

THE TAFE PLUS NEWSLETTER FOR INDUSTRY

THIS ISSUE

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WATER RECYCLING

RENEWABLE ENERGY

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TAFELINK IS PUBLISHED BY
DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION & TRAINING,
CORPORATE MARKETING
GPO BOX 33
SYDNEY NSW 2001
TEL: (02) 9561 8797 FAX: (02) 9561 8327
EDITORIAL: Dominique Antarakis Copywriting
EMAIL: dantarakis@optusnet.com.au
LAYOUT: Lankshear Design

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PRINTED ON CHLORINE-FREE PAPER MADE FROM PLANTATION TIMBER

TAFE NSW is constantly working in partnership with industry to find new ways to meet their skill needs, and innovation in training is key to achieving this goal. This innovation can take many forms – the area of the training, the method of delivery, or the reason for undertaking the training. In this issue, we look at programs around TAFE NSW Institutes which are 'innovative' in one or all of these areas.

Illawarra Institute and Blue Circle Southern Cement have witnessed a training experiment, the Blue Circle Environmental Improvement Project, go from strength to strength in the past three years. As part of the program, Conservation and Land Management students are given some of the harshest mining land and asked to come up with ways to regenerate it. To date, there have been some impressive results.

Renowned for its commitment to environmental best practice, including the area of urban water recycling and management, Sydney Olympic Park Authority has partnered with South Western Sydney Institute to develop a water recycling course. The course will help expand the knowledge and use of recycling systems to a wider audience.

Western Institute is pioneering training in renewable energy sources for farmers in the region. Two new courses have been developed to give farmers the tools and knowledge to use existing technology more effectively, and to design and maintain their own energy systems, the first time this type of training has been made available.

Northern Sydney Institute is offering two new public relations courses in response to demand from business for people working in the field to be up-to-date with the latest techniques and industry best practice. The courses were developed by TAFE NSW in consultation with experienced industry professionals.

Another industry partnership has seen the highly-innovative and successful Accor Hospitality Internship Program provide paid work experience to Sydney Institute graduates in Hospitality Management. The program gives Accor access to some of the top graduates in an industry where sourcing quality staff is always an issue.

And Western Sydney Institute (OTEN) and Austral Bricks have taken a novel approach to customer care, effectively putting staff in customers' shoes by giving them the skills to help customers with the all-important colour choice when buying Austral products.

Janet Stewart

Director, Corporate Marketing



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EMAIL dantarakis@optusnet.com.au

Limestone miners come full circle

An experimental approach to learning holds the key to regenerating some of Australia's most barren land and helping the mining industry meet its environmental obligations.

A successful and innovative working relationship between TAFE NSW – Illawarra Institute and Blue Circle Southern Cement, the *Blue Circle Environmental Improvement Project*, allows for the rehabilitation and environmental maintenance of previously mined and surrounding land.

The conservation and land management industry deals with environmental issues such as water quality and catchment management, natural resource management and conservation, erosion and sedimentation, salinity, land degradation, conservation and enhancement of biodiversity, noxious weeds, bushfires and feral animal management.

Dr Brian Faulkner, Teacher Conservation and Land Management/Horticulture, Illawarra Institute, said Conservation and Land Management students are given an area of the mine to work on, and must research and apply their existing knowledge to come up with solutions to problems themselves. In some cases, these solutions are nothing short of groundbreaking.

'They have managed to revegetate a rocky slope using a method called 'clay seed ball technique',' Dr Faulkner said. 'They mix seeds with clay, other organic material and water to produce round balls the size of grapes.'

'This is steep, sloping land that is too dangerous to stand on, so the balls are thrown on to the rocks from a distance. Because the seeds are contained within the clay they are not vulnerable

to attack from seed predators such as ants and birds. When it rains the seeds are released into the ground.'

Grant Thomson, Environmental Officer at Blue Circle, said the students were developing new techniques that are already being put into practice at the mine.

'The hardest areas of the mine were chosen, and they're getting results, and we're already seeing many benefits,' Mr Thomson said.

'As this is a limestone mine site, the soil pH levels are extremely high, and it's a very rocky, exposed, harsh, dry environment,' said Dr Faulkner. 'If the students can get something to grow in that environment, they'll be able to do the same almost anywhere.'



Students working on revegetating the harsh mine environment.

Q: Does your environmental policy need to be best-practice?
A: TAFE NSW's innovative training methods may hold the key.

'From the mine's point of view, we are very pleased to have the opportunity to involve the local community, and it's also helping us meet our goals and obligations with the Department of Mining,' Mr Thomson said. 'We're so happy that it has proven to be such a success, and it will hopefully continue for many years to come.'

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CONTACT: LIZ THOMAS
TAFE NSW – ILLAWARRA INSTITUTE
TEL: (02) 4222 2907 FAX: (02) 4226 4748
EMAIL: liz.thomas@det.nsw.edu.au

Blue Circle Southern Cement has an obligation under its mining permit to rehabilitate land after mining is finished. TAFE NSW students are assisting with this while gaining valuable hands-on training.



A successful water recycling scheme is now being expanded into urban areas.

Q: Looking for a recycling solution?

A: TAFE NSW has the answer.

Continuing state-wide water shortages have prompted the expansion of a highly successful water recycling program through the Urban Water Recycling course.

Urban water recycling a step closer

With water use and consumption firmly on the national agenda, Sydney Olympic Park is setting the benchmark for urban water recycling and management in Australia. The precinct's Water Reclamation and Management Scheme (WRAMS), has been operating successfully since July 2000.

As part of TAFE NSW – South Western Sydney Institute's work with the Sydney Olympic Park Authority (SOPA), an innovative water recycling course has been developed to expand the knowledge and use of recycling systems in urban areas.

A consultative group was formed to gather the input and endorsement of key stakeholders including several water governing bodies in the state. The resulting course, *Urban Water Recycling*, meets the training needs of plumbers and water inspectors.

Michael O'Brien from South Western Sydney Institute's plumbing teaching section participated in the group, formed by representatives from a number of organisations. These included Office of Fair Trading, Sydney Water, SOPA, Master Plumbers Association and the Construction Industry Training Advisory Board.

At Sydney Olympic Park, recycled water is used for a wide range of purposes including landscape irrigation, toilet flushing, fire fighting, clothes washing, ornamental features and fountains, playing fields, construction and wash down. It can also be used in new commercial developments for air-conditioning.

The NSW Department of Health has endorsed all these water applications at Sydney Olympic Park and the local community strongly supports these water recycling, conservation and management initiatives.

Chief Executive Officer for Sydney Olympic Park Authority, Brian Newman believes the success of WRAMS demonstrates that large-scale urban water recycling systems in new urban development areas are feasible, safe, and beneficial for the community and environment.

'Sydney Olympic Park supports the NSW Government's aim to see urban water recycling initiatives increase as set out in the Metropolitan Water Plan,' Mr Newman said.

The TAFE NSW training is one way of expanding this initiative. The Urban Water Recycling course has already been delivered to industry representatives at the *Houses of the Future* exhibition held at Sydney Olympic Park, and more than 45 Inspectors and Senior Management from Sydney Water participated in the program in June.

The course will be actively promoted to industry members so water recycling can become an integral part of urban life, and the consultative group is keen to see the course widely adopted across NSW to promote effective urban water recycling.

Charmaine Stiffle, Institute Training Consultant, said the Urban Water training program was one of several ways that TAFE NSW was working with Sydney Water to provide training solutions.

'Several projects, including the development of a competency-based framework for Sydney Water staff, a Frontline Management program and an OHS communication program are well progressed and we are pleased to see these training opportunities helping Sydney Water achieve its objectives.'

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT: TERRY CROTTY

TAFE NSW – SOUTH WESTERN SYDNEY INSTITUTE

TEL: (02) 9827 8440 FAX: (02) 9827 8422

EMAIL: terry.crotty@tafensw.edu.au

Pioneering renewable energy courses for rural communities

Pioneering training for the rural community is helping farmers learn about renewable energy sources such as solar and wind power.

TAFE NSW – Western Institute has developed the first renewable energy courses in the state specifically for the rural sector. Participants learn how to use the technology as well as how to design and maintain their own energy systems.

Lyndon Field, Teacher, Agriculture, at Western Institute’s Mudgee Campus, said farmers are generally unaware of the technology currently available and the benefits of using it effectively.

‘Farmers have tried lots of experiments in the past with things like solar power, which are now sitting unused in sheds,’ Mr Field said. ‘This is mostly because of system design errors where the capacity of the system components weren’t matched to the needs of the user.

They were also limited because there wasn’t a great deal of accurate advice about how to put a system together – but now that has changed.’

The courses, *Renewable Energy on-Farm – Maintenance* and *Renewable Energy on-Farm – Applications*, are very ‘hands-on’ and are delivered using a mixture of face-to-face and flexible training. The courses can be delivered at times to suit people in farming communities, and can be run at any location.

Mr Field said people in rural communities can save thousands of dollars through using renewable energy.

‘Through the use of renewable energy systems it is possible to supply power to places on farms that mains power can’t reach,’ he said. ‘This allows farmers to do things like run pumps, lights and monitor equipment.

‘It is economically feasible to use renewable energy for many farm applications where it may

cost thousands of dollars to connect mains electricity. Now farmers can set up a very cost-effective energy system and then benefit from free, renewable energy sources like the sun and wind.’

The maintenance course is currently running in Mudgee with three electricians who live on farms and have existing, or intend to install, renewable energy systems on their properties. One participant, Tim Russell, Director, Russell’s Chaff and Grain Milling, said the course is ‘the most interesting I’ve ever done’.

‘I have a produce and an engineering business, and I do all the wiring myself,’ Mr Russell said. ‘Already, I have been able to make adjustments which have helped me get better economy from my equipment, and it looks like I will be able to reduce my power usage by at least 20% over the next year.’

The course is highly practical and is supported by printed notes and structured exercises. The three participants in the first intake have completed two basic units that provide essential skills for maintaining and testing low voltage circuits.

Future courses are planned for Orange, Dubbo, Mudgee and Lightning Ridge, with North West NSW also a high priority.

‘There is no other way for farmers to get information like this about renewable energy – I’ve recommended the course to all my friends,’ Mr Russell said.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT: ADAM BENNETT

TAFE NSW – WESTERN INSTITUTE

TEL: (02) 6391 5777 FAX: (02) 6391 5671

EMAIL: adam.bennett@tafensw.edu.au



Lyndon Field says farmers aren’t always aware of the technology available.

Q: Wanting to maximise energy efficiency?

A: TAFE NSW training is at the cutting-edge.

The Renewable Energy courses can be delivered at almost any location, and are customised so that farmers obtain skills and knowledge based on the systems they are already using or intend to use.

Public relations offers business advantage

In a world where effective communication and a positive public image are critical to the ongoing success of any organisation, it is vital that anyone working in the field of Public Relations (PR) stays up to date with the latest techniques and industry best practice.

To meet the demand from the corporate sector for staff who can deal with the challenges of a position on the frontline, TAFE NSW – Northern Sydney Institute is offering two new courses: Certificate IV in Public Relations and Diploma of Public Relations.

The new courses were developed by TAFE NSW in consultation with experienced industry professionals, following an intensive review of previous PR subjects that were already being offered. Relevant and innovative, the new PR courses ensure that graduates have the skills required by today's employers.

Q: Need to improve your corporate image?

A: Keep staff up to date with a PR course.

Both courses are career-focused and ideal for those already employed in the PR sector looking to move their career to the next level, and those embarking on a new career in the area.

Phaedra Morgan is employed as Personal Assistant to the State Director of an expanding Australia/Asia Pacific consulting engineering company. She completed a Certificate IV in Public Relations at Northern Sydney Institute's North Sydney campus.

'The TAFE NSW course was great,' Ms Morgan said. 'I was able to apply my PR education by

better communicating our marketing capability statements and in our day-to-day client liaison. I would like to achieve my Public Relations Diploma and consider where it will take me next.'

Following her Higher School Certificate, Lisa Griffiths, now a Marketing Coordinator at Deloitte, completed certificate courses in Marketing and Public Relations at TAFE NSW. Based on this positive experience, she now plans to enrol in the Diploma course.

'I decided to try TAFE NSW because I could study while working full-time,' Ms Griffiths said. 'I found the Certificate IV in Public Relations Certificate really helpful in my job in Financial Advisory Services, particularly the media writing skills.'

Sue Corlette, Marketing and Public Affairs Specialist for National Prescribing Service and part-time TAFE NSW teacher, believes that the revisions made to the PR courses will equip graduates with a broader set of skills.

'The new courses include more contemporary subjects such as Community Relations, Issues Management, Event Management as well as PR Law and Ethics,' Ms Corlette said. For example, the new Event Management component offers students a 'taster' of what is an essential PR activity.

'In fact some students may consider adding a further qualification in the shape of TAFE NSW's Event Management course after they complete the PR course,' she said. 'Students can keep adding to their repertoire of skills — and that is a distinct advantage for employers.'

The Public Relations Certificate and Diploma courses have been developed by TAFE NSW in consultation with industry, in response to demand for PR practitioners with up-to-date and relevant skills.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION
CONTACT: HOLLY FITZGERALD
TAFE NSW – NORTHERN SYDNEY INSTITUTE
TEL: (02) 9942 0028 FAX: (02) 9942 0595
EMAIL: holly.fitzgerald@tafensw.edu.au

Internship program helps hotel source good staff

A shortage of high-calibre candidates for employment in the hospitality industry has resulted in a major hotel group partnering with TAFE NSW to source quality staff.

The Accor Hospitality Internship Program is an innovative partnership developed by TAFE NSW and Accor Hotels to provide paid work experience to TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute Hospitality Management students.

Students enrolled in the Advanced Diploma and Diploma of Hospitality Management can gain their compulsory work experience by being employed in an Accor hotel over a 12-month period.

‘Accor recognises that TAFE NSW – Sydney Institute is a well-respected RTO [registered training organisation] in the field of hospitality and for many years its students have been gaining work experience with Accor hotels,’ Jackie Chong, Human Resources Manager, NSW/ACT, Accor Asia Pacific, said of the program.

‘The concept of the Accor-TAFE Hospitality Internship Program was a logical progression in formalising this relationship and enhancing the benefits to both TAFE NSW and Accor.’

The program is flexible enough to accommodate the needs of students and Accor.

Accor Hotels is the world's largest hotel group with more than 3,500 hotels and resorts worldwide. It is also one of the global leaders in tourism, travel, casinos, restaurants and the provision of corporate and public institution

services. Accor’s hotel brands include Sofitel, Novotel, All Seasons, Mercure and Ibis.

On completion of the internship program, students are provided with the opportunity of employment and in some cases gain promotion into supervisory positions.

‘I see this as the foundation of my career,’ said course graduate Kenneth Villanueva.

Q: Shortage of high-calibre staff in your industry?

A: Consider TAFE NSW students as interns.

This is the second year of the internship program, with 66 students having graduated to date.

This model was developed by the Sydney Institute Job Placement Service and is now being adapted for other organisations in vocational areas including marketing, finance and accounting, advertising, human resources and business administration.

‘We are grateful for the opportunity to work with Sydney Institute and look forward to continuing this relationship,’ Ms Chong said.

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT: CLAIRE MARCH

TAFE NSW – SYDNEY INSTITUTE

TEL: (02) 9217 3358 FAX: (02) 9217 4950

EMAIL: claire.march@tafensw.edu.au

TAFE NSW Hospitality Management students complete their practical work experience with Accor hotels over 12 months, and may be placed in a permanent position on graduation.

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EMAIL: TAFEIC@tafensw.edu.au

Austral Bricks approached TAFE NSW to provide customised training for staff to be delivered on-site. The program is likely to be expanded to sites in three other States.

Course colours customers' worlds



Austral Bricks staff can now assist customers make informed colour choices.

A novel approach to enhancing the skills of their customer service team has helped Austral Bricks boost employee confidence and the standard of customer care.

Austral Bricks approached TAFE NSW – Western Sydney Institute (OTEN) after identifying the need for a short course in colour consultancy to enhance their employees' skill levels.

The course provides staff with the colour theory and practical skills to provide their customers with a better service when buying Austral Bricks products. Delivered on-site for 22 of their staff, the first round of training has proven such a success that the company is looking at expanding the course to its outlets in three other States.

Joanna Nestoroski, Interior Design Teacher, Western Sydney Institute (OTEN), developed and delivered the course, and said the purpose was to provide learners with 'basic knowledge, skills and attitude required to select and apply colour for interior and exterior settings'.

The two-day course featured colour theory, where participants learned the colour wheel, other colour schemes, the effects of different lighting on colour and the psychology of colour. They also learned the practical skills involved in mixing colours and developing sample boards to assist customers with their selection.

Marcelle McGrath from Austral Bricks is delighted with the results.

'Our customer service staff and sales representatives who attended the Colour Theory in Practice workshop were very positive about the course.

'They are now more confident in advising customers in colour selection,' Ms McGrath said.

The decision to choose TAFE NSW to provide training for their staff was an easy one for Austral Bricks, according to Ms McGrath.

Q: Want to improve staff knowledge base?

A: We can tailor a course based on your products.

'TAFE NSW is a nationally recognised training organisation, which is important for us as we are a national business,' she said. 'We also selected TAFE NSW because we knew the workshop would provide quality training for our staff.

'Our Human Resources team has developed a strong working relationship with Western Sydney Institute and I look forward to continuing to work together to improve our employees' knowledge base through quality training.'

FOR FURTHER INFORMATION

CONTACT: MUI COOK

TAFE NSW – WESTERN SYDNEY INSTITUTE (OTEN)

TEL: (02) 9208 9304 FAX: (02) 9208 9266

EMAIL: mui.cook@tafensw.edu.au