

ACDICT Press Release 280711

The negative impact on Australian productivity of a diminishing national ICT skills capacity was discussed at the week's meeting of the Australian Council of Deans of ICT (ACDICT). To coincide with National ICT Careers Week, ACDICT held its Annual Council Meeting in Hobart on 25–26 July.

As with ICT in general, male deans dominate the Council. Nevertheless ACDICT elected its first female President, Professor Janet Verbyla, Dean and Pro-Vice Chancellor at the University of Southern Queensland. Professor Verbyla said that it is an honour to lead this Council which represents the educational leaders of the ICT disciplines. These are the ICT disciplines that are key enablers for modern society, industry and research and which graduate the ICT professionals that are at the heart of the national productivity and prosperity.

The Council was heartened to note that more Australians are starting to realise the benefits of a career in ICT as indicated by a moderate increase in domestic enrolments, However the marked downturn in international enrolments due to broader issues does not bode well for Australia training the volume of students necessary to meet the skills shortage in ICT.

The activities of the National ICT Week entail a wide range of industries such as Banking, Healthcare, Transport, Resource exploration, Manufacturing, Tourism, and Entertainment showcasing their need for skilled ICT staff to work in all areas of the business to work with people, solve problems, find solutions and make a difference to peoples' lives. ACDICT members supports these national events as well as a wide range of other activities such as those of Group X in Queensland.

As well as attracting students into ICT, ACDICT noted the need to improve retention of students particularly by focusing on providing a quality first year university experience and support mechanisms throughout the course duration.

Discussions on the importance of professional practice in the curriculum identified the need to compile a register of current practice and share best practice.

ACDICT is working on a response to the government changes to the method of assessing research excellence in ICT. In this, there was broad consensus amongst the members representing the whole spectrum of ICT, including CORE (Computing Research and Education) and ACPHIS (Australasian Council of Professors and Heads of Information Systems).

ACDICT members agreed on the need to identify grand challenges in ICT research. A summit on grand challenges in ICT with particular emphasis on Australia will be organized as part of the Australian Computer Science Week 2012 in Melbourne.

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