

Telecommunications Schools Pathway Project

Telecommunications Industry Teacher Information Day

On Friday October 15, 20 participants attended a most interesting and informative Telecommunications Industry and Training Information Day.

The Telecommunications Industry Teacher Information Day resulted from a strong, collaborative partnership between FutureNow Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council and the Western Australian Department of Education's *School Pathways Program*. The information day highlighted the importance of linking industry skills shortages to secondary school career pathways programs which focus on pathways and transitions to further education, training and employment.

The *School Pathways Program* forms part of a National Partnership Agreement which aims to support partnerships with registered training organisations, universities, industry training councils and industry to enhance sustainable school based education and training pathways to higher education and the workforce, as well as addressing skills shortages in the defence and allied industry sector.

The tour began with participants visiting the Integracom Management Group training facilities in Burswood. Here Rhyl MacFarlane, Project Manager of Creative Industries from FutureNow welcomed the group and presented the project goals outlining telecommunications skills shortages, training pathways and workforce development.

Rhyl said "Awareness of the telecommunications industry and options for students for training and a career pathway is essential to this industry's workforce. Attracting young is essential especially with the National Broadband Network (NBN) roll out".

The telecommunications industry includes a diverse range of specialist skills in one or more of the following areas: Cabling, Digital Reception Technology, Network Planning, Radio Communications, Broadband and Wireless Networks, Network Planning and Design, Optical Frequency Networks, Rigging Installation, Radio Frequency Networks, Digital Home Integration and Telecommunications Networks Engineering. These skills are most relevant to the defence and allied industries.

Integracom Director Carl Holmes gave an interactive presentation showcasing the latest ICT technology. Carl explained how the NBN will work once cabled and connected to our homes. He described business and private use and how the NBN will enable other technologies.

Carl said "The skills shortages are quite real. We will need to train more workers for the NBN. The telecommunications industry is closely watching Geraldton WA as a case study. This city is currently being cabled for high speed internet and will be one of the first connected with broadband".

Teachers were treated to live demonstrations of security cameras, panels for smart homes, an NBN connection box and interactive learning materials customised for the industry.

Teachers visited Polytechnic West and were shown a different area of telecommunications with lecturer Paul Killcullen. Paul explained how the NBN will be cabled across Australia and showed photos of optical fibre cabled via existing sewer systems like those in the UK and how this is being trialled in Brisbane.

Teachers were then challenged to a student experience in the workshop. Paul gave a short lesson in cabling a telephone and set a challenge for each teacher to cable, connect a telephone to a terminal and test the line. The workshop hosted teachers with toolboxes, cable and laughs while they battled to establish a connection and dial a friend.

Paul concluded the tour with a unique demonstration of fusing optical fibre with state of the art equipment. David Carr Program Manager at Polytechnic West said "Our workshop infrastructure is recognised by industry as a first class training facility in Australia".

The new digital economy is requiring a digitally ready workforce with a digital skills pool. With the rapid development of emerging technologies and pressing demand from the NBN rollout, telecommunications is an industry with a critical skills shortage.

The Telecommunications Industry Teacher Information Day and the *Telecommunications Schools Pathway Project* provides an example of how education, training and industry partnerships can be formed in order to support, promote and develop a workforce sector.

The next phase of the project will support teacher training to enable delivery of the Certificate II in Telecommunications or Certificate II in Telecommunications Technology at Schools working in partnership with Registered Training Organisations.

Telecommunications Schools Pathway Project Information

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