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WELCOME
This first edition of i.research for 2003 presents a brief précis of current international and national news while focussing on reports and articles that further our understanding of some of the debates that occupied our time in 2002.

Included in this issue is a summary of the current debates surrounding the release of the White Paper – The Future of Higher Education which sets out plans for reform in universities and HE Colleges in the United Kingdom. Some of the proposed changes will sound familiar in the context of information leaks that have found their way to the Australian public as the federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, prepares us for the outcomes of the Review of Higher Education.

We also review debates over strategic directions in VET and the international arena. Reports of studies into the influence of socio-economic status on access and participation in education are reviewed. In addition we report on a new study in the schools sector to develop approaches that considerably depart from the value-free curriculum, as we know it.

We hope that you will find the information in this edition both useful and relevant. Attached is an evaluation form and your feedback would be very much appreciated.

Enjoy!

NATIONAL NEWS
A synthesis and round up of current events in Australia relevant to the work of the postsecondary education sector.

Specialisation Centres Get Going
Following on from the Victorian Ministerial Statement on Knowledge and Skill For The Innovation Economy, around $5m has been allocated to the establishment of fifteen specialisation centres, and two feasibility studies across a broad range of training and further education activities.

All of the centres are to deliver training in 2003, although a number will have a strong development focus as well. The International Centre of Graphic Technology at RMIT is one such centre.

Two centres and the two feasibility studies are in 'new and emerging areas' identified as strategically important in the Ministerial statement: advanced manufacturing, environmental technology, biotechnology, and activities linked to the synchrotron.

Other centres include Employment Skills Centre for Culturally and Linguistically Diverse communities (AMES), Sustainable Energy (Central Gippsland) and Food Processing (Goulburn Ovens).

Some centres will develop new specialised courses, and to delivery these flexibly including Environmental Building Design (Holmesglen), Transport and Distribution (VUT) and Creative Arts and Design (Gordon).

The report can be downloaded at: http://www.otte.vic.gov.au/ettenews/issue12.htm#article 6
Nelson's Plan Faces Tough Test in Senate

Adapted from Gerard Noonan and Aban Contractor, February 21 2003

As reported in the Sydney Morning Herald recently, the federal Education Minister, Brendan Nelson, has presented his long-awaited university reform package to cabinet. However there are still challenges to overcome in the budget process and difficulties in gaining Senate support.

Dr Nelson's Crossroads package frees the stronger universities to charge higher fees for popular courses and introduces a new loans system to allow students to repay the debt. But it falls short of the "big bang" reforms of total fee deregulation and commercial-style loans which his predecessor, Dr David Kemp, unsuccessfully took to Cabinet in 1999.

In fact, Kemp style proposals may have been too much for the senate to bear. Labor, the Democrats, the Greens and independent Meg Lees, with 38 votes between them, have already indicated they will oppose higher fees borne by students. But One Nation's Len Harris and two other independents, Tasmanians Brian Harradine and Shayne Murphy, are yet to declare their hands.

The Government, with 35 senators, needs four more to amend the legislation that would allow universities to charge students more each year for a degree.

Dr Nelson's blueprint for the higher education sector will contain some sweeteners: more money for disadvantaged students, regional universities and indigenous education. In addition, it will increase the amount graduates will be allowed to earn before they must begin repaying their higher education contribution scheme (HECS) debt.

And for the not-so sweet? The Government has proposed a measure to link research funding with a commitment by academics to sign a no-strike employment agreement. It has also proposed to lift the 25 percent cap on the number of full-fee paying Australian students allowed to enter university with lower scores than their peers and offers them loans at full rates of interest.

In the past, Senator Harradine has voted with the Labor senator turned independent, Mal Colston, to allow the Government to introduce changes to the original single-level HECS fee.

If the Government classifies the University of Tasmania as a regional university in the new package, entitling the state to more money, it will put tremendous pressure on senators Harradine and Murphy to cross the floor.

According to the Sydney Morning Herald, Senator Harradine said he was waiting to see the package. But he wanted to ensure that it addressed the issue of costs and levels of debt faced by students, and that it did not find more money by charging students extra fees.

Cabinet has referred the Nelson package to the Expenditure Review Committee. The universities, through the Australian Vice Chancellors Committee and student and staff organisations, have been calling for a $1 billion rise in federal funding to the sector.

An Overview - Higher Education Report for the 2003 to 2005 Triennium


The funding report has three main purposes:

- To provide an overview of the higher education sector in 2002, including new Government policies and initiatives and recent developments in the sector;
- To provide a review of the performance of higher education institutions in delivering student places and other Commonwealth-funded outcomes in 2002; and
- To provide information on the allocation of funding for the 2003-2005 triennium.

The Report highlights participation and institutional performance. Total student places increased 6.3% from 2001 to 2002.

The shifts in the composition of the student population are small, but nonetheless significant. HECS-liable undergraduates comprise 61% of all enrolments (down from 65% in 2001), domestic postgraduate students comprise 17% (up from 16%) and international students comprise 18% (up from 15.5%).

A 14.6% increase in postgraduate coursework enrolments is attributed by the Government largely to the introduction of the Postgraduate Education loans Scheme (PELS), an income-contingent loan for fee-paying postgraduate coursework students. In 2002, the government loaned $49m to students under this scheme.

Participation by equity groups as a percentage of the domestic higher education population has generally remained static or fallen slightly over the past decade, although raw numbers have increased.

Participation by Indigenous Australians has increased substantially since 1991, but dropped by 8% in 2000.
There was a small increase in 2002, and Indigenous students now comprise 1.2% of the domestic student population (relative to a population value of 2.5%).

Universities were overenrolled by 32,700 students (8.3%) in 2002.

The report describes achievements in quality assurance mechanisms, including the audits conducted by the Australian Universities Quality Agency in 2002. The Course Experience Questionnaire (CEQ) continues to show high levels of overall graduate satisfaction (89% in 2002, compared with 90% over each of the preceding two years). It forecast that amendments to the Graduate Skills Assessment instrument will be trailed in 2004.

In the report DEST draws upon an analysis of universities’ published 2001 financial statements to provide an overview of the financial state of the higher education sector. This analysis focuses on liquidity and financial stability; and revenue and expense activity. The main problem with DEST’s financial analysis is that it completely masks significant differences between institutions.

**Projections:** Despite the positive analysis of sectoral finances as a whole, DEST identifies priority areas for universities to focus on in relation financial management. These include:

- continuing to diversify revenue sources,
- improving understanding of costs and reporting of financial information,
- improving the evaluation, selection and implementation of AMS-style systems
- risk management in association with new commercial ventures and the expansion of fee-paying student numbers; particularly in relation to franchising arrangements
- planning and management of infrastructure maintenance and capital expenditure programmes (a recognition of increasing levels of expenditure in these areas)
- effective commercialisation of intellectual property

In relation to research the report notes the continued ‘capping’ of institutional gains under the Research Training Scheme (RTS) and International Grants Scheme (IGS) at 5% with surplus funds being redistributed to institutions incurring the highest proportional losses; and the Regional Protection Scheme which provides additional funds to regional universities to offset losses under the IGS and RTS. Both of these issues will be examined and reviewed in 2003.

Under *Backing Australia’s Ability*, universities will receive an additional $376m between 2002 and 2006. The Report notes that under the scheme, the number of Australian Postdoctoral fellows has doubled, the average size of ARC Discovery and Linkage Grants has increased substantially over the life of the project, success rates under the Discovery program have increased from 21.1% in 2001 to 25.8% for 2003 and in Linkages from 44.6% to 49.2%.

The full report is available at:

For a more detailed summary please email ircu@rmit.edu.au

**National Science ‘Stocktake’ Commences - Science ‘Mapping’ Reference Group Announced**

DEST MEDIA RELEASE 11 February 2003

The federal Education Minister has announced membership of the reference group charged with overseeing the mapping of Australia’s science and innovation activities across the public and private sectors. The 17 members have been drawn from across industry and science and include some of Australia’s research and innovation leaders.

The mapping exercise will identify key strengths and weaknesses – highlighting those areas in Australia’s science and innovation landscape that should be maintained and developed as well as noting any gaps which need to be addressed.

The project, an Australian first, was announced by the Prime Minister in November last year. The Chief Scientist, Dr Robin Batterham, will chair a Reference Group that will advise on the study’s scope and methodology and provide draft and final report guidelines. The mapping exercise will cover key elements of the innovation process including:

- Australia’s ability to generate ideas and undertake science and related research and development;
- the commercial application and utilisation of research and the frameworks which support it; and
- the development and retention of relevant skills for science, innovation and enterprise.

National Research Priorities
On 5 December 2002 the Prime Minister announced four new national research priorities and their associated priority goals:

- An Environmentally Sustainable Australia;
- Promoting and Maintaining Good Health;
- Frontier Technologies for Building and Transforming Australian Industries; and
- Safeguarding Australia.

All research and research funding bodies of the Commonwealth will be expected to participate in implementing the priorities to the extent that it is consistent with their mandates or missions.

DEST reports that implementation of the priorities will be driven by the research community who will advise the Government on the best way to proceed. Commonwealth agencies will be developing plans outlining how they propose to implement national research priorities and will submit them to Government by May 2003.


University Places Must Be Addressed
AVCC media release, 4 February 2003

The Australian Vice Chancellors' Committee (AVCC) has put forward a comprehensive package of reform for consideration by the Federal Government in relation to increasing student places and improving flexibility for universities to ensure that areas of highest demand are best met. Meeting recently in Canberra for the first time this year, the Board reaffirmed its stated position on the availability of student places, which they said must be coupled with the maintenance of quality outcomes.

AVCC President, Professor Deryck Schreuder, said that whilst it was important to note that not all of those prospective students who apply would be eligible to study, the issue of ‘unmet demand’ did require serious attention as part of the Federal Government’s Review process.

"While the AVCC has previously published national aggregate figures of 'unmet demand', the State-by-State breakdown does highlight the unsustainable situation the sector finds itself in, particularly if it is to meet the demands placed on it by a community which is calling for more nurses, doctors or teachers and the like.

In its submission to the Review of Higher Education, the AVCC outlined a case for the total number of funded places available to increase each year from 2004 to create an additional 20,000 by 2007.


National strategy for VET 2004-2010: Shaping Our Future
A collaborative national effort is shaping the future of vocational education and training (VET) in Australia. State, Territory and Commonwealth Ministers responsible for VET have agreed to the development of a national VET strategy for 2004-2010 to meet the future skill needs of the nation.

Key elements are:

- a consultation discussion starter, Shaping our Future is open for comment.
- 25 regional forums in rural, regional and metropolitan centres during
- a formative evaluation of A Bridge to the Future - Australia’s current national strategy which runs until the end of 2003 - and an environmental scan;
- consultations with many and varied Australians, including people in industry, regions, communities, training providers and a cross-section of learners, State and Territory training leaders and government agencies at all levels.

The new national strategy for 2004-2010 is expected to be considered by Ministers in June 2003. For further information please contact Allan Ballagh at Allan.Ballagh@rmit.edu.au

Copies of the strategy papers are available at:


China leads growth in international students to Australian universities

The number of students from China studying at Australian universities has grown by 44 percent over the last year according to the latest statistics on international students.

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Singapore, Hong Kong and Malaysia. And in onshore enrolments at Australian universities, China is now Australia’s largest market for international students.

The recent strong growth in the number of Chinese, Indian and Malaysian students studying in Australian universities is consistent with the findings of IDP’s recent research, *Global Student Mobility 2025*. It predicted international demand for Australian higher education will increase nine-fold over the next two decades, with China, India and Malaysia driving much of this demand.

For more information see: http://www.idp.com/aboutidp/mediacentre/november2002/article887.asp

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**A single point of entry into the VET Sector**

Australia’s first vocational education and training portal, www.training.com.au, will be launched in June 2003. The portal will provide a seamless service entry point for Australian businesses and enterprise registered training organisations (RTOs) with services progressively expanding to all RTOs, learners and the general community.

The driver behind the development of the portal was the need for a solution to navigation and transaction difficulties between clients and the national training system.

The portal will provide a seamless service entry point for Australian businesses and enterprise registered training organisations (RTOs) with services progressively expanding to all RTOs, learners and the general community.

Further information about the portal is available from Suzanne Flynn at ANTA.


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**University of Technology Sydney Development Revolutionises Online Assessments**

UTS Students are entering a new era of comprehensive online assessments for their assignments with the introduction of revolutionary software that supersedes the handwritten - and often cryptic - assessment notes of the past.

Lecturer in Visual Communication Darrall Thompson's Online Criteria Based Assessment (OCBA) program appears to have won support from students and staff alike following several pilot studies conducted in the Faculty of Design, Architecture and Building (DAB).


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**VALUES EDUCATION IN SCHOOLS**

4 December 2002 MIN 255/02

Late in 2002 the Federal Minister of Education, Science and Technology announced that 71 schools across Australia would receive Federal Government grants of up to $7,000 for innovative projects to encourage the development of values such as tolerance, trust, respect and courtesy in their students.

The Values Education Study, conducted on behalf of the Department of Education, Science and Training will result in schools sharing approaches to incorporating values education into their everyday curriculum.

The impetus for the move away from ‘value-free’ education in the schools sector is evident in the Minister’s statement;

“More than ever, students need the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice and accept responsibility for their own actions”.

This move is not a surprising one in the context of increasing global conservatism in government. Immediately there are many implications for tertiary education that come to mind, if this initiative captures the minds of policy makers. For now, we can look at international examples, such as education policy changes in South Africa, to shed some light on possible future agendas. The South African government, in the interest of using the education sectors as explicit tools for nation building, require tertiary institutions to demonstrate how a prescribed set of Nation-wide values are exemplified in graduate attributes. Universities are held to demonstrate the integration of these values as part of performance funding.

The case study reports, to be completed by the middle of 2003, will contribute to the development of a national framework for values education in Australia.

Curriculum Corporation will incorporate findings from the school action research case studies in the development of its Values Education Study Report to the Commonwealth in June 2003.

The full list of schools to receive grants is attached. Further information about the study is available from the website: www.curriculum.edu.au/values
World Business Council for Sustainable Development – Post Johannesburg developments

Finance Sector makes a difference

A statement, signed by the Chairmen and CEO’s of 11 leading financial services companies, was released in Johannesburg at the World Summit for Sustainable Development in recognition that the financial sector has an important role to play in advancing the world towards sustainability. In the report, they highlighted several areas of focus for the continuing financial sector project: integrating sustainable development, promoting sustainable thinking, exploring responsibilities and influences, and improving trust and transparency.

For more information see:
http://www.wbcsd.org/newscenter/media.htm

New Offshore Brand For Australia’s $5 Billion International Education Industry

9 December 2002, DEST

In late 2002, DEST launched a new campaign for the marketing of Australian education and training overseas.

‘An education experience that makes a real difference’ is the key message that underpins the new brand that will attempt to distinguish Australian education and training from its competitors offshore.

Education and training is the third largest services export, and is now worth around $5 billion to Australia’s economy – more than wool and approaching wheat in terms of export income.

Australia has the third largest number of international students of English speaking nations, with some 240,000 students studying with Australian learning institutions last year. This number has the potential to almost double over the next decade.

International education is a major contributor to tourism income – each student studying in Australia has on average four visits from family during their stay.

The new brand has been developed following a major study completed this year by Australian Education International (AEI). This research revealed that international students are looking for a challenging education, with status. They are also looking for an education that gives them the freedom to grow as a person.

These results have led to a broadened image for Australian education and training to encompass all three elements: freedom, challenge and status.

The logo will be available for use by Australia’s registered international education providers to build recognition of Australia in their own markets. This will be done through Australian Education International (AEI), the Commonwealth Government’s international education network.

The visual elements of the brand can be seen on the Commonwealth Government website for international students, studyinaustralia.gov.au The research report Positioning Australian Education and Training for the Future is available through the AEI web site aei.dest.gov.au

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

UK White Paper - The Future of Higher Education

The UK’s Secretary of State for Education and Skills released the White Paper "The Future of Higher Education".

The paper sets out the Government’s plans for radical reform and investment in universities and HE colleges. It includes proposals for changes in the student finance system and plans for making higher education more accessible to more young people.

Selected highlights:

Fees and Funding
- Higher limit for tuition fees, up to £3,000
- Universities set own fees
- Scrapping of up-front fees
- Introduction of Graduate Contribution Scheme

Renewed focus on teaching and learning
- Teaching to become more central funding criteria
- The right of the title ‘university will be made dependent on undergraduate degree awarding power (and therefore quality of teaching)
- Development of employer focussed two-year degrees (akin to Associate Degrees recently discussed in the Australian context)

Research
- Increased expenditure for science and research
- Dedicated capital stream for development infrastructure
- More funding to research intensive universities

Access and Equity
- ‘Access regulator’ to ensure wider intake
- Additional funds for students from disadvantaged backgrounds
- Re-introduction of equity grants and expansion of loans schemes

As has been well signposted by leaks and official releases in advance of the White Paper, the key proposal is for increased flexibility in fee-setting, along similar lines to those proposed by the AVCC in Forward From the Crossroads.

The preamble to the White Paper reveals that the UK is facing many of the same problems with its higher education sector as Australia. However where the White Paper departs from Australia’s education reform agenda is in a commitment by the UK Government to new public investment in education and training. No such commitment is likely from the federal Minister in Australia.

The White Paper has received the usual mixed reactions. Unions, students and staff have condemned the proposed fee increases, and the Government is likely to meet strong opposition from backbenchers in relation to these measures. There has been some criticism of the various proposals regarding students from disadvantaged backgrounds, mainly on the grounds that they do not go far enough.

While briefly mentioning part time students, the White Paper fails to address life long learning issues for students. In addition, the impetus placed on the further education sector to provide short cycle higher education may in fact result in a move away from the advancements made in vocational education and training in that sector.

The White Paper can be downloaded at:

US Urged to Form Strategy to Lure Students From Abroad

A report released by the Association of International Educators states that colleges in the United States, along with the federal government, must work harder to recruit international students. This is due to the greater competition from many other countries for top applicants and the political effects of September 11 – according to The Chronicle. As the Australian Prime Minister secures our position relative to the U.S., we too may need to consider strengthening our collective national resolve to maintain the current growth in international enrolments.

The report In America's Interest: Welcoming International Student was written to confront what was seen as a lackadaisical approach to foreign-student recruitment by American colleges and government agencies. Visa issues, lack of a coherent recruitment plan, and the high cost of American education all pose barriers for students from abroad, said the report.

Over the past 20 years, the United States saw its share of the international student market dip from 40 percent to 30 percent. Meanwhile, other English-speaking countries such as Britain and Australia have increased in popularity among those wishing to study outside their homeland.

The report urges the US departments of State, Commerce, and Education to coordinate efforts to attract and keep international students. In addition, it calls on the government to improve visa screening to enable students to come here to study without sacrificing security concerns.

The recommendations of the task force, include:
- A recruitment strategy is needed that specifies the roles and mandates of the Departments of State, Commerce, and Education, and provides coordination of the efforts of these federal agencies
- Immigration laws must be updated to reflect twenty-first century realities
- Creative partnerships among stakeholders including government, higher education, foreign governments, and the business community are needed to increase financial aid opportunities for international students
- A marketing plan should be developed that sends a clear, consistent message about U.S. higher education

The report may be accessed at:
http://www.nafsa.org/content/PublicPolicy/stf/inamericasinterest.htm

Italy’s University Rectors Resign en masse to Protest Lack of Funds

Thursday, December 12, 2002

The next story is of interest in the light of relatively more sedate reactions to education reform in both the UK and Australia. For the first time in Italy’s history, all 77 of the country’s university rectors resigned to protest projected budget cuts that they say threaten the future of higher education in Italy.

The resignations were announced at a news conference in Rome by Piero Tosi, chairman of the Association of Italian University Deans. He said Italian universities are facing imminent crisis because of government neglect.

At issue was the government’s proposal to cut the allocation to universities by more than $202-million in 2003, while the rectors are demanding that spending
on higher education equal or exceed last year's $6.3-billion. Protests and student strikes had been continuing for several months.

The Italian Prime Minister, Silvio Berlusconi, delivered tax cuts at a time when the economy is contracting. The rectors say that unless government support for higher education is restored to this year's levels, they cannot guarantee basics such as utilities and salaries.

**PUBLICATIONS, REVIEWS AND REPORTS**

A regular round-up noting and reviewing recent publications, and reporting on interesting conferences

**University Resourcing: Australia in an International Context**

The Productivity Commission has released its research report on resourcing of Australian Universities. This report contains comparable information on the resourcing of higher education institutions in Australia and other countries.

It was commissioned by the Commonwealth Government as an input to the Review of Higher Education.

The draft version of the report was published in September 2002 and RMIT University attended the Productivity Commission forum on the draft report which was held in November 2002. The final version of the report was published in February 2003 and provides an overview of eleven Australian universities and twenty-six overseas universities.

Selected key findings:

- That a wide range of different funding and regulatory models can all successfully sustain a viable tertiary education sector (p.xiii);
- That there are two broad classes of universities: a relatively smaller group of "resource rich" universities, for example, Yale, Stanford and Pennsylvania, and a relatively larger group of "poorer" universities, which includes Australian universities and most of the overseas universities studied (p.xiii);
- That student fees are regulated in most countries (p.xiv);
- That supply of student places is regulated in most countries (p.xiv);
- That universities are engaged in a wide range of commercial activities (p.xvi);
- That demand for university education is increasing (p.1);
- That the market for university education is becoming more global (p.1); and,

**Commentary on the final version**

The report suffers from significant issues with respect to data comparability. The report should therefore only be viewed as broadly indicative and individual data in the report should in general not be used for comparison purposes. Indeed, the Productivity Commission itself acknowledges the shortcomings of the data and the associated analysis:

"Readers should not draw conclusions about relative performance from the comparisons contained in this report". (Productivity Commission, 2003, xi).

This caveat notwithstanding, the report does draw several broad conclusions for the university as a whole.

**References to RMIT University**

**University governance:** This section discusses a number of areas with respect to university governance. Key findings include:

- That universities are essentially self-governing;
- That universities are primarily required to provide higher education and nurture research;
- That university governance positions are increasingly being filled by executives rather than academics;
- That universities rely on funding from benefactors such as governments and private financiers of research;
- That governments expect universities to use public funds efficiently in order to contribute to social and economic well-being;
- That government's requirement on universities to pursue more market-focused research activity can lead to conflicts of interest;
- That governance covers a wide range of activities, including: good administration of assets; effective quality assurance; and, monitoring of the effectiveness of processes; and,
- That external oversight of universities is typically provided by governments or their agencies.

**University data:** This section provides a brief overview of the history of universities considered in the report as well as detailed financial and management information (including revenue, assets, staff and
student numbers). Data for RMIT University is presented for the period 1996 to 2001.

**AVCC response to the final paper**

The AVCC has released a media statement on the final paper which focuses on the report's discussion of "worsening class sizes" and the attendant "overcrowding of lecture theatres" this brings. The media statement states that the report supports the case for "a comprehensive reform package for the [university] sector".

**Further reading**

*Productivity Commission report on university resourcing*


*RMIT response to the Productivity Commission – draft report is available upon request from the Institutional Research Consultancy Unit (extn 5-6078).*

**Business Council of Australia Report: The Cost of Dropping Out.**

In January 2003, The Business Council of Australia released The report - The Cost of Dropping Out: The economic impact of early school leaving - highlighted the dangers to individuals and to Australian society as a whole when young people fail to complete education or training to at least Year 12 or equivalent.

The two most important factors in achieving this aim, identified by the BCA research, were to provide more flexible education system with a broader set of qualifications, and to better support individual students.

The Business Council of Australia commissioned a range of research to provide an understanding of the trends associated with young people leaving school early, the economic impacts of this situation and details of Government programs in place to address early school leaving. The report highlights the research findings with regard to the causes of early school leaving.

- Australia’s rate of early school leaving has not improved over the last decade;
- Each year, an additional 8,000 young Australians will leave school before completing Year 12 or the equivalent without any significant prospect of ever finding permanent and/or full-time work; and
- The overall cost to the Australian economy if the current rate of early school leaving continues will total nearly $2 billion a year by 2020.

The report can be downloaded at:


**Victorian Government’s response to the BCA Report**

According to an The Victorian Government is now implementing several initiatives which lead the way in the directions suggested by the BCA, including:

- The Victorian Government's target of 90% participation to Year 12 level.
- The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning, the new hands-on option for Years 11 and 12 students, gives practical work-related experience, as well as literacy and numeracy skills and the opportunity to build personal skills that are important for life and work.
- VCAL sits alongside other opportunities supported by the Government including VET subjects for those students who choose to study a full VCE, and combining apprenticeships with school study. A Government election commitment in 2002 provided $3.5 million more funding for VET in Schools over 4 years.
- For individual students, the On Track program follows up student's progress and continues to provide them with support in the six months after they leave school. The Government has pledged $3.5 million to support the On Track program over 4 years.
- Local Learning and Employment Networks which assist young people to make a successful transition between education, training and employment.


**Socio-economic Background and Higher Education Participation: An analysis of school students’ aspirations and expectations**

Differential higher education participation rates between community groups are found in most developed nations. Imbalances in higher education participation remain a problem in Australia. This report is concerned with one under-represented group, people from lower socio-economic backgrounds.

 Australians from lower socio-economic backgrounds have roughly half the likelihood of participating in higher education as Australians from medium and higher socio-economic (SES) backgrounds. This degree of inequity has remained relatively stable for
over a decade, despite extensive equity initiatives across the system as a whole.

This report investigates the attitudes of senior school students towards higher education. It is based on data from a previous survey of over 7 000 Year 10-12 students in three states, Western Australia, New South Wales, and Victoria, conducted for the former Higher Education Council. The project surveyed students across all socio-economic strata and across urban, rural and isolated locations, allowing comparison of the differing aspirations and expectations of young people regarding education and the possibility of higher education.

The study reveals while the overall attitudes of young people towards secondary school are similar in many ways, their aspirations and intentions regarding higher education are strongly influenced by socio-economic background, gender, and geographical location. Socio-economic background is the major factor in the variation in student perspectives on the value and attainability of higher education.

When students were asked what they believed they actually would be doing once they completed school, the proportion expecting to go to university fell away. Higher socio-economic background students demonstrated stronger confidence in securing a path to university study than medium or lower socio-economic background (50% and 42% respectively). Sixteen per cent of students from lower socio-economic backgrounds reported they hoped to go to university but believed they would not be able to do so.

Confirming findings from Paying Their Way 2000, the perceived cost of higher education appears to be a major deterrent for students of lower socio-economic background. In addition, the effect of cost was considerably heightened for students living in rural areas. Overall, higher education is seen as less personally relevant by rural or isolated students, particularly those from lower or medium socio-economic backgrounds. The attitudes of rural and isolated students are primarily associated with socio-economic factors rather than geographical location.


The 'Digital Divide' Among Financially Disadvantaged Families in Australia

Despite figures suggesting that Australia is a high consumer of information and communication technologies (ICT), it is well documented that the pattern of this consumption is not spread evenly across the population; a 'digital divide' exists. This paper presents new data on the access and usage of ICT (computers and the Internet) by 3,404 households and 6,874 children from financially disadvantaged backgrounds.


ARTICLE: Higher Education Models of Change


This article illustrates the application of different models of change to higher education institutions, and review research to identify the explanatory power of these models. Models discussed include:

**Evolutionary** - portrays institutions as vulnerable in the face of external environmental factors, as evidenced in recent accountability and assessment movements. The research suggests that change tends to occur through differentiation and accretion whereby institutions respond to environmental demands by taking on additional responsibilities, thereby adding new structures to the original unchanged existing structure.

As the organisational structure differentiates the organisation is fragmented and coordination is usually lacking. A feature of this model is that organisational participants tend to interpret external environmental factors through internal mechanisms, therefore internal sensemaking creates the context and impetus for whether change will occur.

**Teleological** – portrays the institution as capable of planned behavioural responses and involves rational planning, reengineering, and restructuring. Themes that emerge from the application of this model for explaining change include mission, vision, strategic planning, focus on leadership, incentives, interrelationships among strategies, narrower efficiencies and cost emphases.

Kezar suggests that the unique characteristics of higher education are in conflict with the assumptions of teleological models, which assume a clear vision, unambiguous plans, a decision-making change of command, clear delegation of responsibility and rationality.

**Dialectical** – portrays the institution as a conglomerate of interest groups and power dynamics that shape decision making and behaviour. Key findings include the importance of interest group and power for creating change, persuasion and influence strategies, the significance of informal processes within change, the efficacy of persistence, the role of mediation and the manner in which politics protects interests and prevents change.

**Social Cognition** – portrays the institution as a cognitive system which can incorporate an ambiguous
environment. It includes models such as the learning organisation and illustrates that staff need to understand proposed change and the reasons for change, through processes of discussion, debate, reframing and sensemaking. Highlights cognitive re-orientation as critical to change processes, including single and double-loop learning, mental models, metaphors and language, institutional isomorphism and imitation and emulation.

Cultural – incorporates the role of history and tradition, symbolism as a strategy for creating change, institutional culture affecting change processes, the rarity of deep transformations and paradigm shifts, and irrationality and ambiguity as characteristic of the process.

The institutional culture not only to process of change but also the reasons for change. for example, Kezar suggests that in a bureaucratic culture change is a response to threats in the environment, whereas in a culture that values development, the need to advance people’s understanding would motivate change.

Kezar concludes that there is little evidence to suggest that there exists a 'culture of change', but that rather that change in higher education can best be explained through political, social cognition and cultural models.

Case Study Implementing Knowledge Management and Sharing at the Education Sector of the World Bank Group

This case study identifies the elements of organizational change that were enacted within the World Bank to facilitate knowledge management and sharing, and in particular it focuses on the Education Sector Thematic Network knowledge management initiatives and outcomes.

It also addresses the value added to the front line organizations responsible for the implementation of knowledge sharing.

http://www.worldbank.org/ks/articles/by_decry_or_choice.pdf

Expanding Higher Education through Private Growth

The Observatory on Higher Education has released a report entitled Expanding Higher Education Capacity Through Private Growth: contributions and challenges. The paper discusses the growth of private higher education internationally, explores issues of legitimacy, quality and the role of the state, and outlines some relationships between public and private institutions.

The paper consecutively considers three overlapping concerns:

- how private higher education enhances capacity;
- the main types of private expansion;
- challenges to this expansion.

The Observatory can be accessed from: http://www.obhe.ac.uk/

Innovation Scorecard for Australia

17 December 2002 MIN 269/02

The report, Backing Australia's Ability: Real Results Real Jobs, the Commonwealth Government's Innovation Report for 2002-03 highlights the Government's commitment to strengthening Australia's ability to generate ideas and undertake research, accelerating the commercial application of these ideas and developing and retaining Australian skills.

The 2002-2003 Innovation Report provides a summary of the programmes and projects supported by the Government's science and innovation initiatives including contributions from Backing Australia's Ability.

The report suggests that Australia's capacity for innovation will be further enhanced by initiatives this year which include:

- the further expansion of Australia’s research effort with additional funding of $76 million for Australian Research Council funded research (a total of $94.7 million is being provided in 2003 for more than 1,200 research projects);
- 25 Federation Fellowships, eight of which went to outstanding Australian researchers returning to Australia to lead world class research teams;
- four licences to invest more than $100 million in research spinning out of Australia’s universities and public sector research agencies and;
- the World Class Centre of Excellence in Information and Communications Technology which opened for business in the Australian Technology Park with $129.5 million of Commonwealth funding over five years.


Statistics 2002: Student Outcomes Survey

The 2002 Student Outcomes Survey (SOS) collected information about training outcomes for students who completed their training in 2001. The findings presented in this publication relate only to students who studied at TAFE institutes in Australia.
The survey covered students who were awarded a qualification (graduates) and students who successfully completed part of a course (module completers).

Highlights for 2002 include:

- 87% of TAFE graduates were employed or in further study after their course.
- 65% of TAFE module completers were employed after their training.
- 25% of graduates and 19% of module completers were employed in their first full-time job.
- 63% of graduates and 61% of module completers rated the overall quality of their TAFE training as 8 or more on a 10 point scale.
- 40% of graduates and 28% of module completers who were not employed before their training found work after their training.
- 75% of graduates and 56% of module completers reported that their training was highly or somewhat relevant to their current job.

For more information about RMIT’s SOS results please see http://www2.rmit.edu.au/departments/ircu/outcomes.php

A summary report with national comparisons published by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research is available at:

OECD Report: Models of Public Budgeting and Accounting Reform: Volume 2 Supplement 1

This report provides a comparative look at financial management systems from a family of systems point of view. Despite the similarity between the models there are significant differences that have evolved over time because of systemic reasons like national culture and values, administrative culture, and constitutional and organisational arrangements.

Two major families of accounting regimes are discussed: the Anglo-American model and the continental European model and its two subsets of the German tradition and the French tradition as well as how the accounting structure has evolved in China. These papers were originally delivered during a conference in Beijing in support of efforts to reform the public accounting structure in China.

This report is available online from SourceOECD (see RMIT library):
http://www.sourceoecd.org/content/templates/co/co_main_periodicals.htm?comm=oecdjourn0000


The OECD’s Quarterly National Accounts spans the last 14 years and contains a selection of the accounts most widely used for economic analysis: GDP by type of expenditure and by kind of activity, gross fixed capital formation by product and by sector, and components of disposable income are all shown at both current and constant prices. Financing of capital formation and GDP by cost structure at current prices are also provided.

This report can be downloaded at:

Comparative Survey on the Current and Future Use of ICT in Higher Education

The aim of this study was to investigate which scenarios were emerging with respect to the use of ICT in higher education and how future developments could be predicted. It applied an international comparative methodology and was carried out in the Netherlands, Germany, Norway, the United Kingdom, Australia, Finland and the USA.

The report can be downloaded from:
http://www.utwente.nl/cheps/documenten/ictrapport.pdf

Industry web sites

From time to time i.research will flag web sties and other useful resources. The following web sites have been included as useful for keeping abreast of industry developments.

Provided by the ANZ bank, ANZ industry briefs provide a useful, high level analysis of various industries. They are freely available on the web and are published periodically. Over the past 12 months, documents have been released covering retail, printing and publishing, motor vehicles, chemicals and plastics, cotton, dairy and tourism industries. Generally 2-3 pages, they provide a useful background.

This Federal Government site provides extensive information and links on a range of industries including emerging industries. The Federal Government Industry Action Agendas are accessible from this page, as is the range of government assistance.

http://www.sourceoecd.org/content/templates/co/co_main_periodicals.htm?comm=oecdjourn0000
packages available to industry. This site is an excellent referral site for industry capability.


Australian Industry Group Survey of Australian Manufacturing, December quarter 2002, provides comparative time series data for 12 broad industry groupings, also used by the Australian Bureau of statistics. It provides historical data and predictions for the next 12 months.

http://www.pwcglobal.com/Extweb/ncsurvres.nsf/0cc1191c627d157d8525600600609c037f5af46c7fe9da11585256ace006c7859/$FILE/manufacturing_survey_dec02.pdf

The Committee for Economic Development of Australia produces a magazine known as Australian Chief Executive. Follow this link and click on Australian Chief Executive to view, and download the pdf file. The most recent issue (October 2002) contains useful articles on globalisation, telecommunications and science.


COMING UP

It’s our intention to profile forthcoming conferences, events and tenders in this section of the newsletter. If you want to alert us to any such happening, contact us at ircu@rmit.edu.au

Reframing the Future 2003: The New Program

ANTA’s Reframing the Future program has been expanded to meet new and emerging needs in the national training system. The refreshed program covers staff development and change management for VET practitioners and Registered Training Organisations.

The program for 2003 was advertised in the Weekend Australian on 15th February. The new program, guidelines and application forms are available at http://reframingthefuture.net and applications close on Friday 14th March 2003. For further information please contact Liz Blackmore 08 8207 9655 or elizabeth.blackmore@regency.tafe.sa.edu.au

The Book Conference 2003 - Creator to Consumer in a Digital Age

22-24 April 2003, Cairns Australia

This conference will address a range of critically important themes relating to the future of the book, as well as its past and the state of the book industry, books and reading today.


TAFE in Rural Isolated Communities Conference (TRIC): TAFE as a Key Partner in Regional, Economic and Social Development

11-14 May 2003 Albury Wodonga

The TAFE in Rural Isolated Communities is a biannual conference dealing with the issues of TAFE delivery in rural and isolated communities. The TRIC conference is to be jointly hosted by Wodonga Institute of TAFE and TAFE NSW Riverina TAFE.


Call for Papers: The Information, Communication and Society Research Symposium

The conference is to be held at Balliol College and the Oxford Internet Institute, University of Oxford, on 17th-20th September 2003.

Full details of the conference and submission arrangements can be found at http://www.cira.org.uk/ics_call.htm

Call for Papers: The Australian Universities Quality Forum

The Joint Steering Group has announced an extended AUQF2003 to be held in Melbourne on 11-13 June 2003. The Forum has the overall theme ‘National Quality in a Global Context’.

The target audience for the Forum is primarily, but not exclusively, senior executives with the primary responsibility for quality assurance, chairpersons of Academic Boards, university staff working in the area of quality assurance and improvement, and interested government agencies.

The deadline for submission of proposals is 17 March 2003.

For further information:

Call for Papers: Public Good and Market Commodity Underpinning the Academic Enterprise

ATEM / AAPPA, Adelaide, South Australia, 28 September to 1 October 2003.

ATEM joins with AAPPA each year for their premier event, the three day Annual Conference. The Association for Tertiary Education Managers (ATEM) is the leading Association in Australia dedicated to best practice in tertiary education management. The Australasian Association of Higher Education Facilities...
Officers (AAPPA) is the Australasian Region of the International Association of Higher Education Facilities Officers (APPA) a body dedicated to maintaining, protecting, administering and promoting the quality of educational facilities.

Call for papers can be accessed at the conference web site:

ATEM website:

AAPPA website:
http://www.aappa.com/index.jsp

17th Australian International Education Conference
20 - 24 October 2003 Melbourne

Pre-Conference activities including IDP Client consultations, workshops and sector meetings will take place on Monday the 20th and Tuesday the 21st of October, with the main conference running from Wednesday 22nd to Friday 24th of October.

For more information on the 17AIEC, contact: Davina Park, Conference Manager, IDP Education Australia. Ph: +61 (0)2 8251 2721 or Email: davina.park@idp.com or go to the website for the 16th AIEC.

IN CASE YOU MISSED IT

New Secretary for DE&T: Jennifer Westacott commenced work as the Department’s new Secretary on 16 December 2002 after spending the previous 19 months as Director of Housing Victoria.

Jim Davidson has been appointed as the new Director of OTTE, replacing Kim Bannikoff who has taken up the role of Director, Office of School Education. Mr Davidson has a background in social administration and public policy.

After only less than a year with the Department of Education Science and Training, Dr Peter Shergold, AM, has been appointed to the position of Secretary of the Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet.

Wendy Jarvie has been appointed the Acting Secretary of the Department of Education, Science and Training.

Five new board members have been appointed to Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board and four have been reappointed for a further term. The five board members are Ms Magda Dodd (Portarlington), Mr Bill Forrest (North Carlton), Ms Cam Nguyen (Richmond), Mr Adam Smith (Mt Eliza) and Ms Margaret Wagstaff (Romsey). The four re-appointed board members are Mr Maurie Curwood (Warrandyte), Ms Jane Dewildt (Wodonga), Ms Vicki Mitsos, and Mr Warren Stooke (Ivanhoe).

The Institutional Research Consultancy Unit

The IRCU’s mission is to:

- Assist and contribute to informed decision-making
- Contribute to strengthening the efficiency and effectiveness of RMIT’s activities and programs
- Be proactive in the study and advancement of tertiary education
- Manage, share and create knowledge for the benefit of RMIT

The main function of IRCU is to coordinate the collection, organization and analysis of institutional data and other quantitative and qualitative information to support institutional management, operations, decision-making and planning functions of RMIT University. The IRCU is also engaged in applied educational research, performance measurement, evaluation and assessment; and is proactive in the study and advancement of higher education.

The IRCU Staff are:

Angel Calderon Head
Andrew Brion Business Analyst
David Garner Strategic Advisor - Industry
Ann Hornsby Executive Assistant
Josie Palermo Institutional Research Advisor
David Rutherford Strategic Economist
Neil Wentworth Institutional Research Systems Coordinator

The IRCU, along with the Quality Consultancy Unit, Statistics and Reporting, TAFE Centre of Excellence and the Planning Consultancy is part of the Planning Group.

Email ircu@rmit.edu.au

This issue was edited by Josie Palermo with additional contributions from, Angel Calderon and David Garner, David Rutherford and Julie Wells.

Please note that i.research can be accessed on the new Planning Portal / IRCU home
http://www2.rmit.edu.au/departments/ircu/ircu_home.php
Evaluation of the i.research newsletter

As part of the Institutional Research Consultancy Unit’s commitment to continually improving our performance, we would like you to take a few minutes to participate in this short evaluation survey. In 2002 we are intending to publish 8-10 issues of i.research. Your responses will be used to ensure that the i.research newsletter best meets its aims to:

- Disseminate information, analysis and environmental scanning relevant to RMIT’s work;
- Inform, promote and advance the work of RMIT.

1. How would you describe the way in which you read the newsletter?
   - Read all, cover to cover
   - Skim all, cover to cover
   - Read only articles of interest
   - Refer to it from time to time
   - Don’t read the newsletter

2. Overall, how useful is the newsletter?
   - Very Useful
   - Useful
   - Somewhat Useful
   - Not Useful

3. If you perceive the newsletter to be useful, please describe how the newsletter assists you in your role at RMIT:

4. How satisfied are you with the general quality and format of the newsletter?
   - Very Satisfied
   - Satisfied
   - Somewhat Satisfied
   - Not Satisfied

5. Please indicate which format you prefer for the newsletter (you may choose more than one option)
   - Current Format (pdf – on-screen view)
   - Word document
   - Web - Html (i.e. point and click)
   - Hard copy

6. Please indicate which characteristics would improve the usefulness of the newsletter (you may choose more than one option)
   - A shorter newsletter
   - A longer newsletter
   - More analysis of items and issues presented
   - Broader range of issues presented
   - Narrower range of issues presented

7. How often should i.research be issued?
   - 2-3 issues per year
   - 4-6 issues per year
   - 7-10 issues per year
   - more than 10 issues per year
8. How would you rate your satisfaction with the quality of items presented in each section of the newsletter, and how important is information in these sections to your role?

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9. Please nominate the best feature of the newsletter:

1. 

10. If you didn’t receive the newsletter, where would you acquire the information it currently conveys?

11. Please describe ways in which the i.research newsletter could be improved:

1. 

2. 

3. 

In addition to the newsletter, Institutional Research Consultancy Unit often issues environmental scanning (ES) alerts through Groupwise email.

12. Please describe the ways in which the ES alerts could be improved:

13. Any other comments:

Thank you for your participation.

Please return this form via email to ircu@rmit.edu.au or fax attention IRCU to 9925 9712. For further information please contact Josie Palermo on x54996.