

## Call for more regional funding

Major universities with regional campuses are calling for more federal funding of regional higher education.

A delegation of vice-chancellors' recently met the Minister for Education, Science and Training, Julie Bishop, and Opposition spokesperson Stephen Smith, to put the case for increased regional funding.

The vice-chancellors pointed out that university participation rates in regional Australia were about the same as national rates in countries such as Uruguay and lower than in Argentina and Korea.

"Largely because of the small scale of university operations in some regional areas, universities are subsidising their regional presence by as much as 100 per cent," La Trobe University vice-chancellor Paul Johnson said.

"This is not sustainable, particularly in an environment in which the government is demanding that universities carefully manage their finances," he said.

"Students in regional Australia are absolutely entitled to receive a quality tertiary education. They are equally entitled to have their capacity to attend regional campuses properly funded by Government."

In a briefing paper the universities outline the key issues relating to regional higher education provision. The paper highlights the critical role regional higher education provision plays in the economic and social development of regional areas.

The percentage of young people in inland regional locations who have completed year 12 is about half that for metropolitan areas. The percentage of working aged with bachelor degrees is also about half that for metropolitan areas.

Regional universities are major drivers of local economies, contributing over \$2 billion to regional output.

"In some regional centres the local university accounts directly or indirectly for up to 32 per cent of the local economy," Johnson said.

La Trobe's Bendigo campus generates \$148 million in output and more than a thousand jobs, value adding \$91 million to the local economy.

Monash University's Gippsland campus generates an estimated \$346 million of economic benefit for the region and directly creates more than 2000 jobs for the local region.

The paper says regional universities also make a major contribution to researching and solving problems in regional Australia ranging from water quality, plant genetics, livestock and other agriculture, bio-diversity and environmental changes, to regional health and delivery.

Regional also play a major role in the social fabric of nearly 100 regional cities and towns in Australia. Without regional provision all these cities and towns would lose large numbers of 18 and 19-year-olds to the major cities.

## The odd sock helps landmine victims




La Trobe University Health Sciences' students have mobilised odd socks from various people including Essendon footballer Michael Long, *Backyard Blitz's* Jamie Durie, the Anglican Archbishop of Melbourne, Philip Freier, and members of the Choir of Hard Knocks.

"Angelina Jolie has been asked to donate a sock because the event supports a University initiative that teaches prosthetics skills to Cambodians to help landmine victims. The program

is carried out by La Trobe staff and student volunteers," lecturer in Public Health, Dr Priscilla Robinson said.

The innovative installation called 'OddSocks' was on display at St Paul's Cathedral in the city during last week's Fringe Festival. The centrepiece is a typical Australian backyard clothesline.

"Half of all Australians will suffer from some sort of foot problem," Robinson said. 

**Pic by Beth Rankin**

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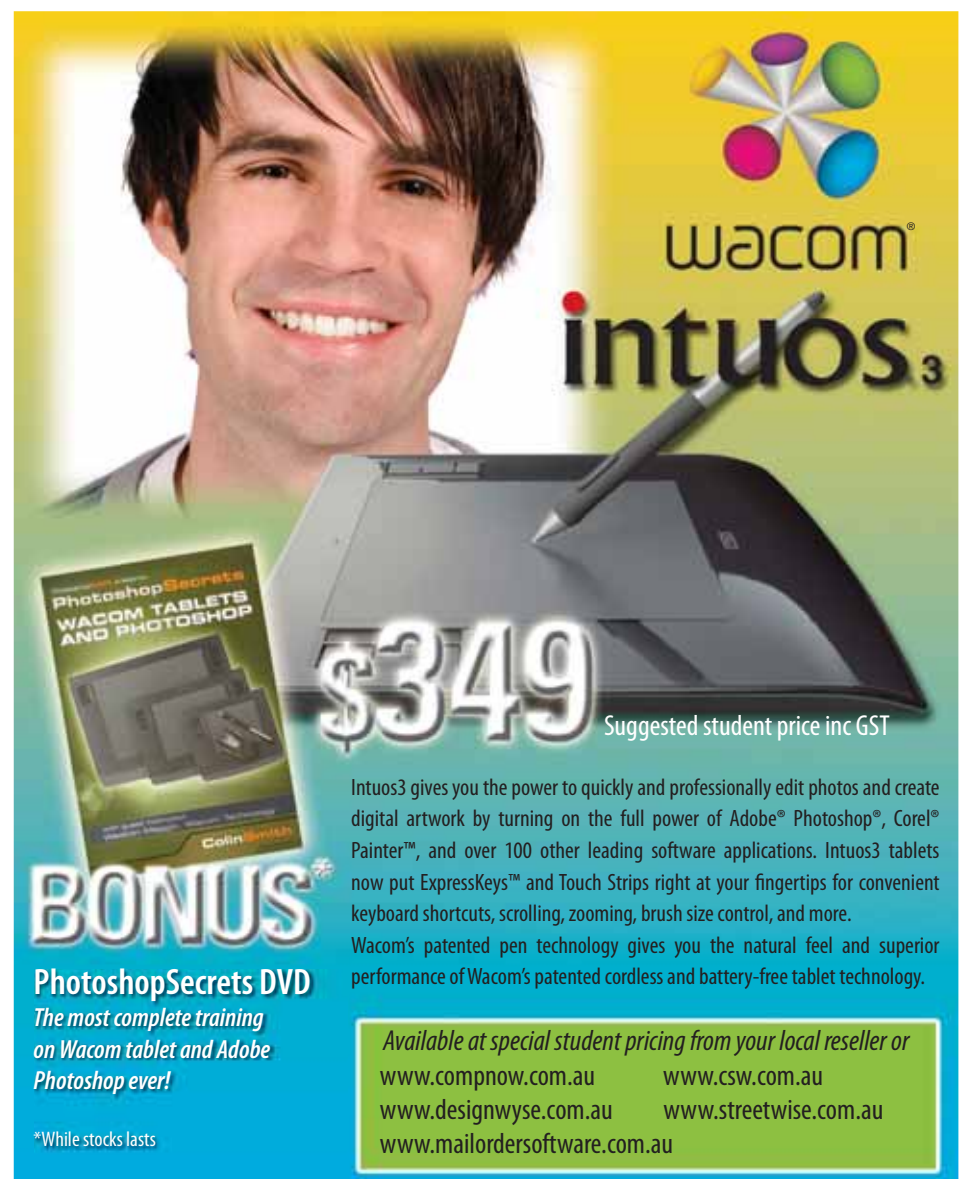
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