UNI ENROLMENTS UP
Indigenous students increase by record 6pc

UNIVERSITY enrolments by regional and indigenous students have increased to record levels, new figures have revealed.

Commencements for students from low socio-economic backgrounds increased by 3.3 per cent to 56,710.

In 2011, a total of 5381 indigenous students started a university course, an increase of 6.1 per cent from the year before.

Since 2007, the number of indigenous students studying at university has increased by 2437 – a 26 per cent growth.

More than 24,000 extra students from regional and remote areas started university in the past five years – a 17.4 per cent growth.

Tertiary Education Minister Senator Chris Evans said this showed the system was increasingly tapping into the potential of all Australians.
GYMPIE builder Peter Bazzan has been named National Carpenter of the Year.

The owner of Stirling Homes was announced the winner on National Carpenter Day, July 20.

Mr Bazzan, 42, was flown to Melbourne for the main event held at Federation Square and to participate in the Carpenters Nail It Harder Challenge in which some of the country’s best carpenters battled it out for the title of National Carpenter of the Year 2012.

He took home a $1000 Home Timber and Hardware voucher, a $500 travel voucher sponsored by Leading Edge Events, plus an AEG Powertool Pack worth $2370 and a Wood Naturally Better prize pack.

Minister for Tertiary Education, Skills, Science and Research, Senator Chris Evans, said the event recognised that a career in a trade can be both personally and financially rewarding.

He said having a trade qualification opened up endless opportunities. “Qualified tradesmen are in high demand by employers, and their skills are the key to Australia’s future growth,” Senator Evans said.

Mr Bazzan employs about eight apprentices as a business owner and is passionate about encouraging more Australians to take up the opportunity of an apprenticeship.

He was invited by Senator Evans to join Scott Cam, Kevin Sheedy, Renya Xydis, Neil Perry and Cameron Ling as an Australian Apprenticeship Ambassador to help spread the word about the value of a nationally recognised qualification.

The Australian Government is increasing the number of apprentices across the country to build a skilled and productive workforce in order to meet the challenges of a modern, diverse and prosperous economy.
Moves to extend HECS relief to nurses

By Linda Belardi

The federal government will investigate an expansion of the HECS reimbursement scheme to include nursing and allied health professionals in an effort to attract more graduates to work in rural and regional areas.

The Minister for Health Tanya Plibersek has responded to calls from student and professional peak bodies to widen the pool of health professionals that are eligible to receive HECS relief in return for working in hard to staff areas.

Plibersek told Parliament on June 20 that she would work with the Minister for Tertiary Education, Chris Evans, to look at expanding the scheme, which is currently only available to medical graduates.

Last year the federal government spent $7 million on the scheme attracting 530 doctors to work in rural communities.

Plibersek said her office had met with the National Rural Health Students’ Network about their action plan for the future of rural health in

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HECS relief for nurses

Australia. She said there was clear evidence that local training was important to meet the needs of local communities.

“We know that people who come from, or study in, rural and regional communities end up working in and staying in those communities.”

Independent MP Tony Windsor welcomed the minister’s commitment in Parliament to address the rural workforce shortage. “Health graduates from a variety of disciplines should be encouraged to work in regional areas,” he said.

Calls to expand the incentive are also supported by Rural Health Workforce Australia and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

Margie Mahon, director of workforce programs at Rural Health Workforce Australia said it didn’t make sense to exclude other health professionals.

“If we are serious about creating a multidisciplinary workforce in the bush, a starting point must be the HECS reimbursement scheme currently offered to medical students. This should be expanded to other health professions,” she said.
Uni students to have a say on experience

ABOUT 400,000 students from 40 universities are set to have their say on their university experience, in what will potentially be Australia's largest survey of higher education.

The University Experience Survey (UES) is being conducted to help universities and government learn more about students' experiences at university, and how they can improve teaching and learning.

First-year and final-year students will report on how active and engaged they are in learning, the support they get from teachers and universities, and the degree to which they develop skills and knowledge.