

Just a few comments which I believe are fundamental to the present skills shortage:

1. In the late 1980s and early 1990s both Commonwealth and State governments decimated those areas of the public sector which had previously provided opportunities for training, development and ongoing employment of professional engineers, technical officers and related occupations. In particular, areas such as public works, civil aviation and the like were fertile training grounds providing both training opportunities and pools of expertise which encouraged and enhanced the professional development of the next generation of engineers. Most of these organisations have either disappeared entirely or have been reduced to small bureaucracies staffed by administrative personnel with no professional or technical capabilities. This has had a major impact not only on the opportunities for training, but also on the perceived role of engineering and the associated future prospects for engineers in Australia.
2. For some time, the acquisition of engineering qualifications has become progressively divorced from the "real world" of engineering. It may be open to speculation how closely this trend has been dictated by the disappearance of cadetships described in the paragraph above. However I believe that the consequences of this trend have been unfortunate, both in reducing the attraction of engineering to many of those who are well suited to the profession and also in hampering the professional development of those who do embark upon an engineering career.
3. Engineering qualifications are generally regarded as a hard option in a nation where there are many softer options available. A plethora of qualifications are available from our tertiary institutions, many of which do not require the hard work and precision of knowledge demanded by the engineering profession, yet which appear to offer equal or greater rewards. If we are to attract more of our youth into the engineering profession, we need to demonstrate that their skills and knowledge will be valued commensurate with the contribution which they provide.

Hope the above is of some assistance,

Regards,

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