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Education in WA

SPECIAL REPORT



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“COVID-19 has created a unique opportunity for Curtin to think quite deeply about the value proposition it can provide to young Australians - Harlene Hayne

Harlene Hayne became Curtin's vice-chancellor in April.

Photo: David Henry

Unis keep weather eye on COVID storm

Recovering from COVID-19 is shaping up to be a long haul for WA's universities.



Jordan Murray
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FEW commentators would have expected any of Western Australia's universities to turn a profit this past year, particularly given limited international student enrolments at the height of the COVID-19 pandemic.

Findings from Universities Australia published in February articulated the extent of these losses across the country, including 17,300 jobs lost and operating revenue declining by 5 per cent for the entire sector.

If any immediate damage has been done to WA's universities, though, it appears limited.

Only two of the state's four public universities reported a loss this past year, with Curtin University and Murdoch University reporting respective operating deficits of \$1.1 million and \$6.3 million.

The University of Western Australia and Edith Cowan University, meanwhile, managed to report a profit, respectively finishing the year \$55.1 million and \$23.4 million in the black.

Not including The University of Notre Dame, WA's only privately operated university, the state's public institutions maintained collective operating profit of \$71.3 million in 2020, albeit a steep decline on operating profitability of \$262.8 million in 2019.

While it is tempting to look at these figures and assume the sector has survived the pandemic, closer scrutiny is warranted, not least because revenue from onshore, fee-paying international students comprised only marginal losses for the sector, declining by just \$11.7 million on 2019 results.

By comparison, investment revenue in that time declined by \$157 million across the state's four public universities.

Revenue from domestic students remained relatively stable for all universities, as domestic enrolments remained steady, and the federal government guaranteed all funding for universities made through the Commonwealth Grant Scheme.

This coming year is unlikely to be as kind to the sector, however.

International borders are not due to reopen until the middle of 2022, impacting new commencements until semester two of next year at the earliest, while already limited financial support from the federal government is set to lapse at the end of the financial year.

That has left WA's universities to plan for even tougher conditions ahead of 2025, when international students should return to Australia at

pre-pandemic levels and demand in the domestic market is expected to increase because of the Costello baby boom.

Eeva Leinonen, who is stepping down as Murdoch's vice-chancellor in October to head up Maynooth University in Ireland, told *Business News* the sector would likely feel the full financial impact of COVID-19 over the next three years.

She explained Murdoch's move to constrain costs, by reducing face-to-face lectures and offering redundancies, would help the university confront long-term challenges.

"There is a real understanding among staff that these difficult decisions had to be made," she said.

"It's only the start of the journey, because last year we had all international students ... so we hadn't lost that pipeline yet."

UWA vice-chancellor Amit Chakma has similarly telegraphed his university's need to increase its net operating result by \$150 million to address underlying structural financial issues in the years ahead.

While Professor Chakma believes a third of that figure has already been

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3 Monkeys thrives with Insight.



Francis Fragomeni from 3 Monkeys AV and Domenic Manno from Insight Advisory Group

The Perth company with the quirky name; 3 Monkeys Audiovisual, has grown from a fledgling business run from the owner's attic to a multi-million dollar enterprise about to move into its own uber-modern showroom in Bayswater.

Owner Francis Fragomeni says Insight Advisory Group has been right alongside it every step of the way, providing an impressive range of services from business advice to bookkeeping and payroll.

He explains the relationship started in the year 2000 when Insight principal Domenic Manno introduced him to a business opportunity; the chance to become a partner in an audio hire company. That business grew, even developing a sales division before Francis sold his share and moved into wholesaling.

He changed direction again when he started 3 Monkeys Audiovisual in 2008 from his house. In just 18 months it grew so big it had to move out of home, and into dedicated commercial premises near the city.

The company has moved to larger premises twice since and with advice from Insight, recently purchased land in Bayswater where its double storey offices and ultra-modern showroom are nearing completion at Tonkin Park Industrial Estate.

Francis explains that in the early days, the sector was focused solely on the

audio – microphones and speakers for venues like halls and theatres. That morphed into audiovisual, with customers seeking gear like large screen projectors and LED screens and as technology progressed even further, into interactive whiteboards for schools and video conferencing for the corporate sector.

With the COVID-19 pandemic limiting travel for conferencing and forcing employees to work from home, business is going from strength to strength.

"We've moved from a business that did about 80 percent of our sales in education to one that now is 50 percent education and 50 corporate," Francis explains.

"We're not about just selling you a box; we provide the training too, which is something we've always done; if we're providing you with a PA system, we train your staff to not just use it, but to make your event much better by using it.

"If we're supplying a school or company with interactive whiteboards, we train staff in how to use the hardware and the software that supports that."

And with the support of Insight's expertise, 3 Monkeys Audiovisual continues to explore creative growth opportunities.

Francis explains its push into robotics and drone technology is in its very early stages and an exciting next phase for the company.

Domenic says Insight's role with 3 Monkeys AV has grown with the company. It currently monitors profits, implements financial systems, takes care of bookkeeping, payroll and reporting systems.

He says as a creative and agile company, 3 Monkeys AV needed suitably agile business supports and he's enjoyed working with the company to provide them.

"This company has grown very rapidly and expanded into different markets and its needs have grown with that.

"Insight has needed to adapt with it to meet those changes," Domenic explains.

"Just as an example; some audio equipment; like hearing assistance systems, are GST free. Educational products will have their own set of tax complexities, so we've had to work as a team to ensure we provide the company and the authorities with accurate reporting.

"And as much as it's been a challenge it's been hugely rewarding to learn and adapt with this client along the way.

"We'll be right there as Francis and his team take the next challenge and move into delivering a more service based product in the STEM sphere."

Francis appreciates that Insight is more efficient in what it does than he could be and importantly, he says, it

freed up his team, allowing them to focus on their core business. This enables him to work more closely with clients and their audiovisual needs.

"There's more value to me in having our team focus on our clients' audiovisual needs, rather than the administrative tasks," he says.

"But it's not just the administration side of things. Insight presents me with advice, giving me comfort and certainty about the outcome which enables me to move forward with confidence."

And for Domenic, he says with the purpose built new premises nearly finished, the relationship will morph again into more of a consultative one; Insight has always been a valuable sounding board for Francis's business ideas.

"Though we don't always agree and that's the way it should be," he laughs.



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resolved through growing revenue and scaling back expenses to the tune of \$30 million, he said \$40 million of spending was still on the chopping block, with redundancies and job cuts likely to follow.

Professor Chakma told *Business News* most of these matters would be addressed in the coming year, and that he had begun focusing on bread-and-butter issues, such as increasing parking on grounds and appealing to domestic students.

“Cost cutting, from my point of view, is not taking up much of my time anymore,” Professor Chakma said.

“I don’t wake up and worry about cost cutting.

“We have a plan; we are executing the plan.

“That does not mean it is easy, but we are doing it.

“We’ll get most of the job done by the end of the year and we’ll hopefully see the financial result next year.”

While reining in expenses remains top of mind for many, ECU, which is the only public university in the state to avoid major cost cutting so far, has devoted significant resources to its \$695 million city campus, due for completion in 2025.

How did Western Australia’s universities perform in 2020?



	Net operating result	Fees from onshore, fee-paying overseas students	As a % of operating revenue	International students studying onshore	As a % of full-time student cohort
UWA	\$55.1m	\$138.2m	14%	4,099	22%
Curtin	- \$1m	\$153.3m	17%	6,516	11%
ECU	\$23.4m	\$116m	24%	6,401	23%
Murdoch	- \$6.3m	\$76.8m	20%	2,923	17%

ECU vice-chancellor Steve Chapman said he was confident ECU would remain profitable in 2021, while suggesting the new CBD campus would give the university a competitive

advantage when international students returned to WA.

“When we are faced with perhaps the biggest crisis [we could be faced with], we’re doing the most ambitious thing

the university has ever done,” Professor Chapman told *Business News*.

“I think that sends a superb message out to staff that, yes, of course it is tough, but we are thinking about the future.”



Catholic schools support one-in-five children in WA to discover their potential.

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Similarly, Curtin has turned attention to its \$500 million development, encompassing a design school, student accommodation, hotel rooms and apartments, in nearby Bentley, which is set for completion next year.

Vice-chancellor Harlene Hayne said the hub had been envisioned as a locale for international students, but that the university now had a chance to offer a point of difference to students in regional WA and other states.

“COVID-19 has created a unique opportunity for Curtin to think quite deeply about the value proposition it can provide to young Australians who might live in Perth,” she said.

“That would not have been possible if those colleges were booked out exclusively by international students.

“For me, it does provide a really great opportunity to test our ability to create a real community here in this massive university.”

Internationals

While these moves should ensure the ongoing sustainability for the sector, welcoming international students back to the state remains a clear priority, given WA’s universities earned \$488.1 million – about 17 per cent of total

“There is a real understanding among staff that these difficult decisions had to be

made - Eeva Leinonen

operating revenue for the sector – from onshore, fee-paying international students in 2020.

Part of the appeal of this cohort is that it is not subject to enrolment caps, unlike domestic enrolments, which have been subject to a federal freeze in funding since 2017.

Although additional places have been funded as part of the latest federal budget, enrolling international students would be the most obvious solution to the sector’s financial woes.

When international students will return in any meaningful sense, however, remains an open-ended question.

Alan Tudge, who took over as federal education minister this past year, was non-committal on a date when speaking at a Universities Australia event earlier this month, instead citing federal budget papers that assume the

international border will reopen in the second half of 2022 as the most likely date.

Meanwhile, a spokesperson for the state government told *Business News* that it was far too early to consider changes to allow international students to WA.

That approach contrasts with that taken by NSW, where between 250 and 500 overseas students could return to that state’s 11 universities as part of a repatriation plan now under final consideration with the federal government.

South Australia has even pitched in to house 160 students per week in Adelaide’s northern suburbs under a now-approved repatriation plan that requires arrivals to be tested every day of their 14-day quarantine period.

In WA, the lack of urgency may be a function of the relative lack of exposure the state’s universities have to international enrolments.

Recent research from private education provider Navitas pegged the sector’s contribution to WA as just under \$2 billion.

NSW’s state government, by contrast, estimates the value of the sector to its economy to be as high as \$14 billion.

Despite that comparative measure between states, however,

international students make a significant contribution to WA’s universities on a proportional basis, with the average onshore, fee-paying international student contributing almost twice as much as the average domestic enrolment funded by the CGS.

And then there is the cultural contribution international students make to local communities. Without them, universities may lose the cosmopolitan atmosphere many domestic students sign up to experience.

“The reason we recruit international students ... is to give students from other countries around the world a great Australian experience, and for our Australian students to have the opportunity to rub shoulders with students from all over the world,” Curtin’s Professor Hayne said.

“The purpose of international students is not revenue; it’s enriching a community.

“That is the reason we want international students back at Curtin.

“For me, talking about them as a revenue stream, we need to talk about them as humans and students [because] that’s why we want them to come back.”

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Total number of students in WA



Rank	Previous rank	Name	Senior executive and title	Year est. in WA	Total staff in WA	Total Number of Students in WA	Specialities
1	—	University of Western Australia	Professor Amit Chakma Vice-chancellor	1911	NFP	NFP	Life and agricultural sciences, medicine and dentistry, law, psychology, education, earth and marine sciences, music, architecture, English, history, linguistics, archaeology, engineering, economics, accounting and finance.
2	—	Curtin University	Professor Harlene Hayne Vice-chancellor	1966	3,809	38,535	Teaching and learning, developing industry-ready graduates, research and development, providing solutions to significant problems.
3	—	Edith Cowan University	Professor Steve Chapman Vice-chancellor	1991	4,634	27,539	Delivers more than 250 diverse courses across medical & health Sciences, engineering, education, arts & humanities, business & law, nursing & midwifery, science and the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts.
4	—	Murdoch University	Professor Eeva Leinonen Vice-chancellor	1973	3,282	NFP	Food security, sustainable development, health futures, primary food production, animal and human health and welfare, including veterinary science, climate variation and adaptation, environmental and natural resources, health futures, environmental sustainability, public policy, governance, business and law, science, social and cultural studies, digital technology, creative arts, engineering, teaching.
5	—	North Metropolitan TAFE	Ms Michelle Hoad Managing director	2016	1,700	30,000	Accounting & finance, human resources, project management, security, work health & safety, business & management, marketing, retail, training & assessment, access to education, children's services, education.
6	—	South Metropolitan TAFE	Mr Terry Durant Managing director	2016		25,329	Aerospace, maritime and logistics, agriculture, animals, science and the environment, automotive, building and construction, business and finance, creative industries, defence, mechanical and fabrication, education and community services, oil and gas, engineering, cyber security and IT, hospitality, tourism and events.
7	↑	Electrical Group Training	Mr Stuart Diepeveen General manager	1988	NFP	NFP	Electrical apprentice employment and hire.
8	↓	The University of Notre Dame Australia	Professor Francis Campbell Vice-chancellor	1989	NFP	NFP	The objectives of the University are: the provision of (a) university education, within a context of Catholic faith and values; and (b) an excellent standard of (i) teaching, scholarship and research; (ii) training for the professions; and (iii) pastoral care for its students.
9	↓	South Regional TAFE	Ms Darshi Ganeson-Oats Managing director	2016		10,109	Arts fashion and design, automotive engineering and electrical, building and construction trades, business, children's services, health and community services, interior decoration, building design and drafting, hair and beauty, education, accounting and finance.
10	—	Central Regional TAFE	Mr Bill Swetman Managing director	2016	401	10,000	Aerospace, maritime and logistics, agriculture, animals, science and the environment, automotive, building and construction, business and finance, creative industries, defence, education and community services, engineering and mining, English, language and foundation studies, health beauty and finance, hospitality, tourism and events, information technology, library and digital.
11	↑	North Regional TAFE	Mr Kevin Doig Managing director	2016	316	6,733	Aquaculture, Logistics and Warehousing, Maritime Studies, Agriculture, Conservation and Land Management, Horticulture, Automotive Vehicle Servicing, Carpentry and Joinery, Construction, Civil Construction, Electrical and Electrotechnology, Accounting and Bookkeeping, Business, Human Resources, Management, Quality Auditing, Security, Work Health and Safety, Music, Visual Arts, Aged Care, Community Services, Early Childhood Education, Education Services, Engineering, Mining, English and Foundation Studies, Beauty Therapy, Hairdressing, Enrolled Nursing...
12	↓	Navitas	Mr Scott Jones Group chief executive	1994	500	NFP	Navitas is a leading global education provider that has helped generations of learners transform their lives through education. We create life-changing opportunities to learn by delivering an extensive range of educational services to over 70,000 aspirational students across our global network at 120 colleges and campuses in 24 countries each year.
13	↑	Edith Cowan College	Ms Amanda Peterson College principal & director	1994	170	1,316	Commerce, computing/IT, communications and creative industries, hotel management, engineering and health studies.
14	↑	Stanley College	Mr Alberto Tassone President	2008	190	1,500	Aged Care Training, Childcare Education and Care Training, Hospitality Management Courses, Commercial Cookery Courses, Digital Marketing Courses, Business & Management Courses, Professional Year Programs, Undergraduate and Post Graduate Courses
15	—	College of Electrical Training	Mr Steve Hall General manager, training	1996	NFP	NFP	Electrical and Communications training including electrical pre-apprenticeship, electrical apprenticeship courses and post-trade training for electrical and telecommunications workers.


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WND: Would Not Disclose, NFP: Not For Publication, N/A: Not Applicable or Not Available.

A photograph of three students in a classroom setting. A young woman with glasses and braids is holding a tablet and smiling. Two other students, a young man and a young woman, are looking at the tablet. They are all wearing 'The Studio School' t-shirts. In the background, a whiteboard has 'Freeman the' written on it.

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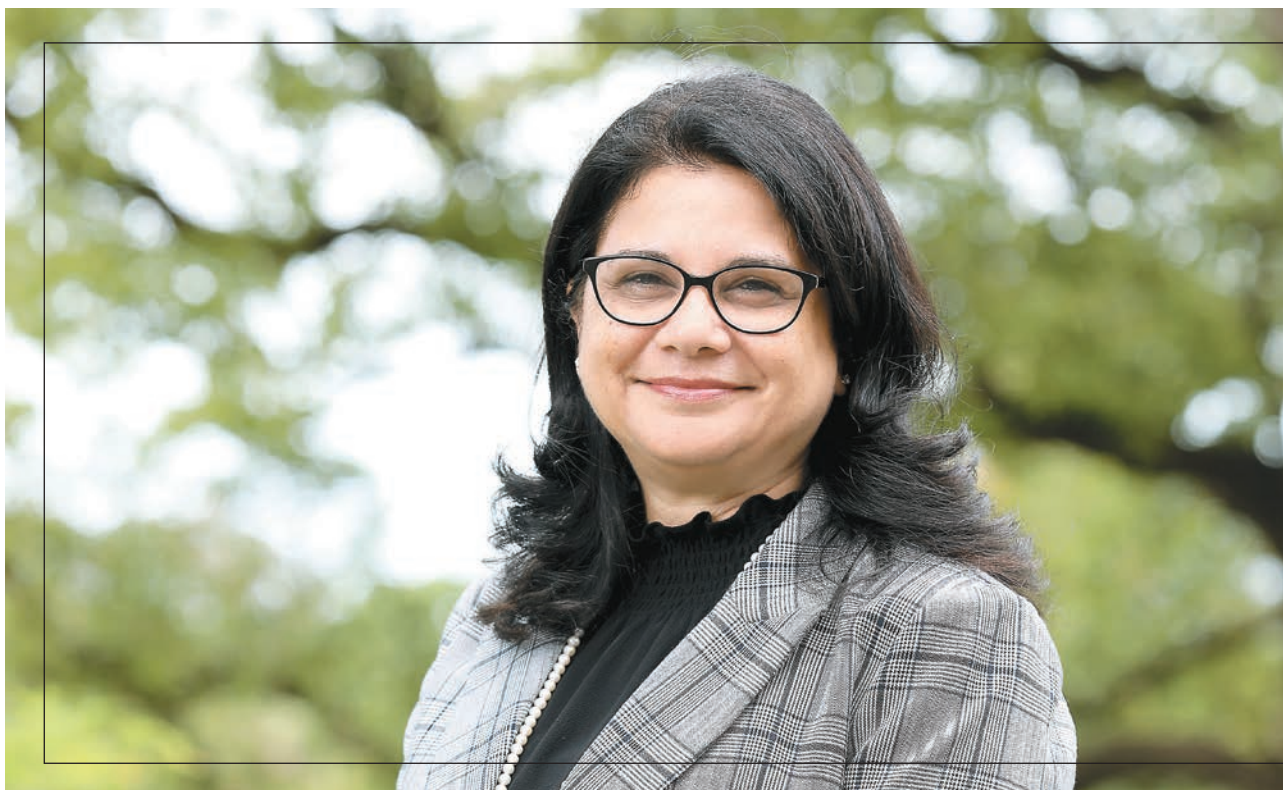
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“We take up to 15 years to do all the different stages [of building a school]

- Debra Sayce

Debra Sayce has been executive director of CEWA since 2014.

Photo: Catholic Education Western Australia

Private schools lobby for capital funds



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Government funding for the capital needs of private schools remains a contentious issue.

FEW items appear higher on the state government's list of priorities than building schools, if the \$456.2 million allocated in the latest budget to their construction, maintenance and expansion is any indicator.

Many would be familiar with big-ticket items, such as funding to expand the newly opened Bob Hawke College.

Fewer may have noted funding for new schools in the exurbs of Forrestdale and Burns Beach, save the parents who live in the overlapping marginal electorates.

Still, for all the funds lavished upon new public schools, which comprises just under a 10th of all the government's budgeted spending on education this financial year, private schools have received comparatively fewer dollars for this purpose.

Not that the state's contribution was negligible, with \$400.9 million to be administered to the sector through regularly scheduled recurrent funding.

While federal spending of \$14.7 billion for non-government schools outstrips the \$9.7 billion to be spent on public schools in the coming financial year, there is a comparative lack of financial support for capital works in the non-government sector as there is for these works in the public sector.

That means that, ultimately, any new builds will be reliant on funds from outside government, with research commissioned by Catholic Education Western Australia (CEWA) and

undertaken by EY in 2019 estimating 88 per cent of new builds for religiously affiliated private schools are funded by parents.

Of the funding that is available, about \$9 million is disbursed to the state sector by the federal government. However, the overall value of that is diluted when distributed between schools.

And while states such as Queensland and NSW have budgeted grant schemes specifically for Catholic schools, Western Australia provides funding through low-interest loans in the form of a \$30 million debt facility.

However, CEWA deputy executive director Wayne Bull told *Business News* the financing on offer was broadly comparable to what was already available if schools went to market for debt funding.

“We continue to encourage state and federal governments to look at capital funding and not diminish our recurrent funding,” Mr Bull said.

“[It's] important to realise when we build a new school, we have to do it from parents' fees, and we have to take out loans and pay those back.”

CEWA executive director Debra Sayce explained how this model often led to years-long developments for extensions and new builds.

“We take up to 15 years to do all the different stages [of building a school],” she said.

“Every time there's a new stage required for any of our schools ... it

takes an application through our panel process to allocate funds from the \$9 million from the capital grants from federal government and what's in the \$30 million interest loans.

“It sounds [like] a lot ... but, when a new school costs between \$90 million and \$100 million to build, if you're doing a staged development, you're not going to get everything all at once.”

Whether that is appreciated at a government level remains to be seen.

CEWA had lobbied ahead of the March state election for increased capital funding to meet the \$90 million worth of demanded works in 2020 and is currently undertaking research to aid efforts ahead of a federal election expected within the next 12 months.

In the meantime, Professor Sayce said funding for capital, mental health services, assisting students with disabilities and hygienic upkeep would remain top of mind for the state's sector.

“We're here to serve our parents who choose Catholic education,” she said.

“We want to be accessible; we want to be affordable.

“We're very appreciative of government ... because they understand we do make a strong contribution, not just financially but [to] the fabric of society and how we can support communities to flourish, and so we acknowledge that.

“But there's so much more that can be done.”

Data & Insights

WA'S LARGEST PRIVATE SCHOOLS

Ranked by total enrolment

Rank	Previous rank	Name	Principal	Year Estab-lished	Chair	Total Enrolment	Education Levels Taught	Fee Structure
1	—	St Stephen's School	Donella Beare	1983	Kevin Smout	2,034	Pre K-Y12	2021: Pre K \$878, K \$4831, PP-Y4 \$6359, Y5-6 \$6482, Y7 \$8144, Y8-9 \$9579, Y10 \$9889, Y11-12 \$10106
2	—	Newman College	John Finneran	1964	Caroline Payne	1,831	Pre K-Y12	2021: Pre K on request, K \$2220, PP-Y6 \$3695, Y7-10 \$7485, Y11-12 \$8585
3	↑	Australian Islamic College Kewdale	Mohammed Nazar Khan	2000	Hamza Amira	1,729	K-Y12	2021: K \$1250, PP-Y6 \$1650, Y7-10 \$1850, Y11-12 \$2000
4	↑	John Septimus Roe Anglican Community School Mirrabooka Campus	Jason Bartell	1992	Diane van de Velde	1,727	Pre K-Y12	2021: Pre K \$1400-\$2800, K \$4650, PP-Y2 \$4850, Y3-6 \$5225, Y7-9 \$7500, Y10-12 \$7800
5	↓	St Mark's Anglican Community School	Steven Davies	1986	Simon Green	1,722	K-Y12	2021: K-Y5 \$6664, Y6 \$9148, Y7-8 \$9296, Y9-Y12 \$10,056
6	—	Christ Church Grammar School	Alan Jones	1910	Paul Johnson	1,688	Pre K-Y12	2021: Pre K \$6980-\$17460, K \$10480-\$17460, PP \$18760, Y1-Y2 \$22080, Y3-4 \$22580, Y5 \$23580, Y6 \$26400, Y7-12 \$28920
7	—	Mandurah Catholic College	Chris Wallace	1992	Genevieve Constantine	1,676	K-Y12	2021: K-Y6 \$1049, Y7-10 \$3666, Y11-12 \$3999
8	—	Chisholm Catholic College	John Bormolini	1989	Paul Depiazzi	1,675	Y7-12	2021: Y7 \$5500, Y8 \$5800, Y9 \$6100, Y10 \$6400, Y11 \$6700, Y12 \$7000
9	—	Mercy College	Lisa Fogliani	1972	Richard Bone	1,620	K-Y12	2021: K \$1098, PP \$1773, Y1-2 \$1903, Y3-5 \$1923, Y6 \$2243, Y7 \$4319, Y8 \$3991, Y9 \$4109, Y10 \$4441, Y11 \$4476, Y12 \$4626
10	↑	Hale School	Dean Dell'Oro	1858	Mark Foster	1,594	Y1-12	2021: PP \$16290, Y1-2 \$17460, Y3-4 \$20910, Y5-6 \$23160, Y7-8 \$26790, Y9-12 \$26910

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Technology Teacher of the Year prepares Hale School students

Preparing students to be innovative and solve complex, real-world problems has led to Hale Design and Technologies (D&T) Teacher, Simon Tilley being named national Teacher of the Year in Technology Education.

The Design and Technologies Teachers' Association (DATTA) of Australia has recognised Simon for his contributions to teacher professional learning, competitions for students, programmes that encourage opportunity and interest in the subject. He had previously won the State Award.

Some of Simon's achievements include initiating the use of Arduino Unos and Nanos (open-source electronics platforms) into D&T at Hale; creating the Hale Connect STEM Challenge involving 150 Year 9 boys and girls from more than 25 schools; presenting professional development lessons to teachers showing methods of integrating STEM in the classroom; and undertaking a MPhil in STEM research to examine relationships between STEM and possible subject selection.


Simon said he felt fortunate to work in a subject area that was constantly evolving.

"With a subject as diverse as technology and the accessibility to a variety of media, that lets us observe recent scientific breakthroughs and discoveries and make links between old ones," he said. "We can nurture creativity and innovation in its many forms and encourage the use of whatever subject areas are needed to solve the problem at hand."

Born and raised in the United Kingdom, Simon started his career as a designer crafts-

man, making one-off furniture pieces that included board room tables for the G7 World Summit, the Duke of Westminster, Esso, Shell and British Aerospace to name a few. He later changed direction, studying teaching and landing his first job in a challenging school in London. After two years, he was invited to apply for a job at prestigious boys' boarding school Eton College, where he found himself for the next 16 years "trying to teach welding to prime ministers' children and royalty!"

When a job offer came up at Hale School eight years ago, Simon moved to Australia and hasn't looked back. He now encourages his students to construct complex problems and then find creative solutions to them. His students who have continued their engineering studies at university have found that they are ahead of their peers due to this pragmatic approach.



HALE SCHOOL



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services sector, international education was worth \$1.9 billion annually ... international. A recent survey of education agents by tertiary institution ... emerging market for global education , has also demonstrated how ...

Technology Teacher of the Year

of the Year in Technology Education . The Design and Technologies ...

Studio skills offer career alternatives

integrated into the students' education ," Ms Provis said. "Instead ...

Education in WA

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