

Briefs...

Indian numbers drop

Melbourne's educational institutions are bracing for a decrease in students from India, as RMIT, VU and Melbourne University all report declining applications following assaults on overseas pupils. The Federal Minister for Education Julia Gillard recently spent five days visiting India in an attempt to restore confidence in Australia's reputation-sensitive international education industry.

Permanent residency courses under fire

Meanwhile, universities are pushing for a crackdown in vocational training to root out the visa-driven element of the international student market, which they argue is causing collateral damage to the reputation of the sector. Universities Australia chief executive Glenn Withers said there was concern that pathways

to permanent residency were overwhelming education objectives in areas such as "shorter courses in the vocational end".

Street art

Hundreds of students in eye-popping costumes took part in a protest rally last month over the future of the Victorian College of the Arts. Following its merger with Melbourne University's faculty of music the college is poised to introduce the university's Melbourne Model, a broad undergraduate degree with postgrad specialization. Students are worried the new curriculum will limit practical training.

Drink driving licked

The Get Home Safe Kit, designed by Monash students contains two "alcohol strips" which when licked, change colour if a person's blood alcohol level is more than .05. The kits are available by emailing amazya.yaa@gmail.com

Current gappers will keep youth allowance

"However bad news for thousands of students in poverty"

Federal Education Minister Julia Gillard has announced a delay in changes to the youth allowance that would have caught out students now working a gap year, but about 61,000 of those on support and working part-time will pay for the concession.

About 5000 students will benefit from the decision to delay by six months tougher eligibility criteria for those working a gap year to qualify as independents, and who can show they would have to move

to attend university.

For these mostly regional students the changes that were to come into effect from January 1 will not now apply until June 30.

That will cost the budget \$150 million. With the government determined to keep its youth allowance changes cost-neutral, it has chosen to delay more generous earnings thresholds by 18 months.

From next year the earnings thresholds at which youth allowance is reduced was to rise from \$236 a fortnight to \$400 a fortnight, but that now will not happen until July 2012.

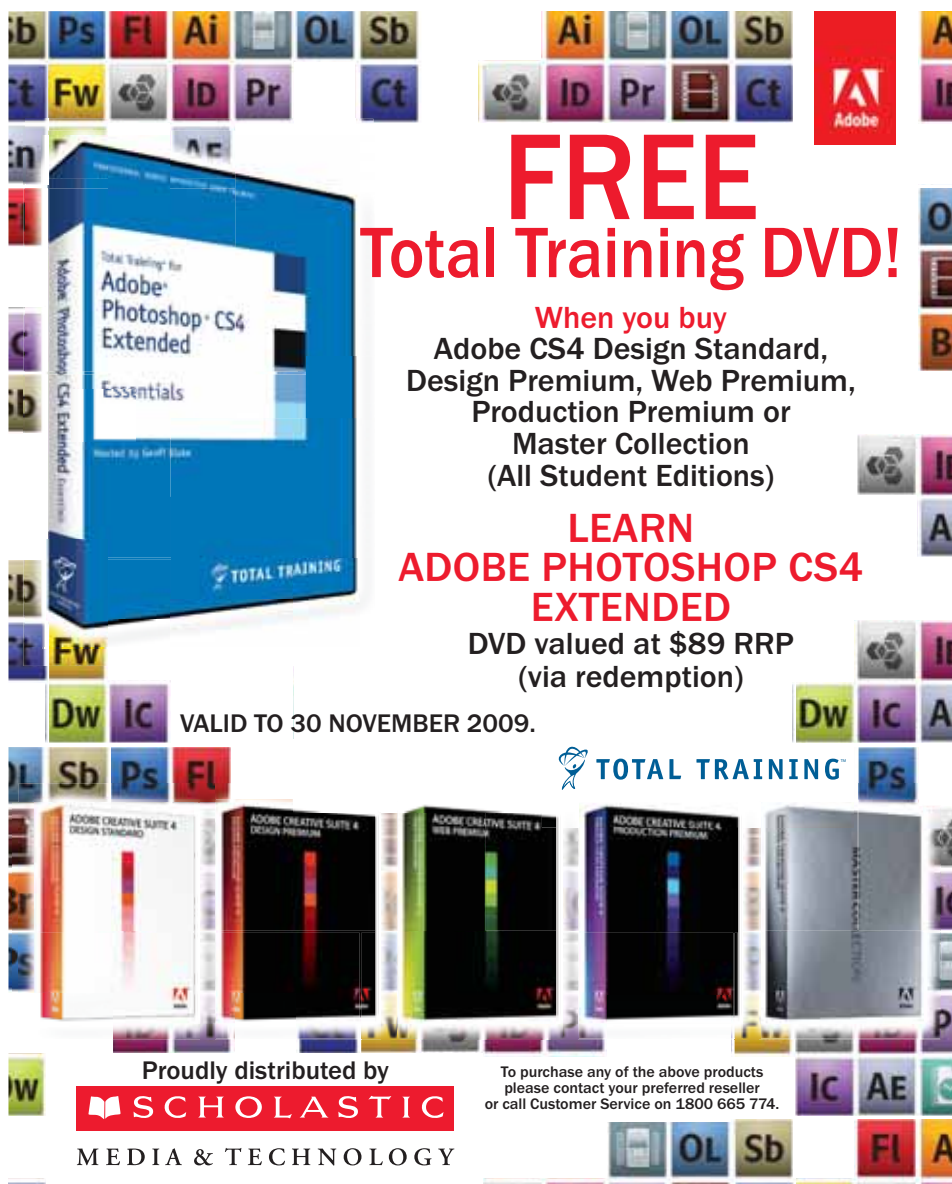
National Union of Students president, David Barrow said while it isn't the unconditional push back hoped for, the six month push-back is good news for those negatively effected by the transition to the new scheme.

"However (the) announcement is bad news for thousands of students who now must spend an extra 18 months in student poverty.

"The amount a youth allowance recipient can earn from other income is currently \$236. This figure has not been updated since the mid 1990s," he said.

"It is extremely difficult for students to live off what they earn through youth allowance and what they can earn from their part time jobs.

"The government has been stubborn in its commitment to a budget-neutral package, this is just not good enough. To fix youth allowance and to make it truly fair, youth allowance needs greater funding in the budget.



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