



Monthly e-Newsletter – August, 2010

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EDITORIAL OF SORTS

Apropos of absolutely nothing, in 1959, the University of Melbourne Student Union installed an £850 espresso machine in the student's mixed lounge (see *Espresso: Melbourne coffee stories*, by Andrew May, 2001, Arcadia). I suspect this was the first espresso machine on an Australian campus. Really took off, didn't it?

Time is running down for early bird registrations for the 2010 AAIR Forum so time to get that sorted out. Information on the Forum is to your right and on page 5.

I'm afraid I was a bit cramped for time this month, so no entries about blogs, vods or pods this time around. Sorry.

As always, I welcome your contributions to the Newsletter. Subject to space and relevance to members, the Newsletter runs job vacancies and items on upcoming events. Send anything at all to me at:

rob@sharpwords.com.au

AAIR Annual Forum 10-12 November 2010 Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, Geelong, Victoria

Our theme for 2010 is:
**Has institutional research come of
age in Australasia?**

The theme invites us to focus on strategic priorities in the tertiary sector. Sub-streams will focus on:

- the equity agenda, 2010 and beyond
- supporting models for academic standards
- improving participation and retention
- improving VET pathways and partnerships.

Early Bird Registration

Early bird closes on 1 September. Registration information is available here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/registration.php#fees>

More Forum details

General information about the Forum, including registration and venue/accommodation details, can be found here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/>

An invitation to send in your IR Coming of Age Story

It's AAIR's 21st birthday!

We'd like to celebrate with some stories from AAIRies about what got you started in Institutional Research, what you've learned along the way and what challenges are ahead for Australasian IR practitioners.

We'd like to share some of your stories at the Forum and on our website.

Email your story to Josie Palermo, AAIR President, or to me, at:

Josephine.palermo@deakin.edu.au or rob@sharpwords.com.au

PLACES TO GO – THINGS TO DO

E-learning Content: Capturing, Contextualising, & Creating

All over Queensland

All through August

I'm a bit slow off the mark with this – the first workshop was in Brissie on 6 August, and the second in Toowoomba on 9 August. But there's still Hervey Bay, Sunshine Coast, Mackay, Townsville, Cairns and a triumphant return to Brisbane on 27 August. The workshops are jointly stewarded by the Australian Flexible Training Network and the Queensland VET Development Centre. Registration etc here:

<http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/content/welcome-framework-queensland>

Dean's Lecture Series 2010

Melbourne Graduate School of Education

August, September, October

I'm a bit late with these, too, cos they started back in February. There are three more in the series, delivered at various locations around Melbourne Uni. I'm thinking seriously about taking in the next one on 11 August, titled 'The radical case for a subject-based curriculum'. Good news is that you can download all the lectures you've missed so far: <http://www.education.unimelb.edu.au/news/lectures/2010series.html>

Just by the way, I did take in a public lecture under the Graduate School's aegis, given by James Palewski from the University of Pennsylvania. It was titled 'Positive humanities: a crucial foundation for positive education'. A bottler – and you can download this one here:

http://www.education.unimelb.edu.au/events/Free_Pub_lecture-1.html

TAE10 Training and Education Training Package: Professional Development Workshops

Across Oz

August and September

The new Training and Education Training Package got the big tick from the NQC back in May. IBSA is organising a series of one day workshop across The Wide Brown Land. The workshops are delivered by Precision Consultancy, which worked on development of the new training package. Truth is, I'm late with these, too – been running since June, but there are more to come in all states:

<http://www.ibsa.org.au/Portals/ibsa.org.au/docs/hosted%20documents/event%20fliers/PD%20FLYER%20ONLY.pdf>

ACER Research Conference 2010

Crown Conference Centre, Melbourne

15-17 August 2010

This year's conference has a long title. Deep breath. Okay – here it is:

- Teaching Mathematics? Make it count: What research tells us about effective mathematics teaching and learning.

A succinct conference brochure is here:

<http://forms.acer.edu.au/documents/rc2010-program.pdf>

AAIR 20th Annual Forum

10-12 November, 2010

Four Points by Sheraton, Geelong

Most importantly, AAIRies and friends, the Annual AAIR Forum is getting closer. This year's forum will dig into the big strategic issues:

- the equity agenda
- supporting models for academic standards;
- improving participation and retention
- improving VET pathways and partnerships.

Early bird registration closes on 1 September, so tarry no longer.

The Forum website is here:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/>

The social security of moving researchers

Catholic University of Leuven/Louvain, Belgium

23-24 September 2010

This conference addresses an interesting issue I've never really thought about. The international mobility of researchers means they fall under a variety of social security systems and end up with splintered rights to support. This conference tallies the problems and poses solutions:

<http://www.leru.org/files/general/thumbs/Files/thumbs/Files/Conference%20Announcement.pdf>

2010 EDUCAUSE Annual Conference

Anaheim, California

October 12-15, 2010

I'm not even going to try to describe what this conference is about – everything IT in higher education is close enough. Teaching, admin, libraries, clouds, access, research, purchasing. See what I mean. You can also attend online, but that would mean you'd miss Disneyland:

<http://www.educause.edu/E2010>

IT ISN'T OVER YET (1)

'In 1865 [Charles William Eliot, President of Harvard from 1869-1909] returned to the United States to take a position as professor of chemistry at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, which had just been founded in Boston as a school to prepare students for the scientific professions. When the Harvard Overseers chose Eliot, who was working at what many would have regarded as a vocational school, they were taking a radical step... Harvard picked Eliot because it wanted to be reformed. Eliot did not disappoint...

'Before Eliot, students entering higher education could choose between college and professional school – law, medicine, or science, which in the nineteenth century was taught at a school separate from the college. In 1869, Eliot's first year as president, half of the students at Harvard Law School and nearly three quarters of the students at Harvard Medical School had not attended college and did not hold undergraduate degrees. These were, comparatively, respectable numbers. Only 19 of 411 medical students at the University of Michigan, and none of the 387 law students there, had prior degrees of any kind. There were no admissions requirements at Harvard Law School, beyond evidence of "good character" and the ability to pay the hundred dollars tuition, which went into the pockets of the law professors. There were no grades or exams, and students often left before the end of the two-year curriculum to go to work. They received their degrees on schedule anyway. Standards at medical schools were only a little less amorphous. To get an MD at Harvard, students were obliged to take a ninety-minute oral examination, during which nine students rotated among nine professors, all sitting in one large room, spending ten minutes with each. When the ninety minutes were up, a bell was sounded, and the professors, without consulting one another, marked pass or fail for their fields on a chalkboard. Any student who passed five of the nine fields became a doctor.

'Eliot considered the situation scandalous. He published an article about in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1869, just a few months before being offered the presidency, and that article was almost certainly a factor in the decision to appoint him.'

- Louis Menand, *The marketplace of ideas: reform and resistance in the American university*, 2010, New York: Norton.

Australasian Campuses Towards Sustainability Association Conference

Melbourne

29 September-1 October, 2010

The conference theme is 'Connecting curriculum and campus'. The conference starts with the welcome function at VU, then day 2 is at Melbourne Uni, and day 3 is at RMIT. Variety is the spice of life:

<http://acts.asn.au/conferences/2010-conference/program>

NCVER Research Forum – Fostering enterprise: The innovation and skills nexus

Australian Technology Park, Sydney

9 November, 2010

The title is pretty self-explanatory, I guess. How does training promote and support innovation at the enterprise level? Here's the good oil:

<http://www.ncver.edu.au/newsevents/innovation/forum.html>

LH Martin Institute 2010 Conference

Melbourne

11-12 November, 2010

The conference theme is 'Building Australia's tertiary education sector: alternative models and their leadership challenges'. In brief, the website sums up the focus: 'This conference will explore the progress, contradictions and ambivalences towards a single tertiary sector by focusing on multi-sector tertiary education institutions and the challenges they face.' Doesn't get more topical than that, does it?

Registrations aren't open yet, but there is some detail here:

http://www.lhmartininstitute.edu.au/conference_events/2010/2010conference.html

Creativity, Inquiry, and Discovery: Undergraduate Research In and Across the Disciplines

Durham, North Carolina

November 11-13, 2010

The Association of American Colleges and Universities is running this one. Conference tracks include 'Defining and assessing undergraduate research and creative practice' and 'Implementing, scaling-up, and sustaining programs institution-wide'. Lots of info for you, starting here:

http://www.aacu.org/meetings/undergraduate_research/2010/index.cfm

2010 ATN Assessment Conference

18-19 November 2010

University of Technology Sydney

Now a fixture in the firmament, the Assessment Conference this year has the theme of 'Assessment: sustainability, diversity and innovation'.

I want to quote in full the blurb for one of the keynotes, to be delivered by Dai Hounsell, Vice Principal for Academic Enhancement at the University of Edinburgh. Cop this, you lot:

- The aim of this keynote will be to explore some 'shoe-pinching' challenges in developing assessment practices in higher education fit for 21st-century purposes. Addressing these challenges will entail significant shifts of emphasis away from, for example, students as lone student assesseees; from fixed-time/fixed-place/fixed-question assessments; from an almost exclusive focus on assignments as 'finished' products; from passive after-the-fact feedback; from communication as writing for the tutor-as-reader; from highly stipulative, closed-choice assessments; and from set-standard assessments based on teacher-defined learning outcomes. These shifts of emphasis will be challenging not just because they call for new assessment designs but because they also throw down the gauntlet to some long-cherished assumptions about what counts as high-quality, rigorous assessment.

I'm joining his cheer squad. Registration opens late August:

<http://www.iml.uts.edu.au/atnassessment/>

AHEEF 2010

Lincoln University, Christchurch, NZ

25-26 November, 2010

The Australasian Higher Education Evaluation Forum (aka AHEEF) has chosen for the theme of its eighth conference: 'Closing the loop: implications for practice'.

Evaluation matters a lot in education and I figure if I have to do a lot of mattering, Christchurch is just the spot. Early bird registration is open until 30 September. And you can get a bed on campus for \$63 a night – with breakfast. I reckon you should go twice! Limited details here:

<http://www.lincoln.ac.nz/AHEEF-2010>

Productivity, Investment in Human Capital and the Challenge of Youth Employment: Comparative Developments and Global Responses

University of Bergamo, Italy

16-18 December, 2010

This is the conference website:

<http://www.adapt.it/acm-online/Home/Eventieseminari/articolo1643.html?sezione=calendario>

It wasn't very helpful, but the CEDEFOP website tells more and it sounds pretty good:

<http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/events/16375.aspx>

IT IS WRITTEN (1)

John Coetzee, the main character of the novel, visits the home of one his students – invited by Maria Regina's mother who wants to assess his *bona fides* as a teacher of English. Or as Coetzee sees himself, an Examination Coach.

"If you would like me to explain my philosophy of teaching I can do so," he said. "It is quite brief, brief and simple."

"Go on", I said, "let us hear your brief philosophy."

"What I call my philosophy of teaching is in fact a philosophy of learning. It comes out of Plato, modified. Before true learning can occur, I believe, there must be in the student's heart a certain yearning for the truth, a certain fire. The true student burns to know. In the teacher she recognises, or apprehends, the one who has come closer than herself to the truth. So much does she desire the truth embodied in the teacher that she is prepared to burn her old self up to attain it. For his part, the teacher recognizes and encourages the fire in the student, and responds to it by burning with an intenser light. Thus together the two of them rise to a higher realm. So to speak."

'He paused, smiling. Now that he had had his say he seemed more relaxed. *What a strange, vain man!* I thought. *Burn himself up! What nonsense he talks! Dangerous nonsense too! Out of Plato! Is he making fun of us?* But Maria Regina, I noticed, was leaning forward, devouring his face with her eyes. Maria Regina did not think he was joking.'

- JM Coetzee, *Summertime*, 2009, Sydney: Random House.

AAIR Annual Forum
10-12 November 2010
Four Points by Sheraton Hotel, Geelong, Victoria

OUR THEME FOR 2010

Has institutional research come of age in Australasia?

KEYNOTE SPEAKERS

- **Hon John Dawkins AO**, Chair, Australian Qualifications Framework Council, and recently appointed chair of the National Quality Council
- Dr Carol Nicoll**, CEO, Australian Teaching and Learning Council
 - **Dr Rod Carr**, Vice-Chancellor, University of Canterbury

BELLS AND WHISTLES

Three Pre-Forum Workshops, to be held on 9 November:

- Workshop One – Survey design, administration and analysis
 - Workshop Two – Creatively Presenting Information
 - Workshop Three – New AAIRies Workshop.

Special Interest Group sessions scheduled during the conference:

- The AUSSE
- Load Planning
- DEEWR Reporting
- Data Warehousing

EARLY BIRD REGISTRATION CLOSES ON 1 SEPTEMBER

You can access registration brochure and details at:

<http://www.leishman-associates.com.au/air2010/registration.php#fees>

SPONSORS

We are grateful to the 2010 AAIR Forum Sponsors:

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Graduate Careers Australia
University of Newcastle
University of South Australia

NEWSLETTER NOTES

1. Sorting out the AQF

We inch closer to revising the AQF, but it isn't easy. The AQF Council, I'm sure you know, released in July a discussion paper entitled *Strengthening the AQF: a framework for Australia's qualifications*. The debate about what a Masters degree might look like takes us back to taws – should the AQF simply describe what universities say a Masters is, or does the AQF regulate the nature of a Masters? The framing of an associate degree within the AQF is also pretty interesting. How much of a difference is there really between an associate degree and an advanced diploma – is the difference really that one is curriculum-based and one is vocationally/competency-based?

Shucks. So much to think about. Consultation was short and sharp, so the time for responding to the paper is already up, but it's still worth a read: <http://www.aqf.edu.au/Portals/0/Documents/Strengthening%20the%20AQF%20-%20Consultation%20Paper%20July%202010.pdf>

2. Public access to provider info, NZ-style

NZ's Tertiary Education Commission has issued an update on the kinds of data it intends to make publicly available, and is pressing tertiary providers to get it all to the Commission in what look like pretty testing timelines. Here's a snapshot: <http://www.tec.govt.nz/About-us/News/Updates/Update-on-publishing-performance-information1/>

3. From telling to engaging

The 'Dissemination investigation project' is an ALTC project looking at what kinds of dissemination strategies are successful in getting practice change – given we all know that just telling people about good learning and teaching practice is a million miles away from bringing about change. The project is titled 'D-Cubed' because the focus is on dissemination strategies with three characteristics: they embed change, are scalable and are sustainable.

You might want to keep watch for the workshops planned for later this year on designing good dissemination strategies and dropping them into grant applications. I assume they'll be spruiked on this website, but in any case you can sign up to the project newsletter here: <http://www.altc.edu.au/July2010-dcubed-project>

4. History update

Just in case you missed the latest history news – well, okay, that's an oxymoron of sorts as all the latest news is history. Anyway, a couple of weeks ago, Marilyn Lake from La Trobe became President of the Australian Historical Association. Here's the media release:

<http://www.theaha.org.au/executive/media.htm>

And if you've never been to the AHA website (I'm talking the Australian Historical Association here, not the Australian Hotels Association) then you should put it on your list. Dispense with any notions you have about historians as being fusty – think Lake, Henry Reynolds, Janet McCalman, Michael Cathcart. Jeepers, you can even find the AHA on Facebook. Here you go:

<http://www.theaha.org.au/>

5. Researchers: now hiring

The Minister for Innovation, Industry, Science and Research, Kim Carr, released in June *Employer demand for researchers in Australia*. Prepared by Allen Consulting Group, it's one of the suite of papers commissioned by the Feds as a contribution to developing the promised research workforce strategy. The report offers a really good overview of the diversity that characterises the research workforce, and the diverse reasons why business and academia employ researchers.

It's the workforce shortages that we need to come to grips with, and we need to resolve the impediments we put in our own way via visa obstacles:

<http://www.innovation.gov.au/Section/Research/Documents/EmployerDemandforResearchersinAustraliareport.pdf>

6. Researchers: how good is the training?

I'm handing over this website to you. I've been checking it for so long now, expecting the final report, that I've officially de-bookmarked it. Let me know if something turns up, will you? The US National Research Council commissioned (many moons ago) an Assessment of Research Doctorate Programs.

The latest is there is no latest, but a promise that there will be something very, very soon. The only firm thing is that it won't be in August. I guess this is going to be a pretty contentious little tome when/if it does see the light of day:

http://sites.nationalacademies.org/PGA/Resdoc/PGA_044475

7. Researchers: where did they come from?

Not sure if I've quite got my head around this, but here's my best effort. The UK Sutton Trust has in train a project called 'Growth of postgraduate education and its effect on intergenerational mobility'. So the focus is whether the burgeoning of postgraduate student numbers over the last decade or so has benefited everyone equitably, or mostly those from privileged backgrounds. That's my rendition – bound to be a more convoluted way of saying it if only I could be bothered.

So as part of this project, an interim report has hit the cyberwaves, called *The social composition and future earnings of postgraduates: interim results from the Centre for Economic Performance at the London School of Economics*. There's some interesting stuff in these 14 pages – for example:

- Postgraduates with a Masters degree earn on average £1.75 million over their lifetimes, while postgraduates completing a PhD earn on average £1.9m – 15% and 23% more respectively than a university graduate with £1.5m in average lifetime earnings.
- Students from professional families and students who previously attended independent schools are over-represented at postgraduate level. This pattern has remained fairly constant during the last decade. This social composition is mostly a result of the social make-up of university undergraduate intakes to begin with.
- ...university students educated at independent schools were actually found to be 4% less likely to achieve a First or Upper Second class degree than otherwise similar students educated in state schools.

Nifty. And here:

http://www.suttontrust.com/reports/Sutton_Trust_Postgraduate_report_01032010.pdf

8. Researchers: from A to B

The OECD recently gave us *Careers of doctorate holders: employment and mobility patterns*. I think you'll find it worth a captain. Oz and NZ tend to flit in and out of the data presented. I note that on gender breakdown of doctorate holders from 1990-2006, Australia was running about 60 men to 40 women. Ordinary. AAIRies will be pleased to note that the paper finishes with a clarion call for more and better data:

<http://www.oecd.org/dataoecd/46/43/44893058.pdf>

IT ISN'T OVER YET (2)

The international mobility of researchers, and the attraction of talented researchers, is a rising concern of the moment. Impediments to mobility have long been with us...

'Attracted by the reputation of a teacher in a particular discipline, European students of the sixteenth, as in the previous, century could migrate from one university to another. This was possible because Latin was everywhere the medium of instruction, and knowledge of Latin was the gateway to study. In mediaeval Europe, the Latin of the lecture room was colloquial; and at least as near to the daily speech of contemporary Italy as the literary Latin of Tacitus. It cannot have made life easy for the itinerant pupil when teachers in Italy, among them Galileo, started to lecture in their own language. First of the societies formed to promote intercourse between inventors and investigators, the Italian Lincei set a fashion followed elsewhere. Like the Lincei, others conducted their proceedings in the vernacular.

'When the great scientific awakening of the mid-seventeenth century enlisted in a common endeavour master pilots, watch-makers, spectacle makers, master gardeners such as Thomas Fairchild of Hoxton and tradesmen such as Leeuwenhoek of Delft, the Reformation had displaced Latin as the medium of instruction in countries where ecclesiastical obstruction to scientific progress was minimal. By no means all the newly recruited personnel were now steeped in Latin scholarship. In this milieu, the British Royal Society and the French Academy followed the lead of the Lincei by adopting the vernacular alike for oral and written communication. In 1687, Newton published his *Principia* in Latin. Seventeen years later, his *Opticks* appeared in English.

'Albeit inevitable and beneficial in its own setting, the decision to do so carried with it a penalty. Hitherto, physicians, chemists, astronomers and mathematicians of Western Europe had used Latin as the medium of scientific publication. Henceforth, there was no lingua franca in which men of science of different speech communities could communicate their discoveries.'

- Lancelot Hogben, *The vocabulary of science*, 1969, London: William Heinemann.

Job vacancy

Non Self-Accrediting Institutions (NSAI) Post-Audit Co-ordinator

Australian Universities Quality Agency

In August 2009 AUQA took over full responsibility for quality audits of all Higher Education Providers (HEPs), including both self-accrediting institutions (SAIs), which are authorised to accredit their own courses, and non self-accrediting institutions (NSAIs), which must apply to regulatory agencies for approval for each specific course that they offer. AUQA is now responsible for audits of over 80 providers in the first five-year cycle of audit, and this number will continue to grow.

The Post Audit Co-ordinator organises and supports the follow-up activities that take place after a provider has been audited and the report of the findings has been published. Each provider is required to present an Action Plan that addresses the issues raised in the audit report, as well as a Progress Report two years later.

This is a new role, and the incumbent will be required to develop the role, including improving established processes and systems and proposing new ones, and the interaction of the role with the responsibilities of other staff.

Deadline for applications closes at 5.00pm on Friday 13 August 2010.

More details are available at:

<http://www.auqa.edu.au/aboutauqa/news/articles/article.php?id=52>

9. Researchers: evaluating the output

The NZ Tertiary Education Commission has issued new guidelines for Performance Based Research Funding. It's a thumper at 172 pages, so I shirked my duty and read the media release instead. May I quote:

- 'The new guidelines put greater emphasis on commercial research and the entrepreneurial application of research, and will help businesses and research organisations achieve more for New Zealand,' says BusinessNZ Chief Executive Phil O'Reilly.

The media release, with a link to the guidelines if that's your special bent, is here:

<http://www.tec.govt.nz/About-us/News/Media-releases/research-fund-boosts-links/>

10. Where do I go to learn innovation?

The *BIG Education Directory* is coming in September. It claims to be a comprehensive guide to innovation and entrepreneurial programs in the tertiary sector. I'm pleased to say it will also include some school sector programs. It's a partner publication to the *BIG Business Directory* which seeks to list all the key players in Australia's innovation system. Start here, and then wander around the Australian Innovation website:

http://www.ausinnovation.org/publications/big-education-directory.html?utm_source=Australian+Innovation&utm_campaign=f76553fe1c-17+June+Sendout&utm_medium=email

11. Where do I go to learn international education?

I may have mentioned this a year or two ago. If so, apologies. Brisbane-based PIER offers an online Diploma of International Education Services. Just thinking, given some of our recent history, whether we need to go down the path of requiring some form of accredited training as a hurdle for playing in the international education space:

<http://www.pieronline.org/default.aspx?id=84>

12. Let's see now – the next market?

If you don't take PIER's Diploma, you might think about taking a trip in September on Austrade's Russian Far East 2010 Education Mission:

<http://www.austrade.gov.au/EventViewBookingDetails.aspx?EventID=2547>

13. Not forgetting the home market

Last month, the Australian Industry Group and Deloitte released the *National CEO survey – skills shortages: a high risk business*. Lots of messages here for education and training providers, not least that businesses are strategising about managing skills shortages. Upskilling existing staff is the frontrunning option. Heather Ridout, AiG CEO and Board member of Skills Australia, says in her intro:

- The education and training system must support people to augment their qualifications and experience in order to increase and broaden their skills base to foster increased productivity. Training providers and universities must be well placed to respond to this challenge – which to date they have only been able to do in a limited way.

Worth reading – and why are we always short of accountants? Here it is:

http://www.aigroup.com.au/portal/binary/com.epicentric.contentmanagement.servlet.ContentDeliveryServlet/LIVE_CONTENT/Publications/Rreports/2010/8799_CEO_skills_shortages_final_web.pdf

NCVER web services, including a new email alert service

I received an email from the NCVER asking if this might be included in the Newsletter. As the NCVER is a national education treasure, I could hardly say no.

Here it is, verbatim.

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) has introduced an email alert service as part of its new registration initiative on the NCVER and Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) websites.

Now people can subscribe to receive free email alerts that will be sent on the day information is released.

The benefits of the new web services are two-fold. They will provide subscribers with more timely information and provide NCVER with valuable data on the information NCVER customers use.

NCVER is keen to know more about who uses what information. This will help with the development of new products in the future.

To receive email alerts, people must first register for the NCVER or LSAY website (one registration covers both websites). You can register here: (<http://www.ncver.edu.au/subscribe.html>)

Once they have registered, they can subscribe to receive alerts for all or selected NCVER releases.

NCVER understands the introduction of registration for the websites will be a change for its customers. To minimise any burden NCVER has developed the registration process to be simple and straightforward.

Registration to the websites is free and downloading all information remains free of charge.

By registering, users of the website will be able to download the full text of reports, support documents, technical documents, questionnaires, data and some products listed within the Resources section on the NCVER website.

Website users can provide feedback on these new services to:
register@ncver.edu.au

14. Training for SMEs

Agrifood Skills Australia is one of our eleven Industry Skills Councils. Someone steered me towards a slice of the Agrifood Skills website which sports the title: Growing Your Business – Best Practice Model. There is a bundle of resources (accessible via hyperlinks a tad down the page) which have lots of ideas for linking small and medium sized enterprises to the training system (in addition to other things). Having wandered through them I reckon you could lift these ideas and plant them in most industry sectors:

<http://www.agrifoodskills.net.au/current-projects/business-skills-for-owners-and-managers/>

15. Green jobs and training

The European Centre for the Development of Vocational Training – the acronymically challenged CEDEFOP – has released a briefing note titled *Skills for green jobs: developing a low-carbon economy depends on improving existing skills rather than specialised green skills*. Green jobs are new and we're still working out how to get them on the ground efficiently and effectively. The take home message from this paper is captured in the title of the briefing note, and slightly elaborated in this way in the text:

- There is an emerging consensus that to have the fundamental skills critical to make the transition to a low-carbon economy, emphasis is needed on improving current skills rather than developing new curricula and training to provide new green skills.

There's a neat little table that shows how existing occupations in some countries are converting into new occupations. Fascinating how national strengths (or are they stereotypes?) are reflected in some of these shifts. For example:

- In Denmark, the old Industry electrician/energy technologist becomes, via upskilling, a manager in renewable energy
- In France, someone in product design and services becomes an eco-designer
- In the UK, a commodity trader/broker becomes a carbon trader/broker.

But the sensible approach to it all is upskilling – retraining the existing workforce. Which I guess is the strategy adopted in Oz by embedding green skills in all training packages. The CEDEFOP briefing note is resting here:

http://www.cedefop.europa.eu/EN/Files/9024_en.pdf

16. Training app

I admit that Facebook and Twitter leave me underwhelmed. This is because I am fossilising quickly. However, I am still breathing and have found my way to Apps. There's a veritable bevy of them out there, including a TAFE Queensland Mobile App:

<http://www.apple.com/webapps/searchtools/tafequeenslandmobile.html>

17. Renovating South Australia's training system

The South Australian government has released a consultation paper on the future of the training system. It's called *Skills for all: productivity and participation through skills*. While you could see it coming, it's extraordinary how quickly in recent months productivity has got itself back to centre stage in The Great Southland's policy agenda.

South Australia is turning over the learnings from elsewhere in Oz, putting a few new ideas on the table, coming to grips with what is distinctive about TAFE as the public provider, nutting out how to make a tertiary system a real thing, and asking for comment on all of it. The consultation paper is here:

<http://www.dfeest.sa.gov.au/LinkClick.aspx?fileticket=mDqznMR%2bC%2f%3d&tabid=267>

Lots of interest. Just a couple of random picks:

- To significantly improve access to training for new entrants, re-entrants and existing workers, an entitlement to a Government supported training place will be available for individuals and employers.
- Targets for inter-institutional [VET and HE] activities (including the movement of students, course development etc) and incorporating these into institutional strategic planning processes.
- For government secondary schools a student-centred funding model whereby schools support students to undertake VET and school-based courses by allowing the full school enrolment funding to follow a student to providers of choice.
- [For TAFE] A higher subsidy rate than other providers where differential costs associated with public ownership can be demonstrated and efficiency benchmarks are met.

Statewide consultation meetings are all done and dusted, but there's an online feedback option here:

<http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/15Z8HQ3>

AAIR e-Newsletter – August 2010

IT ISN'T OVER YET (3)

Been thinking lately about so-called national identity, so I went to Russel Ward's *The Australian Legend* (before picking up Donald Horne and then mixing it with a recent *Griffith Review* based around Horne's *The Lucky Country*). *Legend* is great just for the prose. Yes, it's romantic, long bows are drawn, and it's a boy's own history. True, too, that the questions Ward tackled remain ones to conjure with. Ward knocked about a fair swag of the Oz unis of his time. Apart from secondary school teaching, he studied at Adelaide, completed *The Australian Legend* at ANU, and lectured in history at UNE before serving there as DVC. Anyway, to the book and a prompt for reflection on adult literacy.

'Contemporaries noted also that bush-workers had a passion for reading and versifying. Next to a glass of rum, the loan of a book was the greatest favour one could bestow on a bushman. In view of the complete absence of ready-made forms of amusement, this is scarcely surprising. In 1851, according to census returns, 36.9 per cent of the inhabitants in outback districts were illiterate, but one does not have to be able to read to enjoy reading. At a certain out-station one day in the early 'forties, a man arrived "with a joyful countenance" and a copy of *Nicholas Nickleby*. In the hut that night another man began reading to a company consisting mainly of old hands who, however, "advised that the reading should be stopped, until the men of two or three stations near us, had been invited" to share the feast. By the light of "a twisted piece of rag stuck into a pint tin of melted fat" the book was read on successive nights to a full hut, and if the reader "could have read till daylight" the audience would not have tired.

'More often, because of the absence of either books or readers, the nights must have been passed in singing and story-telling. "Harris" describes several such evenings in bush huts, and it is interesting to notice that the stories told were usually not nostalgic reminiscences of the old life in Britain but "some tale of the olden time, when but few white men were in the colony", or stories of bushrangers, new runs, or the feats of working bullocks. Thus these men, without consciously planning to do so, acclimatised themselves in the new land.'

- Russel Ward, *The Australian legend*, 1958, London: Oxford University Press.

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18. Workers of South Australia

Just hanging about in Wakefield's paradise for a moment, the state government also recently launched the SA Workforce Information Service which is dripping with data of all kinds – labour market data, industry profiles, regional profiles, special reports:

<http://www.workforceinfoservice.sa.gov.au/>

19. Mobile training

Staying with the Croweaters for one more entry. The Civil Contractors Federation is a national body which has a training arm called CivilTrain. The South Australian chapter of the Federation secured a grant from the Commonwealth government (just before the election was called, I think) to embark on three new training initiatives. One of them is to:

- Allow training to be delivered where and when it is needed, including rural and regional Australia, with a mobile training unit at a cost of \$1.2 million.

I'd love to see that mobile training unit in operation, wouldn't you? The Federation's media release on its plans is here:

<http://www.civilcontractors.com/Administration/Obout/Editor/Library/documents/NATIONAL/News/Media%20release%20-%20CCF%20SA%20Civil%20Train%20funding%20boost.pdf>

20. eLearning

You might be very clever and already know about the eLearning Industry Association of Victoria. I didn't until a few weeks ago:

http://www.elearning.org.au/html/s01_home/home.asp

21. Funding schools

A heartbeat before the election was called, the new Minister for Education, Simon Crean, released the 'Final terms of reference for the review of funding for schooling'. Remains to be seen what timelines will apply to a new funding model, or if there is to be one. Nonetheless, this is a pretty good list of things that need to be considered, cos what we've got is tired and a bit silly. I like reference 5c best: 'ways to increase the simplicity, transparency and effectiveness of school funding arrangements, including the forms of school and system-level autonomy within those arrangements that best support improved educational outcomes.'

Only three pages so it won't take any time at all:

<http://www.deewr.gov.au/Schooling/Programs/Documents/ReviewFundToR.pdf>

22. Recruiting teachers

Harry Truman once observed that the human race is an excellent outfit. If nothing else, *Homo sapiens* is an inventive outfit. When I read the OECD paper on *International approaches to teacher selection and recruitment* I was intrigued by the diverse approaches across the globe to assessing the readiness or competence of newly qualified teachers. Finland is oft-trumpeted as a gold standard in school education. Here's how the Finns select candidates for teaching courses, long before we get to schools recruiting them for ongoing jobs:

- Finland, for example, employs a multi-stage process of teacher selection which begins with a national screening process involving a 300-question multiple choice assessment which tests literacy, numeracy and problem-solving; is followed by university-based tests which evaluate candidates' ability to process information, think critically and synthesise data; and proceeds to university-based interviews which seek to assess candidates' motivation to teach, motivation to learn, communication skills and emotional intelligence.

Good read:

[http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf?cote=EDU/WKP\(2010\)10&doclanguage=en](http://www.oecd.org/officialdocuments/displaydocumentpdf?cote=EDU/WKP(2010)10&doclanguage=en)