



Advancing IT through Education and Research

Media Release

AUSTRALIAN IT COMPANIES FLAG \$50m of IT OPPORTUNITIES & \$250,000 of SCHOLARSHIPS

ACS Foundation's 'Great ICT Jobs Debate' – 8th November

9th November 2007 – More than \$50m worth of Australian ICT jobs & \$250,000 scholarships are on offer in the next twelve months, a consortium of ICT industry leaders including **IBM**, **Microsoft**, **CSC** and **KPMG** announced yesterday at the ACS Foundation's 'Great IT Jobs Debate'.

The event was attended by 25 prominent CEOs, CIOs and senior ICT industry representatives, educational representatives, employees and ICT graduates. Concluding with agreement amongst participants to use combined industry and marketing muscle to broaden the perception of "Brand ICT" when it comes to communicating the benefits and opportunities of the sector to potential employees.

The 12 universities supporting the new ACS Foundation scholarships so far include the following:

- Curtin University of Technology
- Edith Cowan University
- Murdoch University
- University of Western Australia
- University of Technology Sydney
- University of Sydney
- Charles Sturt University
- Queensland University of Technology
- The University of Queensland
- University of Canberra
- Australian National University
- RMIT

Moderated by global workforce specialist and best selling author, **Peter Sheahan**, the Debate focused on job opportunities within the ICT industry and the challenges confronting the Australian technology industry workforce in the coming three to five years. An initiative of the ACS Foundation and supported by the ACS, the issues discussed at the 'Great ICT Jobs Debate' included:

- Will ICT continue to grow as an industry?
- Are the opportunities real?
- What's the accurate estimate of employment?
- How can the ICT industry best exploit its enviable position as the centrepiece of the Australian economy?

In Western Australia the ACS Foundation has provided a submission to the recent **Economics and Industry Standing Committee Report no 6 in the 37th Parliament** on "The State Government's Role in Developing and Promoting Information and Communications Technology (ICT) in Western Australia."



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Western Australia has the most active State Chapter of the ACS Foundation in the country with our own Administration Officer and hard working and dedicated committee. The WA Chapter has been operating for 5 years and has provided around 100 scholarships at a value of over \$685,000 to University students.

ACS Foundation Executive Director, John Ridge, said the Debate was the first in a series of annual events to bring industry minds together to leverage the significant job opportunities afforded by the Australian ICT sector:

“Australia’s ICT sector is a gold mine of opportunity for current and future workers – and if we can harness this opportunity carefully, our sector can help take the Australian economy into a new frontier,” said John.

“Today’s debate is the start of a series of important conversations to raise the awareness of this opportunity. We need this message to reach graduates, high school student, parents, careers advisors and mature aged workers in other fields and disciplines, who may be considering a career change, on the career opportunities and skills that are in demand not only within the ICT industry, but other industries such as advertising, film, finance and architecture – as ICT underpins every sector of the economy.

“As such, we are delighted with the outcomes of today’s event as we were able to announce more \$250,000 worth of scholarships for people enrolling in ICT courses. We look forward to making this an annual event and to announcing further job and scholarship opportunities in the future”, said Mr Ridge.

John Debrincat, Chairman, ACS Foundation made the announcement of **\$250,000** worth of *‘Innovation Creativity and Transformation Scholarships’* (ICT Scholarships) to encourage enrolments in ICT courses.

“The scholarships are supported by the ACS Foundation, ACS, IBM, and Tripoint, and will be awarded at the beginning of the next academic year. The scholarships will be awarded to students at those universities, who also contribute financially. 11 universities throughout Australia are taking part in the program thus far and Sydney University has contributed five scholarships, which will be targeted at women. The number of scholarships will continue to grow over the next few months and we realistically expect the value of them will reach \$500,000 or beyond,” said Mr Debrincat.

Mr Debrincat today called on governments and industry to provide further financial support for these scholarships through the ACS Foundation. “In this election year with the focus on skills and productivity it seems an appropriate commitment for both the Federal Government and the opposition to make,” he said.

Information and applications for these scholarships can be completed via the relevant University web sites, and information regarding them can also be gained via the ACS Foundation web site.

ACS President Philip Argy, commented “The ubiquity and persuasiveness of ICT is now embedded everywhere. With every second person using technology to improve their



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lives and lifestyle in some way, the spectrum of opportunity for those with ICT skills is now incredibly broad.

“The job opportunities discussed today amongst the group are impressive and demonstrate the truly dynamic and fulfilling nature of ICT careers. An important outcome of today’s forum was that the focus should not only be centered on graduates and high school students, but also on mature aged workers. There needs to be far greater focus placed on re-skilling ICT workers, as this assists in helping ensure workers’ value in the workplace, and also provides greater flexibility. With the pending Federal Election, the ACS calls on both political parties to address and support retaining as key initiative to addressing skill issues, including mature aged workers within our industry”, said Mr Argy.

One of the initiatives announced yesterday by the ACS to add information depth and value to ICT careers, is an upgraded ICT Careers Portal (www.acs.org.au/ictcareers), which assists careers seekers, career advisers, students and parents, by providing them with useful information on how to grow an ICT career and career options that are available.

Peter Sheahan, Workforce Specialist and author concluded:

“This is a huge industry...the future of an economy with 21 million people is likely to be in our cleverness in our ability to innovate and change... ICT should be the centre point for [that economy] moving forward. Whether it be via other industries like new alternative energy sources, ICT is going to underpin those industries and that economic growth no matter what we ride home on the back of ... ICT is a core part of how we grow and move forward.”

Key comments made by group participants included the following:

Charles Noble, Vice President, ITDelivery, IBM Australia and New Zealand, commented, “All the boundaries are blurring. We have people join IBM intending to pursue a particular technology strain that move across to something completely different within six months. We need to break away from the mindset that suggests that IT is about writing code. Graduates come to our company with a degree - not necessarily related to computing - and they take up roles in HR, Communications, and Finance... we are literally crossing all those boundaries, and that fusion of business and technology is really active. IBM is helping to develop curriculums that will show the next generation that IT is not just about computer chips anymore, it's pervasive... We are promoting this changing perception through our Service Sciences Academic program, now in 70 universities worldwide, including RMIT, Berkley, Stanford, Beijing and Sydney University ... We have about 1000 jobs in Australia that export to the rest of the world, making life-changing and world-changing contributions... I don't think that we, as an industry, have fully communicated to the general public the changing nature of our industry, nor kept students and graduates informed of the myriad career opportunities that are available.”

Peter Grant, CIO, QLD Government, said, “We ran a skills summit in QLD last year and a number of high school and university participants said that they did not choose an ICT career because they did not understand what a ICT career looked like. It's time for us to put on the table what ICT career really does look like. In government the IT framework we are using is that ICT really is a number of different careers. It can be a

career where you can build things such as an engineer or a programmer. Or you could be in the services industry. The ICT services industry is potentially the biggest white collar industry in Queensland, and it is totally invisible. Or you could have a career in changing organisations ... in helping to implement change... We also need people who can plan and architect what the future looks like... There are such diverse career options available.”

Catherine Thomas, Practice Manager, Services, Microsoft discussed: “The variety of our careers at Microsoft is enormous; the flexibility is amazing and with that comes a management challenge. I know that all of us at Microsoft are investing heavily in making sure that we have really high quality management, so that people can have fulfilling careers... I began my career with the engine room type of work and then - the amazing thing in such a great industry - you have the flexibility to move from something very technical - I moved into marketing and now I have a successful career in services.”

Mark Tims, ASIA Pacific Leader of IT Project Advisory Service Group, KPMG explained: “The ten year career plan is not there. Young people are looking for diversity - opportunities to travel, do different types of ICT related work. Some solutions we use to solve the resource crunch is that we do not recruit purely people with technology degrees. We have economics and marketing degrees for example. For us the underlying technology knowledge is important, however the ability to think, solve problems and engage in business discussion is just as important.”

When discussing the figure of job opportunities available **Michel Hedley, Education Manager, AIIA** made the statement that: “You haven’t seen anything yet. There’s a place for everyone in the industry, young and old.”

Barbara Price, HR Director, CSC, explained: “Over the past 3 years we have brought in over 50 to 100 graduates per year to our company on an increasing basis, and are looking to continue that trend into the future. The core advantage that this industry has is flexibility and you can be hooked up anywhere. The ICT industry is suitable for people at the mature aged level who want to cut down to three or four days a week, single parents and women returning to the workforce - we are flexible and that’s our advantage.”

Penny Coulter, President, ITCRA commented: “Change manager is a really hot skill and a role that’s in demand today ... There are so many roles that sit at the peripherals of business and ICT, outside the traditional ICT role.”

Chris Procter, Partner, Project Architecture: explained: “Syntax of ICT is essential to the architecture industry...people are not employable unless they have an understanding of software syntax.”

Xavier Desdoigts, Director of Technical Operations, Animal Logic at Fox Studios Australia, said: “The backroom image is destructive to the industry ... ICT is an enabler to what you want to do.”

Ian Woollett, CEO, Tripoint commented: “We are the clever country, especially in the ICT space where we have lots of innovators. As a company a key to our services is bringing innovative solutions to global companies, its clear we have the talent pool to deliver on a global stage. Mature workers value the actual work content, flexible environments and Tripoint provides this opportunity to the local market’.



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An audio copy of the event is available upon request.

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About the ACS Foundation:

An initiative of the Australian Computer Society (ACS) the ACS Foundation was established in August 2001 to encourage both private and public sponsorship of ICT scholarships, higher education and research projects. The ACS Foundation receives funding from more than 200 sponsors – including ICT companies, industry associations, Government bodies, individuals and the ACS itself. Since the ACS Foundation's inception, it has raised over \$12 million in cash and in-kind sponsorship for scholarships and research, awarding more than 650 scholarships to high achievers and people who are disadvantaged in some way.

About the ACS:

The Australian Computer Society (ACS) is the recognised professional association for those working in Information and Communications Technology, seeking to raise the standing of ICT professionals and represent their views to government, industry and the community. A member of the Australian Council of Professions, the ACS is the guardian of professional ethics and standards in the ICT sector, committed to ensuring the beneficial use of ICT for all Australians. It provides both members and non-members with opportunities for professional education, networking and certification, as well as enabling them to contribute to the development of their profession. Visit www.acs.org.au for more.