

# Scrapping enrolment caps

*“Could result in students flocking to prestigious institutions”*

**A**t present, universities can over-enrol students by up to 5 per cent. Deputy Prime Minister Julia Gillard said that cap would increase to 10 per cent next year and then be removed by 2012.

Gillard said university funding would shift from the current system – with course places allocated and funded centrally – to a model based predominantly on student demand.

The move is designed to help achieve the Federal Government’s new targets for 40 per cent of young people to have at least a bachelor’s degree by 2025, up from the current rate of 32 per cent.

Supporters argue the new system will give universities more flexibility, but opponents say it could result in students flocking to prestigious institutions, putting at risk smaller and regional campuses.

In the first of three speeches responding to the Bradley review of higher education, Gillard said Australia had lost touch with many of its international competitors. Too few people from poor backgrounds were enrolled, completion rates were too low and student-to-staff ratios had climbed as academics were lured overseas, she said.

“We can address these problems, regain touch with the top-ranked nations or watch our prosperity decline,” she said.

Griffith University senior lecturer in vocational education Leesa Wheelahan says substantial expansion of the present 10 degree-granting TAFEs would be

needed throughout Australia to achieve the Government targets.

“I can’t see how the Government can meet its expansion target of 40 per cent of 24 to 34-year-olds with a degree without involving TAFE,” Wheelahan said.

“The idea that you have a university campus in every small regional town is ridiculous and not feasible; but TAFE is in most tiny towns, or accessible to them.”

As universities adopted new credit pathways from vocational education, Wheelahan said the Government’s integration push could help achieve its expansion targets.

Wheelahan said Universities Australia’s new credit arrangements were helpful in promoting student transfer, but TAFE students’ access to elite universities remained constrained.

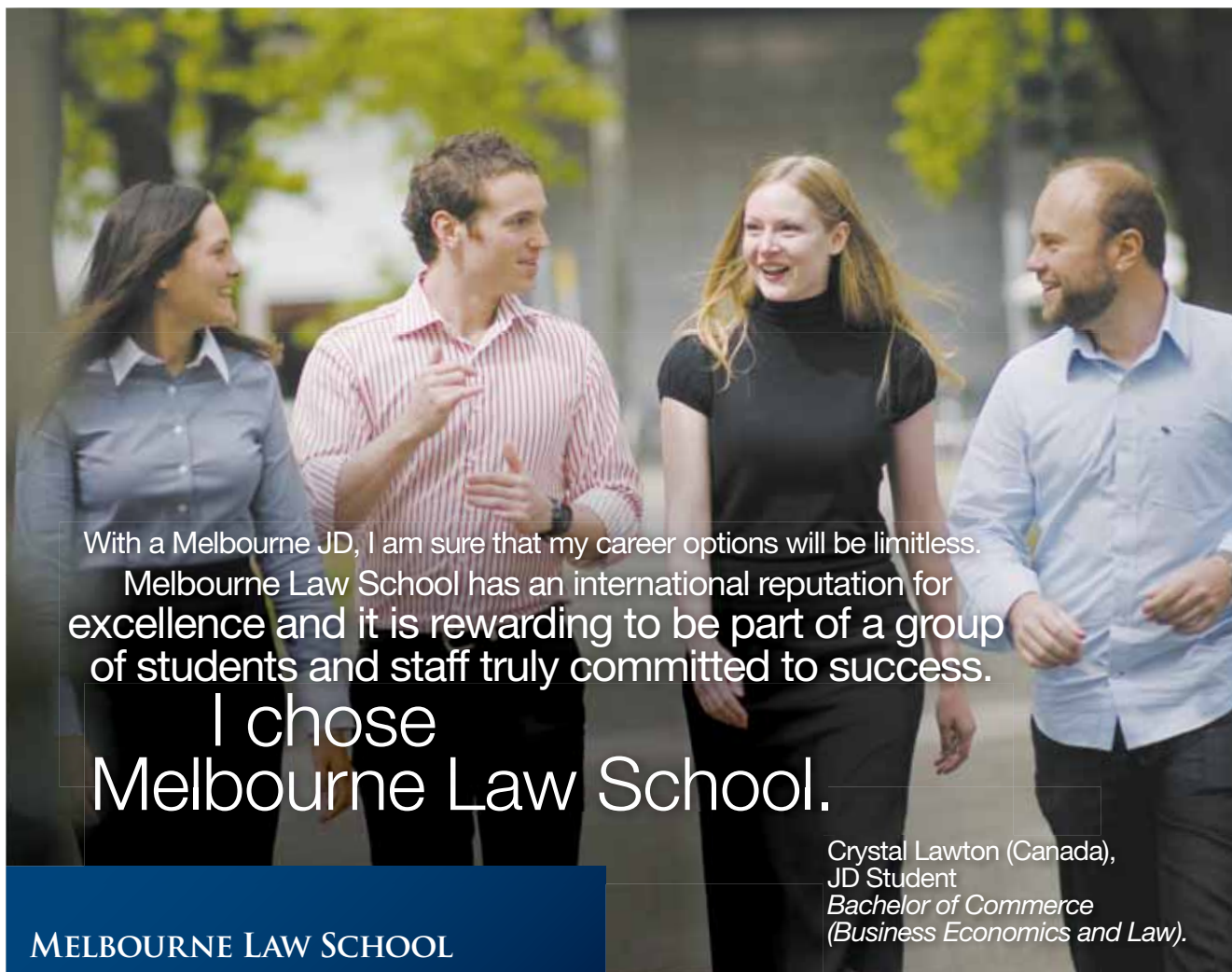


## Student only hub

**S**winburne Hawthorn has opened a students only ‘project hub’, open 24/7 for final year students to work on their major projects, meet with clients and community partners and use for group project work

“Students will have access to the hub, but academic staff will not,” said academic director of Swinburne Professional Learning, Nicolette Lee.

“This reverses the normal structure of university spaces, and provides students with ownership and independence as they prepare for professional life.”



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