

**AUSTRALIAN COUNCIL of
DEANS of SCIENCE**



PRESS RELEASE

Australia's ICT Capability Crash

From 2001 onwards university enrolments in ICT crashed, leading to closure and amalgamation of university departments and faculties, and retrenchment of staff. The Australian Council of Deans of Science (ACDS) today released a report entitled 'The IT Education Bubble' which shows just how extraordinary and deep that crash has been.

In the Report expert Ian Dobson analyses DEST statistics for 2002-2005. He reveals that during this period, while university enrolments generally grew by about 7%, ICT enrolments crashed by about 19%. The Report notes that these statistics 'raise questions about the effectiveness of market signals when in 2007 there is considered to be a skills crisis involving among other things a shortage of graduates in information technology.'

The President of the ACDS, Professor John Rice, also emphasised the implications of the Report's findings on the composition of the ICT student population. "ICT presents a clear instance of the conflict between national capacity building and a market driven university system", he said.

"Driven to make up shortfalls in government funding, universities have turned to fee paying overseas students. In ICT the proportion of overseas students rose from 45% to 50% during 2002-2005. Half of our capability investment in ICT is destined to leave the country unless retained through immigration. What's more, that half is something that can't be used by many organisations who need the capability. Defence organisations, for example, have large demand for ICT skills but find it hard to use overseas people for security reasons."

The Report also gives an idea of the extent to which some universities have gone to chase the international dollar through ICT enrolments, several opening up interstate or capital city campuses solely for this purpose. "These operations are now in great difficulty," says Professor Rice, "but the difficulties are small compared to the disruption, almost annihilation, of ICT faculties across the country."

"As with the geosciences, it may be a long time before universities risk re-investment in ICT, and where does that leave a nation that needs that capability to be a player in the global economy?"

The report can be accessed from <http://www.acds.edu.au>

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