

MEDIA RELEASE

Soaring demand promises securer future for COVID-19 generation jobseekers with a passion for cyber security and ICT

- **Australia suffers largest cyber security talent shortfall in the world**
- **Shortage forecast to grow to 100,000 by 2025**
- **40 per cent of SMEs need cyber security help in 2020 as COVID-19 increases risk**
- **VET cyber enrolments soar as demand grows**
- **National Skills Week: 24 – 30 August 2020**

SYDNEY, Monday 10 August 2020 – Australia has seen a **rapid rise in jobseekers, employees and students turning to potential careers in cyber security and information communications technology (ICT)** as the risk of COVID-19-related cyberattacks and demand for cyber security experts soar.

National Skills Week Chair Brian Wexham said enrolments in cyber security and ICT courses at Australian vocational education and training (VET) campuses have skyrocketed in the past three years as industries digitise and customers move online.

“Combine this trend with COVID-19 and opportunities in this area have accelerated exponentially, with people from all ages and stages of their working lives now realising the potential of cyber training and secure careers,” Mr Wexham said.

Interest in enrolling at one VET campus in Victoria alone had increased ten-fold in the past three years, he said.

Around 75 students were enrolled in the Certificate IV Cyber Security course at Melbourne’s Box Hill Institute at end 2019, jumping to 480 students by second semester 2020.

Of this cohort, around 100 were female students – up from zero female representation when the course launched in 2017, with the Federal Government’s introduction of fee-free courses for in-demand areas such as cyber security helping boost student diversity.

While the increase in cyber enrolments was positive, Mr Wexham said the cyber security sector would continue to experience greater demand for employees than supply of job-ready candidates in the foreseeable future - offering tremendous ongoing opportunities for students, up-skillers and re-skillers.

While Australian Bureau of Statistics figures confirm only one in 10 Australian businesses reported a cyber scare in June 2019, industry figures suggest around 50 per cent of global businesses have experienced a cyber security scare of some kind already this year – fuelled in part by the large numbers of us working remotely and driving demand for cyber experts.



“Cyber security and ICT are significant in-demand growth sectors, identified and forecast by the Federal Government to help fast track the recovery of Australia’s economy and create thousands of new jobs in the long term.”

Prime Minister Scott Morrison recently announced Australia’s largest-ever investment in cyber security, confirming \$1.35 billion funding for the Australian Signals Directorate (ASD) and the Australian Cyber Security Centre. Of this, \$470 million would also be used to create more than 500 new jobs within ASD.

“Around 40 per cent of Australian SMEs are expected to use external cyber security specialists this year - with COVID-19 driving unprecedented levels of cyber risk and attack.

“This growing demand has highlighted the widening gap between demand for cyber specialists and the current supply of job-ready graduates and skilled workers available.

Leading educators warn Australia has one of the worst talent shortfalls for cyber security specialists in the world - with the industry expected to need 11,000 more workers by 2027.

Looking at cyber and ICT more broadly, the Australian Computer Society (ACS) and Deloitte Access Economics forecast a shortfall of 100,000 tech workers in Australia over the next five years to match demand. That figure would need to double to 200,000 to be on par with world leading digital economies such as the UK.

Box Hill Institute’s Head of Cyber and Information Technology Jo Cave said the campus’ cyber security courses provide both a base level and a pathway course developed in consultation and collaboration with industry and nationally recognised as providing solid curriculum for direct industry entry at a paraprofessional level.

“It has provided a credible pool of additional employees for industry at a time when cyber security is rapidly growing and there is a well-documented skills shortage,” she said. “It’s also provided industry with course graduates who have industry-ready skills at technician levels after 12 months and/or the option to take on paid interns after 4-6 months study to fast track learning and fill workforce gaps while the employee completes their course.

“Paid internships, particularly those provided by financial Institutions, have been a great benefit and the take up rate of students with an internship into full employment is close to 100 per cent.

In 2019, courses in the cyber security field have increased seven-fold. We now have over 450 students studying across three campuses at Nelson, CAE and Lilydale. Students have the option to study part time, full time and evenings to help complement their studies and maintain employment and industry partnerships.”

Ms Cave said all graduates benefit from the strong relationship TAFE has with industry, including internships, as well as exposure to international experience and cyber security industry connections.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics June labour market figures confirmed a 0.3 per cent jump in unemployment to 7.4 per cent – the highest in 22 years.

“Younger workers have been particularly hard hit, with youth unemployment soaring to 16.4 per cent and to 17.1 per cent for young men. Undertaking vocational education and training courses now represent the most productive use of time long-term for anyone determined to move into a securer job for life.”

Mr Wexham's comments come on the eve of **National Skills Week**, held annually to highlight the role of VET in providing career pathways, traineeships, apprenticeships and job-ready graduates across a range of industries and professions.

National Skills Week also spotlights key areas of employment demand, skills gaps over the next five years, information and resources on the training required to obtain them, and the importance of trades, skills and VET to Australia's economic recovery.

"The week plays a central role in assisting parents, students and jobseekers as to the many and varied careers out there for young people and asking them to think about matching their passions and skill strengths with career outcomes. A great place to start is the Federal Government's www.joboutlook.gov.au website, which does just that."

National Skills Week this year runs from 24 – 30 August.

CASE STUDIES

Georgia Cadzow

Course: Student | Certificate IV Cyber Security | Box Hill Institute, Victoria

Ever since I can remember, everyone told me, "You should go into IT! You would be so good at it!"

I mean, yeah, I liked PCs and I was a bit of a nerd but I could never see myself in a career where all day, every day, I asked them "Have you tried turning off and on again?" That seemed so mundane to me. I wanted to go onto bigger and better things.

I was 11 years old when I decided "I'm gonna be a coroner!" Then as I grew older, I began to realise, Australia doesn't have a lot of crime, so back to the drawing board I went. I thought about astrophysics, psychology, accounting and fashion. But none of them were right. And that's how I ended up enrolling in a Certificate IV in Cyber Security at Box Hill.

Cyber security is a vast and deeply interesting field. The skills and knowledge that I have gained here I never thought I would be smart enough to understand. I came into this course with no knowledge of coding, networking (apart from my router at home) or offensive security. Now, I have an understanding of these skills and a desire to understand more.

There is a wealth of opportunities from jobs to events to competitions.

Cameron Thiele

Course: Graduate | Certificate IV Cyber Security | Box Hill Institute, Victoria

I started studying generic IT night classes (short courses) at Box Hill Institute to bring back some useful skills to my employer. I thought it would be a lot easier to solve IT problems in-house when things inevitably went wrong.

It was while studying that I learned Box Hill had begun teaching cyber security. This immediately caught my attention. I enrolled the following year in the Certificate IV in Cyber Security, taking two days a week of annual leave for a year. My workplace had been on the end of cyber security incidents and this seemed like a great skill to bring back to them.

Only looking back now do I realise I always had an interest in cyber security. Trying my luck on hackthissite.org, playing cat and mouse with our school administrators and dabbling with code. I was always curious, but never would have thought it as a legitimate profession.

Studying at Box Hill has completely changed my profession and my life. The Cert IV was my entry point to working in cyber security as I was offered a traineeship via the course. This enabled me to spend 12 months at NABvrotating through many cyber security divisions.

Post my traineeship I took on a role working at Shelde as a cyber security consultant. I get to work with a variety of enterprise clients and on constantly changing technology stacks. The work is extremely diverse and challenging, but this is what makes it exciting.

For further information, visit www.nationalskillsweek.com.au

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