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Science, Technology and Education News from Australia, February 2018

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1. Science and Technology Developments

Australian of the Year awards: Quantum physicist Michelle Yvonne Simmons receives 2018 honour

The quantum physicist Prof Michelle Yvonne Simmons has been named the 2018 Australian of the year for her pioneering work in the field of quantum computing. At the awards ceremony, Simmons was praised for world-leading research that could result in the first working quantum computer – a machine that performs calculations using suba-tomic particles rather than components of classic computing. In addition to this award, Simmons has won the Pawsey medal for physics in 2005, awarded by the Australian Academy of Science, and the Unesco award for women in science in 2017.

Click here to read the news article.

Tesla's Australian Battery Shows It Can Also Make Huge Profits

On December 1, Tesla's 100MW battery system went online in South Australia after meeting founder Elon Musk's self-imposed 100-day construction deadline. In the weeks since, the massive battery system has seemingly lived up to its potential as a reliable source of clean energy. Moreover, the system made more than $1 Million in profit in just a few days, giving hope to those who are looking for reliable clean solutions to Australia's energy woes.

Click here to read the news article.

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Are Shark Attacks in Australia increasing? The Facts on Shark Bites and Shark Numbers

Are there more sharks in Australian waters than there used to be, and are interactions between humans and shark increasing? Some Australian politicians have claimed that to be the case. Let's look at the research: Correcting for the growth in human population in Australia, the data show that between 1997 and 2017: incidents resulting in injury increased by 1.59%, incidents without injury increased by 0.36%, and fatalities increased by 0.07%. But there are many other factors at play when estimating shark interactions and the determinants that are responsible for change over time.

Click here to read the full article.

2. Education and Science Policy

Innovation and Science Australia Releases "Australia 2030: Prosperity through Innovation" Report

The Australian Government tasked Innovation and Science Australia (ISA) with developing a strategic plan for the Australian innovation, science and research system out to 2030. Australia 2030: Prosperity through Innovation (the 2030 Plan) aims to contribute to the wellbeing and prosperity of all Australians by strengthening Australia's innovation performance to become a leading innovation nation. The full report was published on January 30 and outlines five imperatives in the fields of Education, Industry, Government, Research & Development, and Culture & ambition.

For a summary of the report, click here and to find the full report, click here.

Group of Eight Welcomes New Chair, Professor Ian Jacobs

Professor Ian Jacobs, President and Vice-Chancellor of UNSW, has been appointed as the Group of Eight's (Go8) new Chair and will take up the role on 1st February 2018. He says: "Australia's universities are world-class and our third largest international export. We need to effectively explain their importance to all in Australia. The sector has a key role in educating and training outstanding graduates, in generating economic strength through the application of stellar research, in delivering the benefits of international education, and in thought leadership to address the big issues facing Australia and the global community." The Go8 represents Australia's eight leading research intensive universities with seven of its members ranked in the world's top 100 universities. The group supports 50,000 jobs and delivers 92,000 quality graduates each year. It educates one in three international students who choose to study onshore in Australia, enrolls one third of Australia's post graduate students and carries out $6 billion in research each year ($2.5 billion funded by Government) and 99 per cent of its research is rated as world class or above.

Click here to read the media release.

How universities can make graduates employable with connections to industry

Many current business leaders graduated knowing one discipline well with some skills to use their knowledge. They typically worked for a business that gave on-the-job training. Over time, they took a further qualification to broaden their skills for management roles. The MBA, for example, has developed for that purpose. Today, it's different. Australian small and medium sized businesses (SMEs) have neither the time nor budget to train graduates. They face cost and price competition and want to hire experienced workers. Hence, universities increasingly face pressure to allow students to gain work experience during their studies. In contrast to the Swiss education system, in Australia universities play a much more central role in training the workforce in a way that fits employer's needs.

Click here to read the article.

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Cybersecurity: Unis and TAFEs can fill the gap

Amid a global shortage of cybersecurity skills, Australia is expected to require another 11,000 cybersecurity specialists over the next 10 years, according to AustCyber — a body established to drive industry collaboration as part of the government's National Innovation and Science Agenda. Historically these cybersecurity skills have been nurtured by the private education sector and certifications, which typically require students to self-fund or have their employer foot the bill. Now Australia's wider education sector is being called upon to play a greater role in supplying cybersecurity skills — from high school through to diploma, associate diploma, undergraduate and postgraduate studies. Many firms are taking it upon themselves to train up their cybersecurity capabilities if the graduates aren't coming pre-armed with these skills, but there's a real opportunity for universities and Technical and Further Education institutions (TAFEs) to step in and fill that gap through vocational training.

Click here to read the article.