



Monthly e-Newsletter – March, 2010

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EDITORIAL OF SORTS

Ah, dear AAIRies, you will have noted the kerfuffle about the My Schools website and thought it was just something to keep the school sector occupied. Then blow me down if the Deputy PM didn't announce last week that My Universities is coming. That'll be something to keep AAIRies entertained for a bit, I should think.

But wait! There's more. The Deputy PM made a delphic statement late last week when launching a new (and very good) tome from Skills Australia. She said: '...more than 1.7 million students and thousands of Australian businesses have a stake in the quality and transparency of the vocational education system. Because of the multitude of players involved and the complex funding arrangements in place, it is perhaps the most opaque of all the education sectors in the country. This must change. I am determined to empower unemployed people and workers to choose training options and workplaces that match their needs and circumstances. In coming months I will be announcing steps that will help shine a light on the performance and effectiveness of the sector.'

So the My VET website is on its way, perhaps? Her speech is here if you want to try reading the runes: http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_100305_121458.aspx

Hot AAIR!

It is with considerable pleasure, AAIRies, that I take this opportunity to introduce you to the new AAIR logo. (Orchestra plays the AAIR anthem, then drum roll)...



Not bad, eh?

The logo will grace the new AAIR website. We don't have a cyber-launch date yet, but it is getting closer. And you can expect a user friendly site with access to goodies for AAIRies that the current site configuration and design couldn't manage. We'll let you know when it's up and running. Yet another occasion to play the AAIR anthem. By the way, does anyone know what the AAIR anthem is?

Your contributions to the newsletter are always welcome. I aim to get the newsletter out 'around' the 5th of the month. But no guarantees.

Subject to space and relevance to members, the newsletter can run job vacancies and items on upcoming events. And always keen to include items you think will be of interest to others. Please feel free to contact me.

If you attended the 2009 AAIR Forum in Adelaide, AAIR membership was included in your registration fee. The newsletter comes to you as part of your membership. If you have received the newsletter and would prefer not to, email me and I'll scrub you from the distribution list. My email address is: rob@sharpwords.com.au

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

Managing Research for Impact: New Approaches to Research and Innovation Management

11-15 April 2010

Cape Town International Convention Centre, South Africa

This is the third conference of the International Organisation for Research Management Societies. The first was in Brissie in 2006. The conference themes include:

- Impact in the research institution
- Impact on innovation
- Impact on social and economic development
- Monitoring and evaluation for research and innovation excellence
- Developing the next generation of researchers

You've missed the early bird registration option, I'm afraid so you'll have to offer up a few more rand to get a name tag:

<http://www.technoscene.co.za/inorms2010/>

3rd Annual Widening Participation Research Conference

14-15 April 2010

Holiday Inn, Lime Street, Liverpool

The conference theme is 'Mainstreaming equity, opportunity and success in higher education'. Down Under, that's what we're talking about more and more. And Kerri-Lee Krause from the Griffith Institute for Education Research is beaming Up There by way of a virtual keynote address on being strategic in the first year. The curious thing about the programming is that it's a 24 hour conference, starting at midday on the 14th and finishing at a quarter past 12 on the 15th. A sort of speed conferencing idea. It goes like this:

- Day One: research-based keynote presentations from international and national leaders in the field, and research and evidence-informed paper sessions.
- Day Two: an international symposium examining in-depth institutional approaches to mainstreaming equity, opportunity and success in higher education and beyond.

The conference is organised by the Widening Participation Research Centre at Edge Hill University, and you will find all the details here: <http://www.edgehill.ac.uk/wpresearch/WPConferences.htm>

Group Training National Conference 2010: Skill2Work

14-16 April, 2010

Hilton, Adelaide

Just a brief mention again of this conference because the detailed program is now available here:

http://www.gtald.com.au/about_gtannual/national_conference/conferences/conf2010_Adelaide/conf2010.html

21st Century Learning Spaces Networking Event

5.00pm, 22 April 2010

Victoria University, City Convention Centre, Melbourne

Now pay attention because I don't want you to beetle off to Wellington for the evening. This is Victoria University in Melbourne, Australia. This an Education.au networking event and it's a school sector target audience. The program will cover:

- characteristics of new learners & their needs
- characteristics of new learning
- design principles for learning spaces
- the challenges with 21st century learning spaces & how to overcome them
- new technologies for 21st learning spaces
- the impact of 1:1 computing on contemporary learning spaces and environments.

An agenda fit for anyone in any education sector. Bowl along:

<http://educationau.edu.au/21st-century-learning-event>

WorldSkills Australia National Competition 2010

7-9 May 2010

Brisbane Convention and Exhibition Centre

Lots happening as usual, with competitions in everything from business services and floristry to hairdressing and welding. As if WorldSkills wasn't enough, the National Careers and Employment Expo will be held at the same time and place. And there's the Green Team which will (and I quote) 'liaise with Project Designers and Category Convenors to introduce real, relevant and financially viable sustainable initiatives to the WorldSkills Competition process while also calculating the ecological footprint of the Competition.'

This is an Australian pre-cursor to the International WorldSkills Competition in London – but that's not until October 2011. Brissie first: <http://www.worldskills.org.au/nationals.php>

Audit Director
Australian Universities
Quality Agency



AUQA is seeking an Audit Director to join a small group of staff, and play an important role in the conduct of quality audits of Australian universities and other institutions of higher education.

The Audit Director provides executive level support for audit panels, of which s/he is a member, liaises between the institution and the panel, advises the panel on AUQA procedures and drafts public audit reports. Audit directors also undertake various other AUQA activities, and often give presentations on quality matters, in Australia and overseas.

Experience in reading papers and digesting information & an ability to deal with both broad concepts & complex detail, will be required. Successful applicants should understand educational quality assurance systems, and are likely to have had experience in supporting committees. Audit Directors must be efficient, able to work under pressure, tactful but firm in guiding the audit panel, and able to write clearly and precisely.

The Australian Government is creating a new Tertiary Education Quality and Standards Agency (TEQSA) to incorporate the functions of AUQA & of other Australian quality bodies in higher education. TEQSA is expected to be operative from the beginning of 2011. Within the context of TEQSA, it is anticipated that AUQA's current cycle of audits, & the work described above, will continue through 2012, after which the role of TEQSA may be expanded.

Remuneration

Salary will relate to the appointee's knowledge and experience. An indicative figure for the total remuneration package is A\$120,000-140,000.

Applications close on Monday 22 March 2010.

More details are available at:

<http://www.auqa.edu.au/aboutauqa/news/articles/article.php?id=48>

Institutional Research: Informing Institutional Enhancement, Practice and Strategy

29th-30th June, 2010

Dublin City University

Another plug for this conference, tailor-made for AAIRies. Hosted by Dublin City University and the UK and Ireland Higher Education Institutional Research (HEIR) Network, the conference will explore the synergies between institutional research, strategy and quality enhancement within higher education institutions. Conference themes include:

- the role of IR in quality enhancement
- approaches to strategic planning and decision-making
- evidence-based decision-making: tools & methods
- institutional research & the student experience
- teaching & learning enhancement.

The conference website is here:

<http://www.dcu.ie/conferences/ir2010/index.shtml>

Australian Quality Forum: Higher Education

30 June-2 July 2010

Sofitel Gold Coast, Broadbeach

The conference theme is 'Quality in uncertain times', and no doubt there will be quite some focus on the advent of TEQSA. The program includes a pre-conference program for non-self-accrediting institutions. The call for papers is open until 31 March, so get cracking. The website is here:

<http://www.auqa.edu.au/auqf/2010/>

19th National Vocational Education and Training Research Conference 'No Frills'

7-9 July 2010

Central Institute of Technology, East Perth

No Frills hits the road again. And again, there's no registration fee. The call for papers is open until 16 April. The only keynote speaker confirmed so far is Trevor Gale, director of the National Centre for Student Equity in Higher Education at UniSA.

It's too early to register yet, but you might want to bookmark the conference website and drop in later this month to put your name down:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/trconf/trconf19call.html>

Senior Manager, Planning & Research

RMIT University

- Drive the University's Strategy
- Key leadership role
- Attractive remuneration package on offer

RMIT is a global university of technology based in Melbourne, with a commitment to and reputation for high quality professional and vocational education and research engaged with industry and community.

This is a pivotal role working with the Senior Management group to inform, develop and implement the University's strategic direction. Reporting to the Executive Director, Policy and Planning you will co-ordinate the Strategic and Business Plan process and support the university's planning and reporting framework. In conjunction with the Director, you will also lead the development of strategic intelligence, environmental scanning and policy advice to support executive and line management in strategic and operational decisions. This will require you to work across the University, building effective relationships internally at the college, executive and chancellery level, as well as engaging with key external stakeholders.

As a natural leader, you will have proven experience in leading business planning, ideally gained in a complex and changing environment in education, government or other service industry. Supported by outstanding analytical, influencing and negotiation skills you will have a track record of managing and delivering strategic change. You will be able to communicate and work effectively with internal and external groups by adopting an influential and collaborative style.

All applicants are required to address Key Selection Criteria.

For further information and to view a position description please refer to RMIT's website www.rmit.edu.au/employment quoting reference number 544392, or contact Robert Webster on +61 3 9925 9703.

Applications close Sunday, 14 March, 2010.

TAFE Development Centre

VET Professional Learning Events

The TAFE Development Centre, based in Melbourne, has a whole bunch of events planned for VET folks. Here's the bare bones:

- **18 March**
Lean Skills: A Culture of Lean
- **24 March**
Training Packages & AQTF Unpacked for VETiS Teachers
- **5 May**
RPL Explained! (Ideal for new teachers and assessors)
- **May 7**
WILL Power lunch for Women in Leadership and Learning (two hour session)
- **12 May, 11 August, 13 October, 17 November**
Critical Conversations on Transforming VET Practice: four x 2.5 hour critical conversation workshops for VET and Higher Ed practitioners.

That's a veritable cornucopia of professional learning opportunities. Go here for info about fees, locations and program details:

http://tafecentre.vic.edu.au/?page_id=5236

Institutional Management in Higher Education 2010 General Conference

13-15 September 2010

OECD Conference Centre, Paris

There's something odd about how this is billed. The website says: 'The 2010 event will take place from 13 to 15 September under the title 'Higher Education in a World Changed Utterly: Doing More with Less' in the prestigious setting of the OECD Conference Centre in Paris.' Well, I guess you can't do a No Frills conference in Paris. But a good time for Aussies to go at 1.5 euros to the dollar.

It's a wee bit early to have a program pinned down, but the general blurb has it that 'the conference will identify ways to achieve high quality outcomes at a time of increased demand and constrained resources. Innovative approaches to meeting the challenges of equity and efficiency will be examined. Governance, resources, technology, relevance and sustainability will be among the key themes.' More here:

http://www.oecd.org/site/0,3407,en_21571361_43541789_1_1_1_1_1,00.html

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Address #1

If you haven't had a close read of Julia Gillard's Address on 3 March to the Universities Australia (UA) Annual Higher Education Conference, you may want to invest a moment or two in doing so. Apart from the sensible promise of a My Universities website, there's nothing new here – but reaffirmation of the policy design and a little more air in the balloon. So we are assured, for example, that the government remains committed to bringing the national regulator for VET into the TEQSA tent by 2013. This is it:
http://www.deewr.gov.au/Ministers/Gillard/Media/Speeches/Pages/Article_100303_102842.aspx

2. Address #2

The chair of UA, Peter Coaldrake, took to the National Press Club podium on 4 March, while the Higher Education Conference was in swing. Coaldrake's speaking notes are on the UA website here, though if you can get a vodcast you'll be better off – the notes aren't an easy read:
http://www.universitiesaustralia.edu.au/documents/policies_programs/conference/national_press_club.pdf

3. Address #3

There is a vodcast of NZ PM, John Key, making a statement to Parliament on 9 February. If you want to skip the 20 minutes of vision, you can read his address at the same link. The speech lays out the government's policy goals and practical intentions, and there are two passages you might want to listen for/scroll down to – one on science and innovation, and later, one on education and skills.

One quote from the speech is worth musing on: 'We are concerned that ... there are a large number of tertiary programmes, particularly below degree-level, that have drop-out rates as high as 50 percent ... We simply must improve the value we get from our tertiary education investment, both on behalf of taxpayers and employers, and on behalf of the students who take these courses. So this year the Government will be progressing the policy changes needed to ensure that tertiary education providers provide courses that are relevant to the modern job market and that are of a consistently high quality.'

Key in the Beehive here:
<http://www.beehive.govt.nz/speech/statement+parliament+0>

4. No Gaps

'Mind the gap' is a long and interesting article by Rebecca Attwood in the 25 February edition of *The Times* higher ed supplement. It's a state of play assessment of equity outcomes, or widening participation as it's called in the Old Dart.

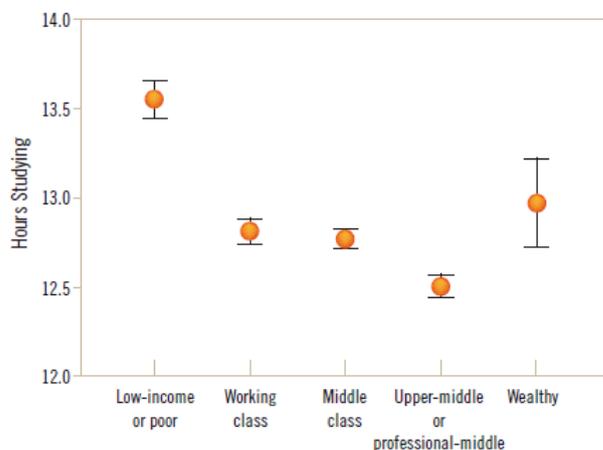
I suppose I left this article a little focussed on the funds the Commonwealth is putting into the Higher Education Participation and Partnership Program. I like the idea of this program, and I'm grateful for the thinking behind the report released by DEEWR last month: *Interventions early in school as a means to improve higher education outcomes for disadvantaged (particularly low SES) students*. It helps us sort out how to allocate some of these funds at the front end. The message from Attwood's article is simple: evaluate, evaluate, evaluate. And so we ought, because the money is valuable, and the intended equity outcomes worth our best shot:
<http://www.timeshighereducation.co.uk/story.asp?storycode=410531>

5. Getting engaged

In February the Center for Studies in Higher Education at UC Berkeley posted a report called *Engaged learning in a public university: trends in the undergraduate experience – report on the results of the 2008 University of California undergraduate experience survey*. The report comes out of the Center's Student Experience in the Research University Project.

Now I think there's a heap in here to get you thinking. Look at this, for example:

Figure 3.5 Student-Perceived Socioeconomic Class and time Spent Studying



Pay a visit to:
http://cshe.berkeley.edu/publications/docs/SERU_EngagedLearningREPORT_2010.pdf

6. Telling and selling science

Inspiring Australia: a national strategy for engagement with the sciences is a national strategy we've been in need of for some time. It's only about 50 pages really, assuming you don't want to wade through all the appendices. The report makes a plain argument for getting the word out about science in Oz (and when we talk science, we are including the social sciences, the humanities and the arts). The plain argument has regard to the plain fact that we are pretty good at science, and to stay that way we more people engaged with it.

The proposed national initiative for inspiring Australia about science has many parts, including one recommendation which reads: 'That a key focus of the national initiative should be raising awareness among young people of opportunities in science and research. The Australian Government's investment in schools, higher education and research should be harnessed to achieve this.'

The strategy has a number of parents, but is certainly a child of the Cutler Review and the government's response to Cutler – *Powering Ideas*. *Inspiring Australia* is here:
<http://www.innovation.gov.au/General/Corp-MC/Documents/InspiringAustraliaReport.pdf>

There's also a report from the UK, released in January, called *Science and the media: securing the future*. I'm not going to get around to reading this, at least in the short term, so I'm referring you to it sight unseen:
<http://interactive.bis.gov.uk/scienceandsociety/site/media/files/2010/01/Science-and-the-Media-Securing-the-Future.pdf>

7. A Thai view of higher ed

This World Bank report – *Towards a competitive higher education system in a global economy* – sounds like it's going to wax lyrical about higher ed everywhere. In fact, it's about higher ed in Thailand. I've had a look at a couple of chapters, mostly because I've got a weird interest in how higher ed hangs together from one country to another. The report offers a good overview. If you think we've got a challenge in finding the next generation of academics (and we have), it's a trifle beside the Thai dilemma on that front. And what about this: 'The male graduation rate was 20.8 percent compared to 33.5 percent for females.' If you're interested, here 'tis:
<http://siteresources.worldbank.org/INTTHAILAND/Resources/fullreport-socialmonitorresize.pdf>

8. Graduate attributes

From the ALTC comes *The B Factor: understanding academic staff beliefs about graduate attributes*. Based on data from 16 unis, the report tells us that things aren't brilliant out there, but there's reason to be optimistic they can be a whole lot better with some thoughtful planning and cajoling. There's handy stuff in here, like a mapping of variations in views about generic skills according to discipline.

Seems to me that the pressure is staying on for better, deeper, wider teaching and assessment of generic skills, and this is a good primer for those who have to respond:

<http://www.altc.edu.au/system/files/G17-638%20RMIT%20deLaHarpe%20BFactor%20graduate%20attributes%202009.pdf>

9. Research careers

The League of European Research Universities has released *Harvesting talent: strengthening research careers in Europe*. All I can lay hands on is the Exec Summary because it seems the full report isn't available from the website.

The Exec Summary is really just a page long, but an interesting page it is. For example: '...we must maximize the potential for high achievement and provide an attractive career framework. Realising the potential for high achievement depends upon:

- a research environment with a wide variety of researchers working on cognate topics, strong links with other disciplines in a cross-disciplinary setting, good international connections, cross-fertilisation of ideas from external researchers, and access to appropriate facilities.
- independence and responsibility at an early stage of a research career.'

At this link you can access the Exec Summary, or request the full report, or indeed look at a number of other documents that might tweak your interest:
<http://www.leru.org/>

10. British rules

No less than three newsletter readers (that's a record for a single issue) called my attention to the UK's changes to student visa rules, announced just as Oz was changing local rules. In the UK, it seems, it all about English language skills. One brief overview of what's happening in Britain is here:
http://www.businesswire.com/portal/site/home/permalink/?ndmViewld=news_view&newsId=20100207005027&newsLang=en

IT IS WRITTEN

Matthew Crawford is a physicist who put himself through uni working as a tradie, got a job leading a think tank and after a month or so thought – nah, I think I was meant to be a motorcycle mechanic. He unloads on the snobs who accord knowledge work higher status than the stochastic work that tradies do. He takes a forceful swipe at packaged and faddish ‘teamwork’ (think Ricky Gervais), comparing it with the élan common on a worksite. Occasionally the text is (deliberately?) offensive, but enough grist to keep me going.

‘A carpenter faces the accusation of his level, an electrician must answer the question of whether the lights are in fact on, a speed shop engine builder sees his results in a quarter-mile time slip. Such standards have a universal validity that is apparent to all, yet the discriminations made by practitioners of an art respond also to aesthetic subtleties that may not be visible to the bystander. Only a fellow journeyman is entitled to say “nicely done”. A judgement on the finer points can arise only within, and receives its force and justification from, a shared orientation toward the more basic functional ends that are captured by the objective standards of the practice. It is in doing the job nicely that the tradesman puts his own stamp on it. His individuality is not only compatible with, it is realized through, his efforts to reach a goal that is common.

‘His individuality is thus expressed in an activity that, in answering to a shared world, connects him to others: the customers he serves and other practitioners of his art, who are competent to recognize the peculiar excellence of his work. Such a sociable individuality contrasts with the self-enclosure that is implicit in the idea of “autonomy”, which means giving a law to oneself. The idea of autonomy denies that we are born into a world that existed prior to us. It posits an essential aloneness; an autonomous being is free in the sense that a being severed from others is free. To regard oneself this way is to betray natural debts we owe to the world, and commit the moral error of ingratitude. For in fact we are basically dependent beings: one upon another, and each on a world that is not of our making.’

- Matthew B Crawford, 2009, *Shopcraft as soulcraft: an inquiry into the value of work*. Camberwell, Australia: Penguin Books.

11. International student safety

The tremors that have shaken us in Melbourne when it comes to international student safety are analysed in a terrific report by the Institute for Community, Ethnicity and Policy Alternatives at Victoria University. *The community safety of international students in Melbourne: a scoping study* gives us a framework for thinking about what’s going on in our community. It’s not straightforward. That a third of international students say their safety has been threatened, and the threat came with a racist element, is more than enough reason to go into overdrive.

It’s a lengthy report and I’m afraid that in the face of other demands, I have but skimmed parts of it. Even so, I confidently commend it to you:

<http://www.vu.edu.au/sites/default/files/icepa/pdf/The%20Community%20Safety%20of%20International%20Students%20in%20Melb%20A%20Scoping%20Study.pdf>

12. Hong Kong’s Common Core

The University of Hong Kong has been good enough to lucidly explain the outcomes of its Undergraduate Curriculum Reform process which will introduce a four year undergrad degree in 2011. There’s a bit on this page, or linked to it, you’ll find worth following.

But I suggest you do follow one tab, and that’s the one labelled ‘Common Core Curriculum’. Now, as is always the case with a common core, one thing leads to a dozen others. But this looks like a very neat dozen indeed:

<http://tl.hku.hk/undergraduate-curriculum-reform>

13. Australian Universities Review

The latest edition of the NTEU’s *Australian Universities Review* has hit the cyberstands. Articles and authors are, as usual, eclectic and include:

- Export earnings from the overseas student industry: how much? Bob Birrell & Fred Smith
- Higher education’s role in ‘education for sustainability’, Kerry Shephard
- The frustrated career: casual employment in higher education, Lorene Gottschalk & Steve McEachern
- Ethics, ethical human research & human research ethics committees, Margaret Lindorff

You can download the February edition, or read it as an e-book, along with earlier editions if you are so minded, at:

<http://www.aur.org.au/index.html>

14. Workforce development writ large

Skills Australia never sleeps. Just in case you thought workforce participation, productivity and population change was taking a bit of a back seat to things like quality and equity, Skills Australia has released a magisterial report that puts them all up front. Launched last week by Julie Gillard, *Australian workforce futures: a national workforce development strategy*, is simply too big to capture in the confines of this newsletter note. While the weight of discussion is mainly on VET, the phrasing is frequently 'the tertiary sector' or 'higher education and VET'.

Skills Australia puts a price tag on its recommendations of \$10b between now and 2025 – so roughly \$700m a year. But the benefits from implementing a workforce development strategy are estimated at \$24b, so it's a pretty good return.

The focus is on how to make better use of skills in the workplace, so the lens for inspection isn't training supply. The better lens is enterprise capability and development. As the report says: 'We recommend governments leverage their influence to encourage workforce development in enterprises of all sizes, with a focus on small business. Government funding should also be used to link skills development with business innovation and growth. Skills Australia recommends stronger encouragement for tertiary education sector/ industry partnerships and the use of publicly funded programs like the EBPPP [Enterprise Based Productivity Places Program] as leverage to engage enterprises in workforce development. We also recommend the establishment of a national program of industry clusters/networks to address the collective skills and workforce challenges faced by enterprises in an industry sub-sector or region.'

I suspect you'll need to thumb your way through this one:

http://www.skillsaustralia.gov.au/PDFs_RTf/WWF_strategy.pdf

15. Raising PISA

The OECD has released a report titled *The high cost of low educational performance: the long-run economic impact of improving PISA outcomes*. The report reckons that it can quantify the effect on GDP growth of improved education performance is very close. Australia and New Zealand already do pretty well on PISA outcomes – PISA being the Programme for International Student Assessment. So the improvements for us under each of three

scenarios is modest. If, for example, we lifted the performance of all school students to a minimum 400 points on the PISA scale the GDP in Oz would lift (by 2090) about 250% in NZ and 200% in Oz. Very modest indeed, by comparison with the US, Italy and Portugal, each of which would pick up something in the order of 500-600%.

No surprise that NAPLAN scores (a centrepiece of the My Schools website) catch the attention of those with long term eyes – 2090 is the presumed lifespan of today primary schoolers. The study backs up the gathering push for improving adult literacy, language & numeracy skills – something the Skills Australia report mentioned above pushes into view once again. The OECD report is here: <http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/11/28/44417824.pdf>

16. Strong currency

Sorry to keep harking back to the Skills Australia report, *Australian workforce futures*, but it does seem to be pushing a lot of bright buttons. One of them is the need for a workforce development strategy for the VET workforce. The report notes that there's a need to expand 'initiatives to improve the familiarity of service providers with the latest workplace environments and technology. As well as the significant benefits already achieved by the practice of employing VET teachers who work part-time in VET and part-time in industry, other strategies such as sabbaticals in industry and other ways of inter-changing staff need to be applied more widely.'

The chorus has been rising for a while on the need to plan more effectively to maintain current competence. So to another timely report, this one from the VET PD program in Queensland's Department of Education and Training: *Keeping it real: industry currency of trainers in Queensland*. Leave out the 'in Queensland' bit; I'm pretty sure the story is the same across the sunburnt country. Just one of many passages I could have quoted: 'Opinions about the ideal length and frequency of industry placement varied across vocational training areas. Respondents from vocational training areas with regular industry changes argued that trainers should undertake industry placement every year in order to maintain their skills at industry standard. Those from industries with a slower rate of change thought industry placement could be less frequent, for example every 3 years.'

Here you go:

http://www.vetpd.qld.gov.au/resources/pdf/ic/keeping_it_real.pdf

17. VET workforce revealed

The NCVER is a treasury. Recently from the vault emerged *Vocational education and training workforce data 2008: a compendium*. Getting hold of good data about the VET workforce hasn't been easy – now it's in the bank. The tables and charts in the online versions a little low res, but here's just one table that has a lot to say, if you get close to it:

Table 8 National TAFE workforce by length of service, staff position and sex, 2008

	Male			Female			Total		
	Perm.	Non-perm.	Total	Perm.	Non-perm.	Total	Perm.	Non-perm.	Total
	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%	%
<6 months	1.9	9.8	5.7	1.8	10.5	6.5	1.9	10.2	6.2
6 months–1 year	3.0	15.9	9.3	2.8	15.0	9.3	2.9	15.3	9.3
1–2 years	7.1	17.7	12.3	5.9	18.1	12.5	6.4	18.0	12.4
2–4 years	13.3	22.8	17.9	13.8	22.8	18.8	13.5	22.8	18.3
5–9 years	20.7	19.5	20.1	25.0	18.3	21.4	23.1	18.8	20.9
10–14 years	17.4	6.4	12.1	23.4	7.7	15.0	20.7	7.2	13.7
15–19 years	13.1	3.6	8.5	15.5	4.5	9.6	14.4	4.1	9.1
20+ years	23.3	4.3	14.1	11.8	3.0	7.1	17.1	3.5	10.1
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Notes: New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania data contained small numbers of missing/unknown values. Missing/unknown values excluded from analysis.

To get all this data you need to download two documents, and the second of them starts its page count where the first document leaves off. So, here's Part 1:

http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/publications/2218_Part1.pdf

And here's Part 2:

http://www.ncver.edu.au/statistics/publications/2218_Part2.pdf

18. VETis Resource Kit

The Transport and Logistics Council has released its VET in Schools Resource Kit, *Just in time: a teaching and learning resource for Warehousing (Cert II) programs*. Now let me warn you that this is a big 'un, running to 341 pages. And it sounds like it has a very specific purpose, doesn't it? Yet I think you should dip into this because it seems to me that there are resources within that would satisfy the curiosity of many a VET professional and VET student, not just those who are focussed on transport and logistics.

Because it's so big, I won't go into detail. Let me just point out a couple of things:

- there is an avalanche of links to other resources – like links to employability skills resources following a section on employability skills
- scads of learning activities/assessment aids built into a series of handouts, running to more than 200 pages – you should borrow at whim.

To get a copy you have to go through a registration process that kicks off from the page that's linked below – but it's worth it:

<http://www.tlisc.com.au/index.php?menuID=208>

19. Skills mismatch

This one is from CEDEFOP which is the EU's reference centre for VET – the European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training. In the last few weeks it has released *The skill matching challenge: analysing skills mismatch and policy implications*. I've got it sitting in my 'to read' folder – but because I have a 'must read' folder, you can see that 'to read' is more a verb of hope than of certainty.

The Exec Summary runs to just three pages and it didn't cause my nostrils to flare with anticipation. But it might be your cup of tea, and so:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/3056_en.pdf

20. Navitas blooms

Navitas is growing. In December, Latrobe announced it had selected Navitas to run La Trobe University International College (LUIC):

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/news/articles/2009/article/navitas-selected-for-ltu-international-college>

More about LUIC here:

<http://www.latrobe.edu.au/icollege/>

Back to Navitas. Have a look at the company's announcements for 2010, titled as follows:

- Navitas extends Macquarie university agreement (8 February 2010)
- Navitas announces fourth US college (5 February 2010)
- Navitas executes college agreement with University of Newcastle (5 February 2010)
- Navitas executes second and third US college agreements (13 January 2010)
- Navitas to partner with Western Kentucky University for first US college (13 January 2010)

Golly. Read the details here:

http://www.navitasworld.com/corporate/cor_announcements.php

21. California learnin'

Now I haven't quite understood the arrangement, but it's something like this, I think. The government of California is down to its last doubloon, thanks to the Global Financial Stuff-Up. So universities and community colleges are losing funding hand over fist. In steps Kaplan, a private provider with muscle, and offers to pick up students already enrolled in the Californian system – and offering a fee discount. I think I need to read up on market failure and the role of government. Check it out: <http://www.collegeconnection.kaplan.edu/>

IT ISN'T OVER YET

These passages are taken from pages 113-115 in Margaret MacMillan's book. Macmillan is the Warden of St Anthony's College, Oxford, which is having its 60th birthday this year.

'History is about remembering the past, but it is also about choosing to forget.'

...

'History is often used as a series of moral tales, to enhance group solidarity or, more defensibly in my view, to explain how important institutions such as parliaments and concepts such as democracy have developed, and so the teaching of the past has been central to the debates over how to instil and transmit values. The danger is that what may be an admirable goal can distort history either by making it into a simple narrative in which there are black-and-white characters or by depicting it all as tending in one direction, whether that of human progress or the triumph of a particular group. Such history flattens out the complexity of human experience and leaves no room for different interpretations of the past.'

...

'In Australia, John Howard, prime minister from 1996 to 2007, caused a spirited public debate when he announced that he had had enough of the "black armband" view of Australian history. The charge came at a difficult time, as Australians were considering what to do about the Stolen Generations of Aboriginal children who had been taken from their families and given to white families. Professional historians, Howard said, were "self-appointed cultural dieticians" who had persuaded Australians that their history is a sorry tale of racism, filled with crimes against the Aboriginals. Journalists and other commentators, appealing to the strong strain of anti-intellectualism in Australian culture, attacked the "moral mafia" and the "chattering classes" with glee. Most Australians, one columnist said, would be happy to see reconciliation between Aboriginals and mainstream society, if only the former would "stop talking about the past".'

- Margaret MacMillan, *The uses and abuses of history*, 2009, London: Profile Books.

22. Learning resources

The National Resources Sector Employment Taskforce released just last week a Discussion Paper titled *Resourcing the future*. The paper is intended to:

- inform a national discussion about the labour and skills requirements of the resources sector;
- elicit views on issues that may need to be addressed to meet those requirements; and
- identify possible solutions and examples of good practice.

We have until 9 April to make a submission. Now speaking as a Victorian, we've no natural resources to speak of. I could be forgiven for thinking this is something that people in other states should focus on. But a quick foray into its 90 pages (50 really, if you exclude the appendices) suggests that there are ideas in here that bear upon broader considerations for the VET sector.

Consider consultation question 30 (which again tugs a bell rope that the Skills Australia report, *Australian workforce futures*, is also hanging on to): 'What measures could be put in place to facilitate the interaction between industry and training providers, such as industry seconding staff to mentor and train trainers in practical industry requirements? What additional infrastructure is required to meet future training requirements?'

Or what to make of the statement that the Mining Council of Australia 'considers that there is "a lack of universally respected high-quality training outcomes for many (non-trade) VET qualifications" & a "disconnect between acquisition of skills and qualifications and job outcomes".'

So even a Victorian might profit from reading this paper:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Skills/Programs/nrset/Documents/NRSETReport.pdf>

23. Recycling VETiS

Great Southern TAFE VETiS students have constructed a settling pond to recycle the Institute's water run off. The students are doing a Conservation & Land Management qualification, presumably the Cert II. Carl Dusenberg, their teacher, has plans to extend 'the channel and pond systems with the ultimate aim of redirecting all treated water back into the irrigation systems in the nursery & surrounding grow out areas.' More: <http://www.gstafe.wa.edu.au/media/features/Pages/biofilterswaterrecycling.aspx>

24. Common learnings

The consultation versions of the national curriculum documents are now available on the Australian Curriculum Assessment and Reporting Authority website.

I've look at the history proposal and I declare it acceptable. Not sure why Year 5 kids are saddled with Federation – perhaps it will be okay if we stick to stories, otherwise it's conceptually pretty demanding.

And Year 10 should be the capstone and Australia-focussed – anybody disagreeing with me on that? Good. So if that's the case, why is there a nod and wink to civil rights in the US and independence in India? I suspect they appear because there are teaching materials and lesson plans around that were crafted long ago for Year 10 delivery. Nope. Let's make a study of Charlie Perkins' leading the freedom rides into western NSW, and pick up the US and Indian influences on that little journey.

English I'm yet to come to grips with. Maths and science I'll leave to others with functioning right brains, though I note that the history document generously identifies links between history and skills and knowledge in science and maths. We all have until May to deliver our verdicts via the consultation process. The curriculum documents are here:

<http://www.australiancurriculum.edu.au/Home>

25. Principal survey

We seem to be making of practice of building warts and all websites in the school education sector. It's a fine thing. Read what NSW guvvy school principals have to say about the NSW Department, management and otherwise. It's a kind of 360 in public, pretty frank in places and not at all disheartening, even for the Director-General:

https://www.det.nsw.edu.au/reports_stats/principalsurvey/index.htm

26. Clever from a distance

NSW has launched a Virtual Selective High School in the west of the state. Very bright kids can study in their local school rather than traipsing off to the nearest selective school that might be a couple of hours drive away, all thanks to smart use of online learning technologies. The lowdown is here:

<http://www.xsel.schools.nsw.edu.au/sws/view/home.node>

FOR THE PODDIES, VODDIES AND BLOGGIES

Martin Bean on Digital Planet

Once upon a time Australian, Martin Bean, is now the VC of the UK's Open University. He's just chatting on the BBC's Digital Planet about the fascinating uses we keep finding for learning technologies. This is like a 30 minute review of what's happening around the world, from learning English via mobile phone in Bangladesh to a very smart secondary school in Kent:

<http://www.bbc.co.uk/programmes/p0062hh2>

Lindsay Tanner at Sydney Institute

As Lindsay Tanner is the Official Commonwealth Abacus (aka Finance Minister), his pre-government views on why Labor is different might be worth a listen. 'Love of Learning' was recorded in 2006:

http://www.thesydneyinstitutepodcast.com/2006/11/22/LINDSAYTAN_NERShadowMinisterForFinanceLoveOfLearning.aspx

Derek Wrigley on Verbatim

This is a terrific ABC interview with Derek Wrigley, a £10 Pom who came to Oz to practice architecture. He designed ANU's first buildings, was long ago into environmental design & heritage preservation, and co-founded the Industrial Design Council of Australia back in the 1950s. Quite a fella:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/verbatim/stories/2010/2755663.htm>

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