Pupils desert our state

THE number of international students enrolling in South Australian courses has dropped by almost 10 per cent, stripping $144 million from the state's coffers.

Federal Government data shows this year 22,565 international students have enrolled in SA educational institutions in the first six months of this year, which is down from 25,011 at the same time last year and the lowest June figure since 2008.

In 2011, international education contributed $884 million to the state's economy - which is 14 per cent down from $1.03 billion in the previous calendar year.

Education Adelaide chief executive Denise von Wald said increased competition for international students and the high Australian dollar had made it more difficult for SA to compete.

“The current situation is not a surprise, however we are quietly confident that some of Adelaide’s differentiating factors will shine through and attract more students,” Ms von Wald said.

In the year to June, there was a 3.7 per cent drop in higher education enrolments - 13,398, down from 13,911.

“The student visa conditions only changed in April and are favourable towards higher education but not VET students,” Ms von Wald said.

“The market is still adjusting to these changes and the impact will not be seen for up to six months.”

Enrolments from SA’s five highest nationalities were all down, with Indian student enrolments plummeting by more than 27 per cent.

“The decrease in Indian students has been the direct result of the Federal Government’s visa policy changes which disadvantage Indian students studying VET courses,” Ms von Wald said.

A State Government spokesman said SA managed to maintain a market share of 5.6 per cent in 2010 and 2011 - during the industry’s highest decline in international student numbers across Australia in recent years.

“We plan to increase our market share … by focusing on key markets that have the capacity to deliver the largest numbers,” he said.
Bright sparks among the best

ROZ PULLEY

JAKE Watkin and Madison Wills have every reason to be proud of their efforts in their final year of school – after being named among Australia’s best Year 12 vocational students for 2011.

They are among 500 of the nation’s most skilled students to receive the 2011 Australian Vocational Student Prize, which comes with a $2000 cheque and a certificate recognising their achievements.

Jake, 17, graduated from Bentley Park College last year, while Madison, also 17, graduated from Smithfield State High School.

“The Australian Vocational Student Prize recognises students who have demonstrated exceptional skills and commitment while completing a Vocational Education and Training in Schools program, or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship,” said Acting Minister for School Education Senator Chris Evans.

“Through their studies, winners have gained a better understanding of the workplace, and have developed industry-specific skills that will help them get work in their chosen career,” Mr Evans said.

The Australian Vocational Student Prize is the vocational equivalent of the academic Australian Student Prize, another initiative aimed at recognising the achievements of students and their schools.

“The two young go-getters wasted no time getting into the workforce to apply their new skills – with both securing a job before they even left school.

Jake, who started his school based apprenticeship with Far North Fabrications, is about to start block studies at TAFE and the second year of his apprenticeship.

“I began my school based apprenticeship in Grade 12. I’d always been interested in boiler-making and it gave me a head start,” Jake said.

“I enjoyed school, but I was keen to get out and go to work. It’s a four year apprenticeship and I can go to the mines when I finish.”

Jake said he was surprised to learn of his national success.

“I thought I was just an average student.”

Madison Wills said she did a Certificate II in Business and a Certificate III in Childcare during Year 11 and 12 at Smithfield State High School.

“I thought I wanted to do childcare when I started the course through work experience, but I realised I preferred business,” Madison said.

And while everyone else was planning their schoolies escapades, Madison had her eyes firmly on getting a job – securing a traineeship at Trinity Fire Services a month before leaving school.

“I started the Monday after I finished school. I just figured if I started as soon as I could, then I would be set up and I could start my training.”

She is now doing a Certificate III in Business Administration and plans to put her $2000 win towards further studies.

“I’d like to move further up in the business industry and get more training and do my Certificate IV in Accounting.”

TOP PERFORMERS: Apprentice boilermaker Jake Watkin and trainee administrator Madison Wills have been named in the top 500 vocational students who graduated from Year 12 across Australia in 2011.

Pictures: ROMY BULLERJAHN
Schools benefit

St Norbert College in Queens Park and Orana Catholic Primary School in Willetton are part of 32 schools in WA who now have greater decision-making power thanks to Federal Government funding.

As part of the empowering local schools initiative more than $2.1 million was provided to schools taking part in the scheme.

The funding is aimed at refining the model of school board governance to encourage parents to get involved in decision-making and the improvement of the management of financial resources and infrastructure.

Acting Education Minister Chris Evans made the announcement on July 20.

St Norbert College would be using the funding to build community engagement through activities and events for the school and community members.
Super tech step

Technology

Federal Minister for Science and Research Chris Evans announced Cray Inc would lead a group of five supercomputing suppliers to build the $33 million supercomputer to be installed at the Pawsey centre in Kensington.

Once operational in March 2013 the supercomputer would process data generated by the Australian square kilometre array (SKA) pathfinder (ASKAP) radio telescope.

Senator Evans said the supercomputer was a critical tool for the Australian scientific community that would increase research capacity in a range of fields including radio astronomy, the geosciences and in nanotechnology and biosciences.

“It will process the masses of data produced by the ASKAP and Murchison wide-field array radio telescopes,” he said.

“Both radio telescopes played a key part in Australia and New Zealand’s recent successful bid to co-host the international SKA project, the biggest and most advanced radio telescope ever constructed.”

IVEC acting executive director Paul Nicholls said the purchase represented a remarkable investment in the future of Australian research.

“Using the power of this petascale supercomputer and the expertise of our staff, scientists will be able to explore new paradigms of research that were previously unavailable,” he said.

The State Government has committed about $20 million from 2011 to 2016 to support IVEC operations with $80 million from the Australian Government super science initiative to establish the Pawsey centre.

The installation of the supercomputer will occur in two phases scheduled for June 2013 and June 2014.
More than 37,000 people in the Limestone Coast have the chance to sign up for hundreds of free funded training courses through the government’s Skills for All initiative, according to Higher Education and Skills Minister Tom Kenyon.

Mr Kenyon visited Mount Gambier on Friday to introduce Skills for All to the region and promote its benefits in increasing employment opportunities locally.

“Research has shown that 83.6pc of people with a Certificate III to V are participating in the economy,” he said.

“The unemployment rate of people without those certificates, or above, is 6.3pc, but for those who have it, the unemployment rate is 2.5pc - that is why we are driving the participation rate with Skills for All.”

The State Government has committed $194m additional funding to help support 100,000 more training places through Skills for All.

Qualifications at Certificate level I and II are fully subsidised, which means there are no course fees, while courses at Certificate III level and above are partially government-subsidised, with students expected to pay a course fee as well as any relevant incidental costs.

Mr Kenyon encouraged residents to visit the Skills for All website at www.skills.sa.gov.au for further information.

“Our vision is one where our next generation is highly skilled, embraces technology, and where our businesses prosper and grow in a globally competitive environment through innovation and increases in productivity,” he said.

Mr Kenyon said training providers had gone through a strict selection process to offer the courses through Skills for All.

One of the main training providers will be TAFESA, which

Mr Kenyon said would face some challenges in how courses were delivered.

“Course delivery contents will change - a lot will be done online, which means people will not have to attend classes all the time and only go to the campus for workshops, for instance.”

Department of Further Education and Skills Minister and TAFESA Mount Gambier education manager Andrew Knowles discuss opportunities under the Skills for All initiative. TAFESA will be one of the major training providers of courses through Skills for All.
Prizes for top VET students

THREE Yorke Peninsula students have been awarded Australian Vocational Student Prizes.

Kadina’s Molly Dixon, Port Broughton’s Kate Sims and Port Mooroyle’s Brenton Burt each received $2000 for their efforts in Vocational Education and Training.

Molly is currently completing an apprenticeship at the ANZ Bank Kadina branch.

“I was surprised when I found out I had won, I was not expecting it,” she said.

“I have never won anything so it was a good feeling to be recognised for what I have done.

“I’m going to put the prize away and save it for something.”

Kate studied a Certificate III in Aged Care last year.

“It was a good starting point for me. I got to do my work placement at the Port Broughton Hospital and I could see if nursing was something I wanted to do,” she said.

“I was really stoked when I found I had won.”

Brenton completed Certificates III and IV in Fitness and is now studying for his diploma.

Acting Minister for School Education, Early Childhood and Youth Chris Evans said the prize recognises students who have demonstrated exceptional skills and commitment while completing a Vocational Education and Training course or an Australian school-based apprenticeship.

“Through their studies, winners of these awards have gained a better understanding of the workplace and have developed industry-specific skills that will help them get work in their chosen career,” Mr Evans said.

ON THE MONEY... Kadina’s Molly Dixon is one of 500 winners of an Australian Vocational Student Prize.