be co-ordinated by a “revived” National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education. The centre has lacked direction since inaugural director Trevor Gale resigned last year and has struggled to find a successor.

“A body such as this would provide the expertise and independent advice to best evaluate programs,” EPHEA president Deborah Tranter said in a statement.

Nadine Zacharias, Deakin’s director of equity who will lead the evaluation discussion, said funding for evaluation would have to come from the universities. She suggested that the NCSEHE could undertake a longitudinal survey to monitor outcomes. In the shorter term, she said, the sector could also agree on a common survey instrument to assess student attitudes before and after programs.
$250m research program cast into doubt

EXCLUSIVE

DAVID CROWE
NATIONAL AFFAIRS EDITOR

LABOR’S plan to rebuild the manufacturing sector has been thrown in doubt as the Gillard government delays a $250 million promise to boost new research, sparking fears funding will be cut.

A federal pledge to fund thousands of jobs appears to be in jeopardy after last-minute changes to a budget program meant to transform manufacturing by creating new ventures.

The doubts come amid growing concern over retrenchments across the sector, including more than 400 layoffs at Ford and the closure of a Caltex oil refinery at the cost of more than 600 jobs.

Julia Gillard announced the $250m plan last December with a commitment to transform manufacturing by helping the private sector draw on university research to develop new businesses.

The Prime Minister said the program would help “build the industries of the future” by funding more than 1000 engineering cadetships across four years and 600 university researchers a year.

But the program was cut to $2.3bn in May, and the government has failed to meet its deadline to issue guidelines, leaving potential applicants in the dark.

Asked about the delays and whether the government was reviewing the scheme, a spokesman for Tertiary Education Minister Chris Evans said the program was “currently being developed” and the government was committed to implementing it.

But universities have sought without success for confirmation the spending will go ahead, while researchers and their corporate partners wait for the guidelines before putting in their applications.

The uncertainty meant universities and potential industry partners could not prepare their projects for funding, delaying their plans while jobs were being lost in manufacturing.

“I don’t think the sector has come to any conclusion to explain why they’ve heard nothing from the government about this,” she said. “It’s starting to cause concern among universities and businesses that were hoping to put forward proposals under the scheme.”

The University of NSW, the University of Technology, Sydney, the University of Queensland, Monash University and others are already part of a program meant to link academic programs with the private sector.

Companies including BlueScope Steel and IBM Australia are involved, but those two companies would not comment last night.

The Council of Textile and Fashion Industries of Australia expressed concern. “Delays sometimes have devastating effects on projects, and research timing is everything,” chief executive Jo-Ann Kellock said.

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Farm chief fears students may be scared off

VICTORIA’S farm leader fears students will not choose agriculture as a career because of the Government’s TAFE budget cuts.

Victorian Farmers’ Federation president Peter Tuohey said publicity over the budget cuts “may have scared off some students”.

Mr Tuohey agreed the VFF had now “done an about-face” over the cuts after a meeting with Higher Education Minister Peter Hall last week.

“I feel more positive after the meeting that the cuts won’t be so bad,” Mr Hall said.

“There are agriculture courses out there which have actually had an increase in funding.”

In May, the VFF slammed the cuts, with vice-president David Jochinke saying the timing was wrong.
Navitas sees glimmer of hope after worst year

Sean Smith

Navitas has urged the Federal Government to better promote Australia’s new streamlined visa system for higher education students as it looks to bounce back from its worst year on record.

The company is seeing increased interest since the introduction of the new, less onerous visa regime in March, but co-founder and chief executive Rod Jones said yesterday the Government “needs to actually get some better communication into key markets over the benefits of the visa processing” changes.

“That’s recognised and potentially will happen,” Mr Jones said.

Navitas had earlier announced an annual profit result at the bottom end of expectations, with net earnings down 5 per cent at $73.1 million, despite a 7 per cent rise in revenue to $688.5 million.

The company’s shares fell more than 7 per cent, with sentiment also affected by confirmation of a 5 per cent fall in worldwide second semester enrolments on last year and the disclosure Navitas will wind back its dividend payout ratio to 80 per cent with effect from the next interim payment in February.

Mr Jones said the profit result was affected by a combination of factors, including the flow-through of recent regulatory changes in Australia and the UK which had reduced student enrolments over the past two years, global economic uncertainty and higher depreciation and interest costs associated with the 2010 acquisition of NSW-based media technology training group SAE.

He said the year had been Navitas’ toughest since its float in 2004 as IBT Education. “It has impacted all parts of the business,” he said. “Sometimes you get a little hiccup in some parts, but this has been almost like...a perfect storm for us.”

However, Navitas was “definitely over the worst” and “can see some smooth waters in front of us”. Its optimism reflected signs of “relatively significant” growth in new enrolments for next semester.

The company, which offers bridging courses for overseas students seeking to study at Australian universities, said worldwide student numbers at its university programs division were down 3 per cent at 14,097 at the end of June. Australian enrolments were off 12 per cent, though new enrolments in the second semester were up 2 per cent. There were also reassuring signs in Britain, where new enrolments were up 27 per cent for a 4 per cent annual decline in overall student numbers.

The university programs arm, which accounts for about half of group revenues, recorded a 5 per cent fall in underlying earnings to $104.9 million before interest, tax, depreciation and amortisation.

SAE ended the year much better after a disappointing first half, up 53 per cent at $26.4 million.

Navitas shares closed 27¢ down at $3.86, taking its decline over the past two weeks to 13 per cent.

Mr Jones, who holds nearly $210 million of stock, received remuneration for the year of $816,995, down substantially from 2010-11 when his $1.52 million package was inflated by a $612,000 short-term bonus.

Navitas will pay a reduced final dividend of 10.1¢ on August 31 for a full-year payout of 19.5¢.

“The Government needs to actually get some better communication into key markets.”

Navitas chief executive Rod Jones
**Global Tertiary Enrolments Growth (2011-2020)**

- Russia
- Ukraine
- Poland
- South Korea
- Germany
- Belarus
- Romania
- Vietnam
- Britain
- Kazakhstan
- Mexico
- Ethiopia
- Turkey
- Bangladesh
- Philippines
- Nigeria
- Indonesia
- Brazil
- China
- India

*GTE Calculated by Tertiary Enrolment Ratios and 15-22 Population Group.*

Nash wants regional universities policy

The student population at the Dubbo campus of Charles Sturt University (CSU) could grow if a government policy for regional universities is developed, according to Australian Senator Fiona Nash.

For example, the inclusion of a tertiary access allowance in such a policy could help western NSW residents take the higher education leap in Dubbo, she says.

Ms Nash said more enrolments at the campus would increase its economic and social contribution to the city, already playing its part in firming up the regional workforce.

The senator from country NSW contends that the mooted policy would seek to address the “unique challenges” faced by regional universities that were “vital to Australia’s education fabric and make an enormous contribution to regional Australia”.

“The economic and social contribution of these universities to their region is extensive, but, more importantly, students who study there are demonstrably far more likely to go on to pursue a career in regional Australia,” Ms Nash said.

“If we agree that regional universities are quite different and that it is in the national interest to secure their future, it follows that we need a distinct regional universities policy.”