Apprentices build a rewarding career

A DOZEN new apprentices have signed on with Holden as part of the Aboriginal Recruitment Training (ART) Employment scheme.

The Indigenous Apprenticeship Program has put 12 Aboriginal job seekers into the workforce as mechanical fitter apprentices.

Twenty-three candidates underwent training, with 12 successfully completing the Holden interview.

Holden executive manufacturing director Richard Phillips said the program was a great opportunity for the apprentices. “Holden has always prided itself on our fair-go mentality and giving these apprentices the means to learn a trade and build a career is fantastic,” he said.

“Working with ART Employment to achieve this outcome has been a rewarding experience...”

Minister for Employment, Higher Education and Skills Tom Kenyon said the State Government was proud to support this program. “Our Skills For All reforms of vocational education and training aims to increase skill levels, lift workplace participation and increase productivity by offering training for existing workers and those trying to break into the workforce,” he said.

OPPORTUNITY: Richard Phillips.
IN PRAISE OF PRIVATE EDUCATION

JULIA GILLARD

“I’ve never looked at a big independent school in an established suburb and thought ‘That’s not fair.’ I look at a big independent school in an established suburb and think ‘That’s a great example.’”

TONY ABBOTT

“The 34 per cent of Australians who attend independent schools get just 21 per cent of government funding. So there is no question of injustice to public schools here. If anything, the injustice is the other way.”
Private schools hard done by, says Abbott

By JEWEL TOPSFIELD
and BIANCA HALL

OPPOSITION Leader Tony Abbott has provoked a storm of controversy and contradicted the findings of the Gonski review into school funding by suggesting that state schools receive too large a share of education spending.

Labor and the Coalition yesterday used an independent education forum to talk up their private-school credentials in the lead-up to the federal government’s long-awaited overhaul of school funding.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard promised every independent school in the nation would receive an increase in funding, and defended big private schools as “a great example”.

Mr Abbott went further, implying that private schools were being treated unjustly by receiving a smaller proportion of funding than state schools.

“Overall, the 66 per cent of Australian school students who attend public schools get 79 per cent of government funding. The 34 per cent of Australians who attend independent schools get just 21 per cent of government funding,” Mr Abbott told the forum.

“So there is no question of injustice to public schools here. If anything, the injustice is the other way.”

This contradicts the review led by businessman David Gonski, which recommended an annual $5 billion increase in funding to all schools, but with an emphasis on increased funding to state schools because they have a higher proportion of disadvantaged students.

The review found that more than 80 per cent of students who could not “participate in society” because they were so far behind in reading and mathematics were in state schools: “The concentration of this problem in government schools is evidence of the need for a greater increase in resources in those schools in particular.”

Mr Abbott went further, implying that private schools were being treated unjustly by receiving a smaller proportion of funding than state schools.

Australian Education Union president Angelo Gavrielatos said Mr Abbott’s comments betrayed an ignorance of the Gonski review and proved he would be the “private school prime minister”.

Trevor Cobbold, of the public education lobby group Save Our Schools, said Mr Abbott showed a “callous disregard” for the large proportion of disadvantaged students who were not receiving an adequate education.

“It’s a disgrace. Low-income students are on average two to three years behind their high-income peers. If we are going to do anything about the massive achievement gaps in this country, government schools need to receive the bulk of any funding increases,” he said.

But Mr Abbott said the whole Gonski process was in part generated by the idea that the government somehow neglected state schools, and the risk was that funding for private schools might be cut.

Ms Gillard seized on his comments, claiming in Parliament that every state school in the country was “on the opposition hit-list”.

In the ensuing argument, Mr Abbott was thrown out of Parliament by Deputy Speaker Anna Burke, making him the first opposition leader ejected since John Howard in 1986.

Mr Abbott had been asked to withdraw a remark that was inaudible in the public gallery. “I withdraw, but it’s still an untrue statement,” he replied.

“You could not help yourself,” said Ms Burke, telling him to leave for an hour.

He returned to declare that he had no intention of cutting funding to state schools. His office said any such suggestion was “just another lie”.

Conclusion

Mr Abbott’s comments on school funding have sparked a heated debate between the opposition and the government. His suggestion that state schools receive too large a share of funding contradicts the findings of the Gonski review. The government has promised to increase funding for all schools, but with a greater emphasis on state schools. The opposition leader’s remarks have drawn criticism from education unions and other groups. The incident highlights the ongoing controversy surrounding school funding in Australia.
Earlier, Ms Gillard moved at the independent education forum to dispel any lingering notions of class envy from the days of former leader Mark Latham’s private school “hit-list”.

“I’ve never looked at a big independent school in an established suburb and thought ‘That’s not fair,’” she said. “I look at a big independent school in an established suburb and think ‘That’s a great example.’”

Melbourne University professor Richard Teese said the Prime Minister’s speech represented a betrayal of Labor’s position on public education. “It’s completely a reversal of its historic position,” he said. “It’s gradually acclimatised itself to a close position with private schools, despite the inequities that creates.

“There are big lobby groups and they have a lot of political clout and the government is being forced to pay a price for what it sees as fundamental reforms.”

But Independent Schools Victoria chief executive Michelle Green said parents would be happy to hear that both leaders supported them. “Many of our parents feel they are not very well supported, when they do put their own money into their child’s education.”
THE CHAIR

Public benefits don’t match uni subsidies

By ANDREW NORTON

The Grattan Institute has just published research that looks at what the general community gets from higher education, through the increased skills and attributes of graduates to others.

The benefits studied in the Graduate Winners report were guided by a 2011 federal government funding review, which argued that public funding levels should be driven by the expected future value of public benefits.

Graduate Winners does not accept that recommendation, as the public should come out ahead on any investment in higher education. However, if there were no public benefits from higher education it would be difficult to justify public investment.

Using international research, the federal government funding review said that higher education contributes to a range of benefits grouped under the idea of a “more robust civil society” — including more civic engagement, more volunteering, and greater tolerance of others.

Graduate Winners uses data from several Australian surveys to show some broader contexts are important in explaining graduate behaviour.

Graduates express much more tolerant attitudes than the general non-graduate population. But as with other “civil society” benefits, much of the difference is explained by factors other than higher education. Women and young people are more tolerant than men and older people, and the fact that graduates are disproportionately female and younger than average helps explain these differences.

Graduate Winners concludes that though there are higher education “civil society” effects, these are smaller than in other countries, especially the US. Many American colleges and universities see shaping a student’s character as part of their mission. They aim to produce graduates who are engaged with their communities.

Historically, Australian higher education has not emphasised civics. It is therefore not surprising that Australian graduates are less civically engaged than their American counterparts.

The federal government’s funding review also nominated less crime as a higher education public benefit. Education can have positive effects by improving legal money-saving opportunities, providing better peer groups, and occupying young men’s time. However, only 20 per cent of the people entering jail have completed school, so the potential for higher education to take prospective criminals down another path is limited.

Graduate Winners has been criticised for not estimating the contribution graduates make to productivity. Education does contribute to productivity, but it has complex relationships with other factors in the economy. Australia’s mediocre productivity performance over the past decade coincided with a strong increase in the number of graduates.

However, higher productivity levels are reflected in graduates’ salaries. These convert into increased income tax revenues, which in turn finance a range of other benefits to the community. The report analysed these increases in tax revenues by the bachelor-degree studies of graduates, when compared to someone of the same sex who finished their formal education at year 12.

Overall, these are significant. The average additional lifetime tax benefit from graduates is about $240,000 for women and $360,000 for men. However, these figures range from very high in the case of medicine to low or even negative in the case of graduates in the performing arts.

Public benefits partly justify $6 billion in public tuition subsidies for universities, so it is surprising that some benefits discussed in Graduate Winners have not been investigated before using Australian data. The report has been criticised for not examining a longer list of public benefits. But, ironically for a paper that ultimately concludes that public tuition subsidies are too high, it investigates public benefits more thoroughly than anything produced by the university lobby groups that say public subsidies are too low.

Andrew Norton is the higher education program director at the Grattan Institute. Graduate Winners and its supporting papers are available at grattan.edu.au
Gold rush runs out of steam

Australia’s universities have become reliant on income from international students but they’re going to have to be more innovative to ensure the numbers keep coming, writes Geoff Maslen.

A

DVENTURERS from China in the 1850s thought of Australia as Hsin Chin Shan — the New Gold Mountain where golden nuggets were said to lie scattered across the land. These days China has become the new gold mountain for Australian universities, given their increasing reliance on the fees paid by young Chinese and other Asian students.

But just as the Australian gold began to run out in the 19th century so, too, has the flow of fee money from overseas students who are turning in their tens of thousands to other countries.

Although these students are still expected to contribute $13.5 billion to the Australian economy this year, with nearly half that sum pouring into university coffers, the total is way below the massive $18 billion their predecessors spent a mere three years ago.

The number of international students in Australia fell by nearly 80,000 — or more than 20 per cent — in the three years to June 30, down from a peak of 386,300 in June 2009. The number of Chinese students in Australia has dropped to 71,230, an 11 per cent fall in the past two years.

University heads are likely to be even more perturbed by what lies ahead. A 9 per cent slump in new overseas students enrolling in higher education for the first time means total enrolments will soon start falling even more sharply, as will the income from fees. Adding to those concerns is the fact offshore visas granted to students in China slid 9.5 per cent in the 12 months to June 30 — on top of a startling 20 per cent collapse the previous year.

But this fall is not showing up in actual higher education enrolments because of a “churn” effect. In the year to end of June, 33,500 students whose visas were due to expire — notably those from China and other parts of Asia — reappeared to undertake a different course or moved from vocational education colleges to university, avoiding the need to return home.

This churn effect tends to disguise the heavy downturn in the number of new students seeking to enrol in universities.

Overall, 139,000 former student visa holders stayed on in Australia after obtaining a visa in a different category such as working graduates, skilled temporary migrants, tourists and even, as 6741 did, becoming a partner to someone holding permanent residency.

Jude Perera, who is among the more than 5500 Sri Lankans studying in Australia, is an example of this trend to stay on. Mr Perera started a two-year advanced diploma in electronics and communications engineering at RMIT in 2009, completing the course last December. He then renewed his student visa so he could undertake a bachelor of engineering in the same fields at the university and gained a two-year credit off the four-year degree because of the diploma studies.

“I will try to get a job here when I graduate but if not I will go back to Sri Lanka,” Mr Perera says. “I have an offer to work there because I did six months’ work experience with the employer before coming to Australia. I have to do three months more work experience here to get my degree, but I would like to stay after being here for four years and having made many friends.”

Despite the clear downturn in international numbers, Belinda Robinson, the new chief executive of Universities Australia, has an optimistic view of the situation facing universities. Ms Robinson says although universities have suffered a fall, the vocational education and English-language colleges are enduring worse declines.

“Compared with those sectors, higher education has done much better but, yes, there has been a drop and one reason is the rising value of the Australian dollar, while another has been visa processing,” she says. “But the government has responded very effectively in streamlining processing for students wishing to study in Australian universities.

“We are still to see the full effect of this on enrolments, or on the changes to work rights for international students. Here the government has changed the rules to allow them to work for up to 40 hours a fortnight and that, plus extending to two years the time that graduates can stay working in Australia, does give universities a competitive edge over those in other countries.”

Ms Robinson says the enrolment decline does not include the students Australian universities are enrolling in their offshore campuses, noting that Monash is the first to do so in China, and that these moves could prove very successful. “We have some
We have some good success stories with offshore campuses and it is something that universities are taking seriously.

BELINDA ROBINSON, Universities Australia

Sri Lankan Jude Perera is on his second tertiary course in Australia.
HAMPTON PARK

Schools to discuss TAFE cuts

KEY educationists from across the southeast will converge on Hampton Park on Thursday to discuss the impact of TAFE cuts on secondary school students.

The education coalition of schools in the outer southern metropolitan region has invited Premier Ted Baillieu to the meeting to address their concerns.

Hampton Park Secondary College principal David Finnerty said the decision to alter funding to TAFEs would filter down and affect the schools’ ability to provide Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning and Vocational Education and Training programs.

“The reality is there are other ways we could recapture some of the funds,” Mr Finnerty said.

Kate Walshe, spokeswoman for Mr Baillieu said he would not be attending the meeting.

It will be held at the River Gum Performing Arts Centre, Fordholm Rd, Hampton Park at 7pm.
MINISTER for Higher Education and Skills and the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, Peter Hall, will do the honours at the Victoria launch of National Skills Week in Melbourne on August 27.

To be held at the Kino Cinema, guests will get to share the experiences of three young workers as they tell their stories.

The trio are this year’s Apprentice of the Year finalist, Sevag Parseghian, Trainee of the Year finalist, Stephanie Greene, and Justin Stankovic of East Coast Aviation in Traralgon.

The night will also see the premiere of Le Chef, a French culinary tale about having a passion for your trade and what hard work can bring.

Catering for the event will be handled by Victoria University Academy Sofitel culinary students.

Work Place Connect chief executive Nicholas Wyman said by 2015, Australia would need 2.4 million new workers with Certificate 3 (apprentice level) qualifications.

As such it was imperative to encourage and engage more young people in skilled careers. “Given the limited number of young people entering the pipeline, many businesses may find it hard to find workers in the future.” he said.
Train to sustain success

EDGAR D’SOUZA

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“To compete for the jobs of tomorrow, Australians will need to be increasingly more qualified,” Senator Evans said at the national launch of the event last week.

“Better skills not only lead to better pay and employment outcomes for the individual, but an investment in skills is also an investment in higher productivity and a sustainable economy.”

Senator Evans said the Federal Government was investing $15.6 billion in skills and training over the next four years to ensure all Australians are able to maximise their potential to participate in the workforce.

“The $700 million National Workforce Development fund is making it easier for businesses and employees to get the training they need,” he said.

SkillsOne chief executive Brian Wexham said National Skills Week would provide a positive focus on Vocational Education and Training (VET).

“It will bring to life the positive messages, highlighting the talents, skills and the value of apprentices and trainees across Australia to the wider public and employers,” he said.

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Australian apprenticeship ambassador and hairdresser to the stars Renya Xydis said an apprenticeship in any occupation provided job seekers with real world skills, as desired and needed by industry.

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It will raise the status of practical and vocational learning and allow us to acknowledge the contribution of our skilled workers to our economy and community.

Senator Chris Evans
Once again: where will the money come from Mr Abbott?

Back in 1987, while working for Bob Hawke’s second re-election campaign, the advertising man John Singleton created what was, quite possibly, one of the most obnoxious characters ever to appear on Australian television. That’s a big claim but anyone who lived through Wendy’s repetitive, whining demands knows exactly what I mean.

The knowledge you’ve created a memorable character is, of course, music to an advertiser’s ear: it shows the message got through. And, when the voters (or, as ‘Singo’ prefers to call them, the ‘punters’) walked into the ballot booths that year enough of them remembered the critical message they’d been bombarded with any time they turned on a television set over the past few weeks to ensure Labor was returned triumphantly.

The ALP’s Bob McMullan wrote the advertisement, but although he’s a cultured, educated man, the nearest it got to a classical allusion was when the central figure, “Whingeing Wendy”, quoted Laurie Oakes “on TV”. She enthusiastically ripped into the central figure, “Whingeing Wendy”, quoted Laurie Oakes “on TV”. She enthusiastically ripped into the electorate remembered that when Mr Howard was Malcolm Fraser’s treasurer, the budget had blown out badly, and the accusation of fiscal profligacy and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punished now for its ‘profligacy’ and spendthrift ways under Kevin Rudd. The conservative attack is two-fold; it’s not just that the surplus was spent, there’s also the accusation it was squandered. That’s why Labor’s been punish
spending on social security's forecast at $131.6 billion and health is $61 billion.

Secondly, an Abbott government has already announced it will forego huge dollops of money, including, most particularly, the mining and carbon taxes. Shadow treasurer Joe Hockey’s pretending that clawing back the recent tax cut won’t hurt anyone because it’s just compensation for the increased carbon pricing mechanism. And I bet the electricity companies can’t wait to slash their prices. Ho ho, it’s Christmas again.

The final problem is that the current government’s been building expectations that it knows it will never be in office to meet. The review of higher education; a new disability support scheme; a return to spending money on defence; etc, etc.

Whingeing Wendy will soon be back with her one simple, rhetorical question. “Where’s the money coming from, Mr Abbott?”

Nicholas Stuart is a Canberra writer.
Passion for trade

MINISTER for Higher Education and Skills and the Minister responsible for the Teaching Profession, Peter Hall, will do the honours at the Victoria launch of National Skills Week at the Kino Cinema, Melbourne on August 27.

Guests will get to share the experiences of three young workers – Apprentice of the Year finalist Sevag Parseghian, Trainee of the Year finalist Stephanie Greene, and Justin Stankovic of East Coast Aviation in Traralgon – as they tell their stories.

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Details: nationalskillsweek.com.au

Senator Chris Evans
Class warfare has no place in our nation’s schools

Australians tend to have a pragmatic approach towards private education. The deep class divisions that exist in other countries over education are not apparent here to the same extent, in large part because private schools are seen as a crucial option rather than an exclusionary barrier.

This is one reason why former Labor leader Mark Latham’s 2004 “hit list” that would have cut government funding to 67 private schools was such a disaster.

Mr Latham perceived a community-wide hostility towards private schools.

In reality, no such broad hostility existed. His policy was among the reasons for Labor’s 2004 election defeat.

Prime Minister Julia Gillard has learnt from Mr Latham’s error and now promises, as part of the government’s response to the Gonski review, to take an approach that is the very opposite of Mr Latham’s. “Every independent school in Australia will see their funding increase under our plan.” Ms Gillard said yesterday.

So, too, will funding for public schools under Labor’s proposals.

It’s an everybody-wins scenario that in some respects echoes Ms Gillard’s claims about carbon tax compensation.

Still, while Labor’s attitude is impressively more enlightened than it was just two leaders ago, there remains an undercurrent of division. This became clear yesterday during a parliamentary clash that was heated even by current Canberra standards.

Attempting to score some points over Opposition Leader Tony Abbott’s observation that the 34 per cent of Australian students who attend private schools receive 21 per cent of education funding, the Prime Minister declared that “every public school in this country is on an Opposition hit-list”.

In case the message wasn’t clear, she continued: “Like Jack the Ripper he’s going to be there wielding his knife to cut money out of that public school.”

The Prime Minister’s unusually exaggerated rhetoric may have come in response to continued poor polling and a strategic need to refocus electoral attention on Mr Abbott, but the effect was to remind many of 2004’s strange class warfare.

While Mr Abbott ended the day being thrown out of parliament, the Prime Minister would do well to retain her party’s new-found views on equality of opportunity across the educational spectrum.

Labor can’t win a class fight that nobody wants to have.
Extra funding for schools needs to be linked to knowledge of Australian culture and responsibilities.

The PM seems very keen to indicate that the government will give more government funding to private schools before the government’s full official response to the Gonsky Report.

But any education system in Australia with government funding attached must ensure, in my view, that all students have a deep understanding of the Australian culture including the benefits, customs, values and belief systems along with their individual responsibilities within the Australian society.

Courses associated with such matters should only be handled by government-approved teachers, be examinable, and passes in these subjects be mandatory for progression to higher education.

Failure to inculcate these courses within the private school education sector should be a bar to any further funding.

Keith Askew
Hornsby Heights
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Senator Chris Evans
Schools in TAFE ‘turmoil’

Michael Randall

KEY education figureheads from across the southeast will converge on Hampton Park tomorrow to discuss the impact of TAFE cuts on secondary students.

The Education Coalition of schools in the outer southern metropolitan region — which includes secondary colleges in Greater Dandenong — has invited Premier Ted Baillieu to the meeting.

Hampton Park Secondary College principal David Finnerty said the decision to alter funding to TAFEs would filter down. It would affect schools’ ability to provide Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) and Vocational Education and Training (VET) programs.

“We understand Victoria is facing an economic crisis, but the reality is there are other ways we could recapture some of the funds, rather than hit the future of our kids,” Mr Finnerty said.

Berwick Secondary College school council president Roger Hall said a lack of information about the changes had thrown planning for the 2013 school year into turmoil.

“Trying to predict the number of VET and VCAL students and what schools are going to be able to offer is creating a lot of angst for us,” Mr Hall said.

Kate Walshe, spokeswoman for Mr Baillieu said he would not be attending the meeting.

Thursday’s public meeting will be held at the River Gum Performing Arts Centre, Fordholm Rd, Hampton Park from 7pm.
Skills shortages report released

The Senate Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee released its final report on the problem of the engineering skills shortage in Australia last month after being charged with examining "the nexus between the demand for infrastructure delivery and the shortage of appropriate engineering and related employment skills in Australia".

The Shortage of Engineering and Related Employment Skills sets out 12 recommendations to the government.

To find a solution, the committee recommended the government work with the Chief Scientist, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG), and the Australian Workforce and Productivity Agency, or a similar body, to ensure that education and training is receiving enough support and development around the country from high school science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) courses to Vocational Education and Training courses in engineering trades.

This includes the federal government considering extending funding for government-supported places to all domestic students accepted into public higher education engineering programs. On the matter of university programs, the committee recommended industry committees are set up to advise universities in ensuring engineering courses are suited to industry requirements.

A review of the Commonwealth Procurement Guidelines was recommended to ensure the government is an informed purchaser of engineering infrastructure and that appropriate advice is provided in relation to procurement decisions that require specialist technical knowledge. This would be supported by the creation of senior technical engineering roles in the Australian Public Service.

Another recommendation was that states and territory governments engage with engineering industry bodies to provide practical, paid work experience to university students, as well as consider how it can encourage Commonwealth contractors to provide graduate and cadetship programs through its procurement processes.

It was also advised that targeted policies are created that encourage women as well as mature engineers to remain in or return to the engineering workforce.

The final recommendation, and one that Engineers Australia has championed, was for the government to continue to work through COAG to develop a national registration scheme over the next decade.

Engineers Australia chief executive Stephen Durkin said: “Engineers Australia strongly supports recommendations to establish a nationally consistent system of registration for engineers. This will ensure that engineering services are delivered by individuals who hold appropriate qualifications, have work experience consistent with accepted international standards and can demonstrate a commitment to continuing professional development. There is currently no uniform system of registration for engineers, and this must be addressed as a priority by all Australian governments.”

To download the report go to: http://goo.gl/ifkV4.

Engineers Australia’s response to the report is further detailed on page 26, as well as in the chief executive’s column.

Facts & figures

- Australia produces around 9500 engineering graduates each year.
- The average annual demand for engineers ranges from 13,000 to 20,000.
- The Engineers Australia Salary Survey suggests that 63% of engineering employers have reported difficulty recruiting suitably qualified engineers in the past year.
- Engineering employers in Queensland, WA and NSW are most likely to report recruitment difficulties.
- Employers report that shortages mostly relate to engineers with 5-15 years of work experience in the areas of civil, mechanical and electrical engineering.
- Engineering unemployment was 3.2% in 2011, much lower than the labour force average.
Train to sustain success

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Senator Evans said the Federal Government was investing $15.6 billion in skills and training over the next four years to ensure all Australians are able to maximise their potential to participate in the workforce.

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As such it was imperative to encourage and engage more young people in skilled careers.

“Given the limited number of young people entering the pipeline, many businesses may find it hard to find workers in the future,” he said.
TAFE looking at all options for the future

A PROPOSAL by the University of Ballarat to partner with regional TAFEs to deliver subjects across Victoria has been met with interest, but some restraint, by Advance TAFE.

“Nothing has been ruled out. We are looking seriously at all ideas and suggestions to ensure we continue as a successful, relevant and sustainable education hub in our region.”

- Advance TAFE chief executive Peter Heilbuth.

But this doesn’t mean we would be able to reinstate the courses we have had to remove, he said.

Mr Heilbuth acknowledged there may be courses that, while not viable when offered individually at each TAFE, might be practically shared between a group of universities and TAFEs, partially through using technology.

The State Government has set a deadline of early September for each TAFE to provide their transition plans detailing how they will operate under new funding from 2013 and beyond.

“Nothing has been ruled out.” he said.

“We are looking seriously at all ideas and suggestions to ensure we continue as a successful, relevant and sustainable education hub in our region,” Mr Heilbuth said.

The State Government has set a deadline of early September for each TAFE to provide their transition plans detailing how they will operate under new funding from 2013 and beyond.

One of the areas due to be affected from 2013 is the government’s removal of funds for services such as disability support, careers advice, student counselling and other student services.

The transition plans will be reviewed by a government-appointed panel, which will then make its final recommendations to the State Government later this year.
Reinventing himself in Dubai

MENTION the word Dubai and the brain immediately locks in visions of desert, sand dunes, camels, oil wells, tall buildings, wealthy sheiks and their many wives and luxury cars.

Dubai (pronounced doo-by) is an emirate within the United Arab Emirates (UAE). An emirate is a nation or territory controlled by an emir, which is an Islamic name for an independent ruler, chieftain or governor. It is also the name of a city within the emirate’s boundaries.

The city of Dubai is situated on the emirate’s northern coastline. The emirate is located south-east of the Persian Gulf on the Arabian Peninsula and has the largest population and is the second-largest land territory by area of all the emirates, after Abu Dhabi.

As of 2005, just 17 per cent of the emirate’s population was made up of UAE nationals. About 85 per cent of the expatriate population was Asian, chiefly Indian (51 per cent), Pakistani (16 per cent), Bangladeshi (nine per cent) and Filipino (three per cent).

Although Dubai’s economy was built on the oil industry, the emirate’s model of business drives its economy, with the effect that its main revenues are now from tourism, real estate, and financial services, similar to that of Western countries.

Oil was discovered in the region in 1966, which caused a massive influx of foreign workers and the population quickly expanded by 300 per cent. But, these days oil revenues account for just six per cent of the emirate’s revenues. The major earners are real estate and construction (22.6 per cent), trade (16 per cent), entrepôt (15 per cent) and financial services (11 per cent).

Entrepôt is a port where merchandise can be imported and then exported without paying import duties.

Because the area has been built on such a multicultural population it was no surprise to learn that former Bainbridge College teacher and Casterton Secondary College principal, Andrew Rogers, had re-invented himself as a teacher at a private school in Dubai, several years after he packed away his chalk and duster and retired after more than 30 years as an educator in Victorian schools.

“I saw the job advertised and decided to apply for it,” he said.

“I am head of a department and am teaching psychology at a private school in Dubai. I used to teach some psychology in Victoria and I published several VCE textbooks on the subject when I was living in Australia. I have gone a little further with that over there and I teach something called International Baccalaureates over there.”

The International Baccalaureate Diploma Programme (IBDP) is a two-year educational programme for students aged 16 to 19 that provides an internationally accepted qualification for entry into higher education, and is recognised by universities worldwide.

It was developed in the early to mid-1960s in Geneva, by a group of international educators.

Although every university in Australia recognises the IB diploma, entry criteria differ between universities. Some universities accept students on their IB point count, while others require the points to be converted and in most states this is based on the Equivalent National Tertiary Entry Rank (ENTER).

“This is my third year and I have just signed a contract for another two years,” Andrew said.

When asked how he found living in Dubai, his one word answer was “hot”.

“Probably, for eight months of the year it is very similar to a nice sunny day in Australia and, the thing I like about it is, it carries on being pleasantly warm in the evening,” he said.

“But, having said that all that, at the moment the temperatures are pretty horrific and get as high as 46, and I have heard of 50, so for three months of the year it is a good place not to be.”

Whenever he does have some time off at weekends and the like, Andrew doesn’t do too much, the weather and the location see to that. But, he has travelled to several nearby countries such as Oman and enjoyed the experience.

“I went swimming in the very clear waters there; you can swim with the little pink dolphins there too. You go on small barges that take you out to sea to view them and swim with them,” he said.

“A typical weekend for me is similar to everybody else’s; I go shopping or visiting friends for a barbecue. Shopping is a big pastime for the Arab community; they seem to enjoy it a lot. Andrew said the Dubai mall, supposedly the world’s biggest, was another favourite place for people to visit during the hotter months.

“It is like a world within a world and people like to visit and escape the weather,” he said.

Shopping for food causes no problems for Andrew; he finds everything he wants in the mall’s supermarkets. The shops cater for all populations and even though Islamic people do not eat pork, it is freely available in separate sections set aside for Asians and Europeans who wish to buy pork products.

Alcohol is also available, but buyers have to be licensed to buy it.

Interestingly, football and cricket are the most popular sports in Dubai. Cricket is followed by Dubai’s large community of Indians and Pakistanis, alongside the residents from other cricket playing nations (Sri Lanka, Bangladesh, England, Australia and South Africa).

In 2005, the International Cricket Council (ICC) moved its headquarters from London to Dubai. The city has
hosted several Pakistan matches and two new grass grounds are being developed in Dubai Sports City.

Also, the former Cunard ocean liner, Queen Elizabeth II, is berthed in Dubai and is expected to open soon as a five-star, 300-bed luxury hotel next year.

Andrew was born in the UK and arrived in Australia at age 24, after living in numerous countries where his father served in the UK Army. He had trained as a teacher in England and when he arrived in Australia found work almost immediately.

He spent a great deal of time teaching in Hamilton at the old Hamilton Technical School and its successor, Baimbridge College. He moved to Horsham as assistant principal at Horsham Secondary College, then was appointed principal of Casterton Secondary College in 2003.

After five years in the job, Andrew decided enough was enough and decided to pack his chalk and duster in the cupboard and take an early retirement from teaching.

He moved to Grovedale, outside of Geelong and worked in the Barwon South West regional office for some time, before taking on an acting principal’s role at the small Beeac Primary School for nine months while the principal was on leave.

He then retired from the Education Department and, after several months, saw the Dubai position advertised and successfully applied for the position. For the time being, Andrew enjoys the challenge of living and working in the Middle East and will wait until his next contract expires before he decided what to do next.

As of 2009, there are 79 public schools run by the Ministry of Education that serve Emirates and expatriate Arab people as well as 145 private schools. The medium of instruction in public schools is Arabic with emphasis on English as a second language, while most of the private schools use English as their medium of instruction. Most private schools cater to one or more expatriate communities.
Talent breeds success

SKILLS WEEK
TIME TO ACT

Sarah Sharples

BETTER skills equal a better life for individuals and a better nation for us all. That’s the equation the federal government hopes to hammer home during National Skills Week 2012.

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He said the government was partnering with employers through the National Workforce Development Fund to help train new employees and upskill existing workers.

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“We want to make sure Australians from all walks of life are able to maximise their potential to participate in the workforce and share directly in our continuing prosperity.

“The opportunities are endless,” he said.

**SPECIAL WEEK**

- In its second year, the week is designed to highlight the huge variety of opportunities and careers available through vocational education and training.
- An additional 2.4 million workers will be needed with qualifications at certificate III or higher by 2015, says Skills Australia.
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Passion for trade

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By BRIDGET COOK

A PUBLIC meeting will be held next week to make local schools’ concerns about budget cuts to TAFE funding loud and clear.

The secondary school Education Coalition, for the outer sub-region of the southern metropolitan region, called the meeting after they met last month to discuss the implications of the recent changes to the funding of TAFE, VET, VCAL and related programs.

As a consequence of the State Government’s cuts, funding has been reduced to 80 per cent of courses across the TAFE sector, with training in hospitality, business, sport, retail and process manufacturing all affected at Chisholm.

Hampton Park Secondary College principal David Finnerty said the group discussed the implications the TAFE funding cuts would have for students' pathways and sense of well-being.

“While there was general recognition of the quite demanding economic environment currently facing Victoria, there was equally expressed a grave concern as to the potential, long-term impact for our children, of the recently announced drastic reduction to TAFE funding, identified in the Victorian State Budget,” he said.

In the outer south region, 33 per cent of Year 12 completers go on to vocational training.

Mr Finnerty said the reduced number of courses due to budget cuts would markedly limit pathways and opportunities from school to TAFE, university and into positive economic participation.

“Often students from lower socio-economic areas make effective use of these pathways,” he said. “Fewer courses and site closures will increase student disengagement. This will result in poor outcomes for the individual, as well as having long-term negative implications for the state economy.”

Mr Finnerty said they also feared the TAFE funding cuts would affect VET (Vocational Education and Training) provisions in schools.

VET in the VCE or VCAL allows students to include vocational studies within their senior secondary certificate. VET provision is compulsory in VCAL to comply with the Industry Specific strand,” Mr Finnerty said. “Our information is that there will now be reduced access to courses and at significantly higher cost.

“There is significant concern that access to a variety of certificates and an increased pressure on available spaces will further marginalise students who would otherwise benefit from the VCAL option.”

A spokesman for the Higher Education and Skills Minister Peter Hall said rather than cutting funding, the government announced in May’s state budget an extra $1 billion over the next four years for the state’s training system.

“Much of this money 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,” he said. “The government is increasing subsidies in these important areas, in which TAFEs traditionally have a very strong market share, while reducing subsidies in areas of oversupply or that don’t necessarily lead to positive employment outcomes, such as fitness training and many lifestyle courses.”

The Education Coalition has called the public meeting 23 August at 7pm at River Gum Performing Arts centre, Hampton Park Secondary College.

Mr Finnerty encouraged interested people to attend the meeting.
Skills breed success

TRAINING FOR A BETTER LIFE

Sarah Sharples

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Tertiary Education and Skills Minister Chris Evans is urging people to train today for the jobs of tomorrow.

Picture: KYM SMITH
PRAHRAN

Community joins battle to keep campus open

PAST and present students, teachers, traders and residents are fighting to keep Swinburne University's Prahran campus open.

More than 120 people attended a meeting about the future of the university's Prahran campus on August 5. Former Swinburne executive director of educational development, Judy Bissland, said five action groups were formed to rally to keep the campus open for TAFE.

"We've also organised petitions to the Legislative Assembly and Legislative Council, the vice-chancellor and the Stonnington Council to try to restore funding and to ensure the campus remains open," Ms Bissland said.

The Prahran campus's future is uncertain following announcements the National Institute of Circus Arts will become a private education provider and the Faculty of Design will be relocated from Prahran to Hawthorn.
SCHOOL FUNDING

It’s the same old lesson – privilege wins every time

It appears likely that a trifecta of victories for narrow self-interest is about to be complete ("Private schools to get more funding", August 20).

Big Mining was able to defeat the very sensible proposal of the Henry tax review for a reasonable portion of profits from mining the resources owned by all Australians to be returned to those owners.

Big Olympics was able to defeat the equally sensible proposals of the Crawford report that correctly identified health and fitness benefits through greater funding of grassroots sport.

Big Private Schooling appears likely to have succeeded in turning back the fair proposals from the Gonski review to address the alarming lack of equity in educational outcomes in Australia. Other countries, including Finland, South Korea and Canada, have successfully established high achievement and high equity educational systems. Finland has no private schools and is consistently a podium finisher in educational achievement.

Is this a bit of preannouncement softening up of public education advocates to prepare us for a response to Gonski that will not be as bad as first reports, or is Gonski really off the table?

When Menzies introduced funding for science laboratories and libraries, the richest schools benefited most because they could afford to build bigger and better and could afford to pay more staff. This advantage was compounded when Commonwealth capital grants for new classrooms began as the richest schools could buy expensive real estate to expand and build new wings then pick up the extra per-capita grants for their increased student population.

Now, when the Gonski report has given some hope for a different and fairer system of funding, the Gillard government says it will increase funding to every independent school.

What kind of nation are we promoting?

Australian culture including the benefits, customs, values and belief systems along with their individual responsibilities within the Australian society.

Courses associated with such matters should be handled by government-approved teachers, be examinable, and passes in these subjects be mandatory for progression to higher education. Failure to include these courses within the private school education sector should be an absolute bar to any further funding.

The Prime Minister seems very keen to indicate, as a matter of priority, that the government will bestow more government funding on the private school sector before the government’s full official response to the Gonski report.

However, the government does not seem to demand anything other than some well-worn nebulous comments about improved performance.

It is fundamental that any education system in Australia with government funding attached ensures that all students have a deep understanding of the

Many will leap for the equality in funding which will see all students funded alike from federal coffers.

But true equity would ration- alise needs from both students and school facilities and apply funding accordingly.

What was the point of Gonski’s review?

Australian culture including the benefits, customs, values and belief systems along with their individual responsibilities within the Australian society.

Courses associated with such matters should be handled by government-approved teachers, be examinable, and passes in these subjects be mandatory for progression to higher education. Failure to include these courses within the private school education sector should be an absolute bar to any further funding.

The Prime Minister seems very keen to indicate, as a matter of priority, that the government will bestow more government funding on the private school sector before the government’s full official response to the Gonski report.

However, the government does not seem to demand anything other than some well-worn nebulous comments about improved performance.

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