

Submission to the Senate Standing Committee

Education, Employment and Workplace Relations Committee

Skilling for Climate Change

Dear Committee members,

I don't have time to check the formal process for a "submission" but I'll type in these few lines in the hope someone will read them and preferably someone in Government will actually do something constructive about the skill and investment debacle in maths/science/engineering in Australia (proudly advocated by the Howard government who sat on their backside for 10 years).

In meeting the demand for "climate change professionals" there is not much point training them if there is no work for them other than as pen pushing advisors to government who probably won't be listened to anyway, or to simply advise government on how fast the tides are rising around our prized real estate. We all know what is needed! We need to invest in new technology that lowers emissions and better uses resources in general (food, water etc). We also need to "encourage" business to get on board in more ways than emissions trading, although that will be a start. With sensible government incentives, Australia could actually improve its economy by selling high tech product and expertise. Clean coal technology is admirable but we need to do much more. Currently, Germany and China are leading the world in new power generating technology and are beginning to create enormous wealth from selling it (Australian brains are behind a lot of it). Our coal industry won't be damaged even if we don't use any ourselves, there will still be huge demand for many decades but we can't rely on it forever. Surely government needs to urgently expand research grants and encourage climate friendly industries than simply train more people to tell us how bad things are getting!

The University of NSW already has a division in the Engineering faculty called "Renewable Energy Engineering" along with photovoltaic. Our son is currently undertaking work experience in California with a small company experimenting in high altitude wind turbine power generation. As a 99+ student, he was one of only two students in Australia to gain a scholarship. These students will almost all work overseas as their talents are internationally recognised in the US, China and Europe. There is "bugger all" work for our best and brightest here in the renewable energy sector and in spite of recent announcements there is still not much on the horizon as we doggedly cling to the old technology. Government should be falling over itself to "cash up" our world class engineering/science faculties at our major Universities (and the students that attend them – HECS incentives etc) but they still have to beg for crumbs.

How do you expect to "create" these new professionals when country families have to pay a fortune to get their children to city universities and be treated like criminals if trying to get Centrelink assistance (where was the National Party helping country kids to study at Uni over the past 10 years???)? How do you expect to train these new professionals when they can earn three times the salary in the resources sector. How do you expect to train these new professionals when you pay their lecturers at universities not much more than a shop assistant. How do you expect to train these new professionals when State governments and unions refuse to lift the status of maths and

science teaching in schools by thinking outside the old box (you could offer decent scholarships to top line math/science kids and pay them a bonus to teach for three years before starting their preferred career – who knows some may even stay).

The industrial revolution created European superpowers, the IT revolution created US and Japan as superpowers. The next crop of “superpowers” will come from countries that lead the technology for cheap and clean energy for power generation and transport. Australia has already slipped at the starting blocks and given the competition our new pair of running shoes!

I humbly submit that you should be addressing the wide range of issues I have discussed rather than simply investigating whether we can “train” climate change professionals and continue to do “bugger all” about climate friendly industry and technology while watching our future economic prospects disappear.

Kim Morley