

THE AUSTRALIAN

Delayed deal signed at last



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In today's **Higher Ed Daily Brief**: After 13 years still only five out of 35 countries have signed a deal on recognition of qualifications.

Good enough to wait for

Way back in 2011 senior officials from 35 countries, including Australia, gathered in Tokyo to endorse a strengthened “UNESCO Regional Convention on the Recognition of Studies, Diplomas and Degrees in Higher Education in Asia and the Pacific”, a pact now known to its friends as the **Tokyo Convention**.

The positive news is that [the convention](#) will take effect from today in five countries. **Japan** and **South Korea** have signed on, joining **China**, **New Zealand** and **Australia** in ratifying it.

This is a good thing. “The greater recognition of qualifications will enable the 1.5 million students who studied at Australian higher education providers in 2016 to realise the full value of an Australian qualification in a globally mobile world,” says Education Minister **Simon Birmingham**.

It will give them more opportunities to work and study in the **Asia-Pacific region**.

We're not sure what happened to the other 30 countries, most of them also from the Asia-Pacific. But no sweat. This whole thing only got started in 2005 so time is clearly not an issue.

It all adds up

The maths lobby has leapt on [this week's strategy blueprint](#) from **Innovation and Science Australia (ISA)**, to remind us all where we are falling down in preparing the next generation of Australian's to deal with a digitally-dominated world.

“In 2016 only 7 per cent of Year 12 girls and just over 12 per cent of Year 12 boys enrolled in advanced mathematics,” says **Geoff Prince**, director of the **Australian Mathematical Sciences Institute**.

He adds that “out-of-field teaching is endemic in Australia with an estimated 38 per cent of Year 7-10 maths classes being without a maths-trained teacher”.

Professor Prince wholeheartedly backs the ISA recommendation that we need to urgently tackle these problems in maths education.

Reason for worry

The expected shortfall in the federal government's \$1.5 billion **Skilling Australia Fund (SAF)** is raising alarm bells in the vocational education sector. The **National Apprenticeship Employment Network (NAEN)** yesterday urged the federal government to

think about dedicating a stream of funding for vocational education to plug the gap.

The problem is that, from July of this year, the Skilling Australia Fund will rely on a levy on skilled migrants to keep it topped up. And, as *The Australian's* [John Ross has reported](#), the number of primary skilled visas fell by over a third in the first quarter of the current financial year.

No wonder people are worried.

Among the fishes

The dream of being a marine biologist will come true for up to nine Year 11 and 12 students who will be chosen for free enrolment in a **University of Tasmania** (UTAS) six-day course on Maria Island during the April school holidays. They will be doing university-level study in the course titled “**A Practical Introduction to Temperate Marine Biology**”.

The school students will join UTAS students on the course, which included collecting data on the abundance of fishes and invertebrates.

”We now see more species from New South Wales than ever before as waters continue to warm,” says course coordinator **Scott Ling**.

Student who want to apply should go to the website of the university’s [Institute for Marine and Antarctic Studies](#).



Court rules on cattle DNA patent

SUE NEALES

The Federal Court has passed a complex judgment on a Cargill JV’s plan to patent the genome of all Australian cattle.



Selective schools for rich kids

REBECCA URBAN

Students from highly privileged backgrounds are filling the classrooms at academically selective schools.



‘ISIS student came here to kill’

SIMONE FOX KOOB

A Bangladeshi student accused of stabbing a Melbourne father allegedly told a neighbour she had ‘come here to kill’.



COMMENT

Barnaby’s folly: ignoring history

DENNIS SHANAHAN

A warning to public figures — if there is something in your private life which would interest the public, someone will publish it.



Amelia Earhart, mystery solved?

THE ECONOMIST

New analysis rejects the belief that bones found on Nikumaroro island in 1940 were those of a male.



COMMENT

ABC blinkered on economics

CHRIS MITCHELL

ABC political reporters on TV and radio should do some courses on economics and business.

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