Recreating history

Challenger TAFE Multimedia Developer Andrew Widdis helps surface an ANZAC legend. SEE PAGE 5
With the academic year in full swing, I'd like to welcome back all Challenger TAFE students and staff to what promises to be another exciting and eventful year.

2007 was a great year for the College, with a number of national and international awards that recognised individual accomplishments as well as those of Challenger TAFE training centres and partnerships.

A message from the Managing Director, Liz Harris

The College achieved 102% of its government funded training target and grew its non-government funded revenue by 16%. Overall, the College received 45% of its total revenue from non-government funded sources.

2008 has already seen some major developments. The Australian Centre for Energy and Process Training (ACEPT) welcomed their first intake of students in February, and the next few months will see the launch of the purpose-built Automotive Technology Skills Centre at Gilmore College in Kwinana.

These developments will allow us to greatly expand our capability to deliver industry-led training in response to the skills shortage in WA. By adopting a forward-thinking approach to WA’s workforce needs, the College will continue to remain at the forefront of training provision into the future.

And while we are well-placed to move forward, this edition of WAVES also invites us to celebrate some of our achievements in 2007.

The College is extremely proud to have seconded multimedia developer, Andrew Widdis, to a documentary production that highlights the little-known exploits of the Australian AE2 submarine during the ANZAC landings at Gallipoli. This story is featured on page 5.

The past few months have also been a rewarding time for two of the College’s popular lecturers, Ken Gwyer and Faye Arcaro.

Ken continued the Winjan Aboriginal Corporation’s remarkable run of success with a Highly Commended award at the 2007 Premier’s Teacher of the Year Awards. His commitment and dedication was acknowledged with a $25,000 prize, which he greatly deserved. Read about Ken’s award and the latest Winjan happenings on pages 6 and 7.

Faye, a Horticulture Lecturer at the College’s Murdoch Campus, was recently declared the 2007 ABC Gardener of the Year and featured on the national ABC television program, Gardening Australia. Faye’s twin passions for her own garden and inspiring her students to embrace sustainable horticultural practices are outlined on page 2.

In addition, this issue of WAVES showcases outstanding work across a broad spectrum of the College. I wish you all the very best in what promises to be another year of enterprise and success for the College.

Liz Harris
Managing Director
Challenger TAFE

Faye rated as Australia’s best gardener

An energetic and enthusiastic gardener with a passion for teaching has been awarded the 2007 ABC Gardener of the Year Award.

Challenger TAFE Horticulture Lecturer, Faye Arcaro received the award on the ABC Gardening Australia program in recognition of her love of growing and tending plants.

Faye said she aimed to give her students a lifetime of pleasure and productivity in their chosen field.

“One of my students told me that I use light but powerful words, and that’s the key really, to pass on skills and knowledge that are useful and can be easily put into practice in the workplace,” she explained.

“I’ve been lecturing a lot of international students recently, and even though they are from a wide range of climates and environments, they can still learn how to apply horticulture and gardening skills that will help them build a loyal client base.

“...the key to successful gardening is understanding your local environment and knowing how to manage it successfully....”
“It doesn’t matter where you are in the world, the key to successful gardening is understanding your local environment and knowing how to manage it successfully.”

Faye has been introducing her students to aquaponics and hydroponics, two gardening techniques she has been applying in her own two hectare garden she started only five years ago based on permaculture principles.

“I had to be really careful with the plant selection for my garden as it’s subject to extreme temperatures,” she explained.

“Most of the plants were grown from cuttings, or obtained from friends and garden clubs, and that’s something I focus a lot on at Challenger TAFE because once people know how to propagate plants successfully, they’re set up for a lifetime of gardening pleasure with very little financial outlay.”

ABC Gardening Australia presenter, Josh Byrne, described Faye’s garden as an oasis of garden rooms crammed with trees, shrubs and edible plants.

“Faye’s garden is beautiful, productive and completely in balance with the environment and her aim to use it to train horticulture students and provide a habitat for native animals and birds made her a worthy recipient,” he said.

Faye’s prize included a year’s supply of garden products, $3,500 cash from Seasol, as well as the coveted Golden Spade from Digadoo.

Practice and awareness is all anyone needs to become a successful gardener says Faye.

“I learn by noticing things and absorbing information from as many different resources as possible and this is what I try and pass on to my students,” she said.

“I’ve recently picked up lots of new tips from the Indian students I’ve had in class, who explained how their local herbs and flowers are used extensively for cooking and treating illnesses.”

Faye is currently working on creating an aquaponics business and has set up a system in her garden where the waste water feeds the plants and fish that feed her family.
Innovative training methods at Challenger TAFE are helping to combat the engineering skills shortage by attracting students in record numbers.

With the number of qualified engineers at a critically low level, the College has achieved increased enrolments of engineering students, particularly in flexible delivery mode where students can study according to their individual circumstances.

The College’s Director of Defence and Resource Industries, Greg Guppy, said tackling the skills shortage required new approaches and that their initiatives were producing excellent results.

“The high number of enrolments is very encouraging because it shows the innovation we’ve been fostering is producing positive outcomes in terms of addressing workforce shortages.

“We are unique in offering flexible delivery in engineering, and its’ success shows we can reverse negative trends in para-professional enrolments by responding to student and industry needs,” he said.

For Mechanical Engineering student, Danielle Roberts, flexible delivery is essential in helping her balance work at defence contractor Tenix with her studies and the demands of being a single mum.

“Flexible delivery makes it possible for me to meet all the competing commitments I have, both at home and at work,” she said.

“I attend TAFE one day a week as part of my employment, and can meet the rest of my study requirements through the flexible delivery mode.

“I know flexible delivery makes it much easier for those working on a fly-in fly-out basis to complete their studies,” she added.

Danielle also praised her lecturers for their dedication.

“Unlike other learning environments I’ve been in, you really get the personal interaction you need with the lecturers at Challenger TAFE,” she said.

“They’ll come and sit with you during their breaks to make sure there are no problems.

“To learn from lecturers who have actual industry experience is essential because they understand the practical situations engineers face,” she added.

Challenger TAFE Engineering Lecturer, Cindy Egan, said many engineering courses were effectively seeing full employment rates for graduates.

“Apart from international students with visa restrictions, all Advanced Diploma graduates in Civil Engineering are finding employment,” she said.

“This is a fantastic result, and we anticipate this trend will continue as the demand for engineering personnel increases”.

Danielle Roberts enjoys the benefits of flexible delivery.

Challenger TAFE engineers skills shortage solutions
The saga of the AE2 submarine is perhaps the greatest Australian war story never told. It is certainly unfamiliar compared to the many other tragic and heroic events in the days surrounding April 25, 1915.

Andrew recreates AE2 history

Executive Producer of AE2: Gallipoli’s Submarine, Andrew Ogilvie, said Andrew’s expertise was invaluable in portraying the adventure of the AE2 in the documentary, which also focuses on the subsequent discovery and ongoing surveys of the AE2 wreck.

“The documentary not only looks at the original adventure of the AE2, but also the latter-day events following the discovery of the wreck in 1998, which are compelling and dramatic in their own right," he said.

“Andrew’s background in 3D modelling and animation combined with his knowledge of the Australian submarine community was crucial in depicting the unique visual characteristics of the AE2”.

The documentary promises to cast light on a tale that bears all the hallmarks of a legendary war story.

In order to support the main ANZAC landing at Gallipoli, British Commanders sought to penetrate the Dardanelles Strait and disrupt Turkish supply vessels.

A British sub tried and failed, resulting in the death of the Captain and several crew, before the AE2 was granted the mission.

The AE2 proved more successful, becoming the first Allied submarine to penetrate the Dardanelles Strait, where it set about attacking enemy vessels as the first ANZAC landings were taking place.

Although history records the ultimate fate of the troops at Gallipoli, the efforts of the AE2 in creating havoc in Turkish waters hindered the enemy by forcing them to re-route reinforcements and supplies overland.

On the morning of April 30, the AE2 was located by a Turkish vessel and hit by a torpedo. The Captain of the AE2 scuttled the sub to prevent it falling into enemy hands, making it the first Royal Australian Navy (RAN) warship lost in action.

It lay undiscovered on the bottom of the Sea of Marmora until it was located in 1998, leading to concerted efforts from Australian and Turkish authorities to recognise the importance of the find.

Challenger TAFE Managing Director, Liz Harris, said that, as a training provider to the RAN, the College was focused on delivering training for the future, but Andrew’s input into the documentary afforded a rare opportunity to explore its past.

"The College has an established record of providing training to the RAN to address their future skills needs, but it’s significant that through Andrew’s contribution we have also been able to play a part in recognising the deeds of the past,” she said.
Challenger TAFE Lecturer, Ken Gwyer, received a $25,000 cash reward as part of his Highly Commended prize at the 2007 Premier’s Teacher of the Year Awards recently.

Ken’s passion for reinvigorating indigenous culture in the Peel region makes him a driving force behind the successful partnership between Challenger TAFE and the Winjan Aboriginal Corporation.

His teaching initiatives have inspired students to showcase their talents and share their local knowledge, language and traditional culture with the wider community.

Ken also manages partnerships with local government and industry to form sustainable initiatives that ensure positive outcomes and career prospects for Winjan students.

In addition, over 5,000 school students, both locally and internationally, from as far afield as China, Japan, Denmark and Belgium, have been educated and entertained at Winjan.

Ken said he was “shocked and thrilled” at receiving the award.

“It still hasn’t quite sunk in. While the award is great personal recognition, working with the students is just as rewarding,” he said.

“I’d also like to acknowledge the fantastic team we have at Winjan that has seen us go from strength to strength,” he added.

The celebrations at Winjan have indeed been considerable, with a host of achievements and awards in 2007, including being named a finalist in both the WA Training Excellence Awards and the Premier’s Awards, the latter being open to the entire public sector.

Winjan have also benefited from an upgrade to their kitchen facilities to a commercial level, thanks to a grant from Alcoa and the support of the Rotary Club of Mandurah. This allows Winjan to provide cooking, nutrition and budgeting courses to enhance their acclaimed training delivery.

Challenger TAFE Managing Director, Liz Harris, paid tribute to Ken and the rest of the Winjan team.

“This host of awards and accolades is a fabulous reward for everyone involved with Winjan. In particular, I’d like to congratulate Ken and thank him wholeheartedly for his dedication,” she said.

“His work is a wonderful example of what can be achieved in partnership with industry and community agencies.

“With such a remarkable run of success to date, I’m sure that Winjan’s winning ways will continue into the future”.

Ken Gwyer at Winjan after receiving his award.

Ken heads up Winjan’s winning ways

...over 5000 school students, both locally and internationally, from as far a field as China, Japan, Denmark and Belgium, have been educated and entertained at Winjan...
The Winjan Aboriginal Corporation capped off a stellar year with their fourth annual art exhibition.

Entitled *Woon-Yaa Ngundabut*, meaning Love of Life, this year’s exhibition was a celebration of one of the six Nyoongar seasons, Kambarang, which brings decreasing rains and the onset of the warmer months.

It is also a celebration of new life.

As part of a partnership with Challenger TAFE, students in Aboriginal Cultural Arts and Tourism at Winjan displayed artworks celebrating life in the Coodanup region.

Opening the exhibition, Mandurah Mayor and Chair of Challenger TAFE’s Governing Council, Paddi Creevey, praised the “wisdom and knowledge” of the local indigenous community and said she was privileged to see local indigenous culture thriving.

“You hold the history, you hold the culture that is so important to the region,” she told the assembled artists.

“This exhibition is an opportunity to display the wonderful artistic creativity that is so alive here at Winjan. The artworks speak to the heart because they are painted from the heart”.

The opening night’s sponsor, Frasers Property, was represented by Paul Conti, who spoke of the naturalness of the art and the surrounding environment.

“When you feel this beautiful, natural art speaking to you there is a sense of satisfaction in retaining this pristine bush for the benefit of all in the community,” he said.

Many of the artworks were snapped up by eager buyers on the opening night, a strong endorsement of the artists’ talents, some of whom had only recently taken up painting.

Lesley Pickett said her family had motivated her to start painting.

“My sisters are painters, so I get my inspiration from my family. I’ve only been painting a couple of months, but they’ve got me stuck into it now,” she said.

...an opportunity to display the wonderful artistic creativity that is so alive here at Winjan...
Aquaculture program attracts attention

An award-winning project to restock the Blackwood River with Black Bream attracted national media attention as it enters its next phase.

The project is a response to a drastic decline in Black Bream in the river over the last 30 years, and was featured in a recent segment on the popular national fishing-based program *Escape with ET*, hosted by former Rugby League international Andrew Ettingshausen.

Greg Jenkins, Head of Research & Development at the Aquaculture Development Unit (ADU) at Challenger TAFE’s WA Maritime Training Centre – Fremantle, said the attention reflected the importance of the ongoing project to achieving environmental sustainability in a bio-diversity hot spot.

“Black Bream stocks were reduced to less than 20% of the levels of the mid-70’s and this project has shown positive indication that we can combat these threats with leading aquaculture practice,” he said.

“The ADU partner with Murdoch University, and they undertook the rigorous science required for this project to stand up to international scrutiny”.

The *ET* crew accompanied Mr Jenkins to Augusta to report on the next stage of the project, which involves catching fish previously released into the river to monitor their survival rates.

Mr Jenkins said one of the strengths of the project involved applying a special mark to fish grown at the Fremantle-based hatchery that enabled them to be identified up to six years after restocking in the Blackwood River.

“Marking the ear bones with a special chemical indicates the survival rates of introduced fish stocks, and we are getting confirmation of extremely high survival rates,” he said.

This would undoubtedly be good news for the estimated 10,000 recreational anglers who fish the river annually.

Laboratory training cures

David Feast thought his career was over when he injured his back at work. But since training in Laboratory Operations at Challenger TAFE his job prospects and livelihood have been turned around and he has now returned to the workforce full-time.

“Prior to my injury, I’d been working in parks and gardens for the Shire of Murray,” he said.

“Coming back from surgery, my injury healed well, but I needed to find work that was less physically demanding, so I called Challenger TAFE to see what re-skilling and career options might be available to me.

“They told me there were all sorts of jobs I could re-train in, such as counselling, civil engineering, or laboratory work. That last option really piqued my scientific interests, and I soon discovered a whole world of opportunity open to me.”

David enrolled in the Certificate III in Laboratory Operations at the College’s Rockingham Campus and quickly developed a taste for the field, even though returning to study was challenging.

“Having to think and learn in a disciplined way took a bit of getting used to, but the lecturers are brilliantly supportive and pass on a wealth of knowledge to their students. Also, knowing there were so many job opportunities available once I completed my studies, kept me even more motivated,” he said.

David Feast has discovered a passion for his new career.
In 2006 the project was awarded Best Recreational Enhancement Project at the inaugural National RecFishing Awards in recognition of the contributions of Mr Jenkins and the ADU to practical research outcomes, which involved close cooperation with recreational fishers.

Escape with ET Presenter, Toby Bosschieter, was impressed by Challenger TAFE’s state-of-the-art aquaculture facilities and their commitment to providing solutions to environmental challenges.

“I was blown away by the scale of the whole operation,” he said.

“The Blackwood River is the only estuary in WA where Black Bream are in real trouble. In just two years, over 200,000 Black Bream have been restocked successfully. It’s great to see such a committed team focused on reducing environmental risks and reversing negative trends”.

The current WA boom means there is a huge demand for qualified laboratory workers across a vast range of industries. Quite literally, laboratories are everywhere - from mining and oil, to food technology and manufacturing, to biomedical and, in David’s case, educational settings.

“I had two days free from TAFE classes, so I thought I would start looking around for some work and got offered a casual position as a Lab Technician at Mandurah Senior College,” he explained.

After gaining some confidence in his new career path, David undertook some temporary work at Lynwood Senior High School to complement his work at MSC, and after just a few weeks, gained ongoing part-time work that has just turned into a full-time position as a Level 2 Laboratory Technician.

“In some ways I feel that I’ve had a meteoric rise from TAFE training to full-time work, but there are just so many job opportunities out there that it’s a great time to establish a career in this field,” he said.

Senior Laboratory Technician at Challenger TAFE, Steve Becker, agreed, saying enrolments had increased significantly compared to recent years and employment prospects were at an all time high.

“In the current skills shortage climate almost all our students are gaining employment after completing their studies...”

David still has regular contact with Challenger TAFE lecturers and staff, including Steve, and this ongoing support has made him keen to continue on to the Certificate IV in Laboratory Techniques.

“I found Steve to be a really decent bloke who cares about the students and follows up with them to check they’re managing to stay on track,” he said.

David thoroughly recommends laboratory operations training to anyone needing to re-train or find work.

“I could always go and ask him for help and advice and it was never too much trouble for him to take the time to explain concepts and help me figure things out properly. It’s great to still be able to maintain that one-on-one contact with him, even though I’ve finished my TAFE training for now”. 

David thoroughly recommends laboratory operations training to anyone needing to re-train or find work.

“I had no problems getting part-time work and that led onto to a full-time position really quickly, and, even though there are lots of opportunities in the mining sector, the flexible hours and longer leave I get from working in school suits me perfectly,” he said.
College cubbyhouse boosts child care

There were smiles all round at the Rockingham Early Learning and Child Care Centre (RELACCC) when a cubbyhouse built by high school students in a School Apprenticeship Link (SAL) program was donated recently.

The SAL program in Construction, based at Challenger TAFE’s Fremantle Campus, is aimed at addressing skills shortages in the construction trades and increasing the number of young people entering apprenticeships.

Debi Spencer-Smith, Director of the Construction Industry Skills Centre at Challenger TAFE, said not only did students gain practical “hands-on” skills training building the cubbyhouse, but there were also wider benefits to the community.

“On one hand the students had something tangible to work on that helped them develop the skills required for the construction trades, but they’re also giving something back to community by creating something that kids will enjoy for years to come,” she said.

Kerry Pelajic, the Director of RELACCC, was delighted to accept the brand new cubbyhouse on behalf of the community-based, not-for-profit centre and said the children gained valuable social skills from the cubbyhouse.

“We are enormously grateful to the College for their kind donation. The children absolutely love it. They’ve made it into their own little ‘shop’, which, apart from being great fun, actually promotes a lot of self-help skills and mathematical concepts such as exchanging and counting money.

“In fact, it’s also encouraging further community involvement in that a father of one of the children contributed their own time and efforts to carry out further on-site renovations,” she said.

Darren Reynolds, Program Manager in Construction Industries at the College, said the project was originally suggested by one of his lecturers.

“Peter Stent, our SAL Lecturer, deserves the lion’s share of the credit for the cubbyhouse project. Not only did he have the idea of doing something with a dual benefit of helping students and the community, he also worked with the students every step of the way,” he said.

“As a result, this SAL group was remarkably successful, with all students now either on work placement or in an apprenticeship. In a skills shortage climate this is a fantastic outcome”.

The best endorsement, however, came from the children themselves, most of whom were unanimous in proclaiming that “having fun” was what they most liked about the cubbyhouse.

Four year-old Monique Patterson, of Safety Bay, summed up the collective mood.

“We like to play shops and sell food and lollies,” she said.
Busy mums find special satisfaction in new career

Teacher Assistant training at Challenger TAFE is proving increasingly attractive, allowing students like Anita Eaves and Sue Haese to establish rewarding careers in the education sector.

Challenger TAFE’s Community Services Training Centre Program Manager, Leigh Cook, said the women were part of a growth training area that is yielding positive employment outcomes.

“Teacher Assistant courses are completely full this year, which we are delighted about. Both Anita’s and Sue’s stories show that students are able to enter the industry upon, or before, completion of their studies,” she said.

Anita said she had always wanted to work with children, but raising four of her own had to come first before she could embark on her own career, while Sue, a mother of five, had been volunteering at her children’s schools for a few years before she considered returning to paid work.

“I haven’t been in a classroom since high school, but after my youngest started pre-primary, I decided the time was right for me to start a career,” Anita explained.

The six-month Preparation for Teacher Assistant course at Challenger TAFE’s Peel Campus primed them both to take the next step on their career paths.

Sue said the course significantly improves the chances of getting into the very popular Certificate III in Teacher Assistant and was a great help in getting her back into the routine of learning new skills.

“Doing the preparation course made a big difference as I could get used to being back in a classroom, doing homework and assignments, and this gave me the confidence to carry on,” she said.

“You learn a range of useful introductory skills, such as child development, how to communicate more effectively with children, and how to prepare interesting educational games and toys”.

Sue subsequently completed Certificates III and IV, while Anita completed the Certificate III and recently embarked on the Certificate IV.

Anita was full of praise for her Challenger TAFE training. She said the course provided a convenience that suited her lifestyle, and found the learning environment to be particularly inclusive and engaging.

“The training was easy to fit in with my personal commitments because it was scheduled around school hours, and coming to TAFE was really enjoyable because the lecturers and other students were so interactive,” she said.

Both women now have a strong foothold in their training and are excited to be getting back into the workforce.

“I guess having five children has prepared me well for this career, but I’ve still learnt heaps of new skills that I couldn’t possibly pick up through day-to-day parenting,” said Sue.

“Learning how to manage children’s behaviour and resolve conflicts have been particularly interesting, and my eldest child, who’s twelve, says they’ve started to notice a change in my parenting style,” added Anita.

Both women gained employment as Teacher Assistants, with Anita having secured ongoing part-time work at Malibu School in Safety Bay after undertaking relief work as part of her studies, and Sue putting her training into practice at Assumption Primary School in Mandurah.

Anita Eaves with some of the students from Malibu school.

Sue Haese is discovering the joy of being a teacher’s assistant.

...training was easy to fit in with my personal commitments because it was scheduled around school hours...
CareerConnect links employment and family

Challenger TAFE’s CareerConnect is used to helping students find rewarding careers, but the recent sponsoring of an international student also helped reunite a family.

It was with mixed emotions that Kumaravelu “Kumar” Kanapadi came to Australia in 2006 to study for a Diploma of Electronic Engineering.

“While I was extremely excited by the opportunity to study at Challenger TAFE and improve my career prospects, it was very hard to leave my family in Malaysia and travel to another country,” he said.

However, his tough decision proved well-founded.

CareerConnect Student Employment Officer, Rod Rodriguez, registered Kumar for a vacancy as an Electronic Assembler with Telvent Australia and, following an interview, Kumar was offered a casual position.

Kumar proved an outstanding asset in his initial trial period, and Rod subsequently approached Telvent to sponsor him as a full-time employee.

Telvent jumped at the opportunity, and Kumar was granted a temporary working visa by the Department of Immigration, with Telvent providing accommodation and study fees.

For Kumar, however, the best news is that he no longer has to endure the separation from his family as they are now eligible for temporary residency in Australia.

“It’s a wonderful outcome. To be with my family again and to have such a great career opportunity is truly the best of both worlds,” he said.

Rod was delighted that CareerConnect was able to play a significant part in Kumar’s story.

“While it’s always satisfying to put a student on the right career path, in Kumar’s case it was particularly pleasing because of his strong desire to be with his family,” he said.