

## High first year drop out rate

*“The current youth allowance system is broken”*

**F**irst year students are dropping out of Victorian universities at a troubling rate, with experts blaming financial difficulties, academic failure and poor course choices.

As many as one in five students leave within their first year of study, a government review has found.

Victoria University had the highest first-year drop-out rate in the state, at 23 per cent, according to the 2007 attrition data released by the Federal Government.

Other universities with high first-year churn rates included

Ballarat (21 per cent), La Trobe (20 per cent), and Swinburne (17 per cent). Melbourne had the lowest percentage of first-year drop-outs, at 9 per cent.

An average of 16 per cent of students dropped out in their first year across all Victorian universities, compared to a national attrition rate of 19 per cent.

International first-year students proved more tenacious at each of the eight Victorian universities in the review, with an average of only 9 per cent leaving in 2007, compared to 16 per cent in 2001.

The head of the Australian Review of Higher Education, Professor Denise Bradley, who conducted the study, has called on universities to set targets to improve student retention rates.

A separate study by Melbourne University researcher, John Polesel found that more than one in six drop-outs had worked 15

hours or more to help pay for tertiary costs, compared with 9 per cent of those working up to 14 hours a week and 4.8 per cent who did not work at all.

The National Union of Students out-going president David Barrow said, “The current youth allowance system is broken; rortable, inequitable and causing students to drop out. A simple, fair and generous system will help keep students stay at uni.

“Any change to youth allowance is expensive, but it comes back to the future economy in spades when Australia has a highly skilled, highly paid tax paying workforce,” he said.

“International students have lower drop out rates because they have usually invested a high amount of capital into their courses before arriving in Australia and are under huge pressure from their families and communities to complete their studies” he said.



## Solar powered lunch at Monash

**M**onash University has installed a large network of solar panels at its Clayton campus as part of its commitment to reducing its carbon footprint.

The photovoltaic array is believed to be the largest at any Australian university and is capable of generating about 100,000 kWh of electricity a year – enough to power 25 average-sized homes.

The 416 solar panels are installed on the roof of the Campus Centre – the building that houses many of the food outlets, shops and student support

services. The power the panels produce is fed back into the campus’ electricity grid.

A computer-controlled screen at the heart of the Campus Centre gives real-time statistics of the amount of energy being produced and provides examples of carbon emission savings.

Ecologically Sustainable Design strategy manager Brett Walters (pictured) said the installation of the solar panels was part of an integrated strategy to reduce the university’s carbon footprint and was hopefully the first of several significant renewable energy investments.

# free ENGINEERING EXPO 2010

*A showcase of how engineers make it so.*

25th March 2010

Etihad Stadium, Melbourne, 2 - 7pm



Event Sponsors



Engineering Education Australia

This event will provide you access to;

- 60+ Exhibitors
- FREE Seminars
- Recruitment Opportunities
- Engineering Industry Insight
- Career and Professional Development Advice
- Updates on Engineering Projects
- Leadership Information
- Knowledge on Engineering Capability

*For more information..*

Noël Dos Santos, Manager - Membership Marketing,  
Engineers Australia, Victoria Division  
Level 2 / 21 Bedford Street, North Melbourne  
Victoria, Australia 3051  
Tel +61 3 9321 1726



ENGINEERS  
AUSTRALIA  
Victoria Division

*Register online at [www.engineeringexpo.org.au](http://www.engineeringexpo.org.au)*