News Release

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Government of South Australia

Hon Jay Weatherill
Minister for Education
Minister for Early Childhood Development
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SOUTH AUSTRALIA GETS SET FOR A HIGH-TECH FUTURE

Science and Information Economy Minister Jay Weatherill is unveiling a cross-government strategy to increase the supply of people taking up careers in the science, technology, engineering and mathematics fields to meet the future needs of local industry.

Demand continues to rise for people with skills in science, technology, engineering and mathematics – known as STEM skills - particularly in the mining and defence industries.

Mr Weatherill says the Government has mapped all the STEM work being done in South Australia by government, industry and the community sector so that more than 55 programs can be harnessed to deliver the greatest possible benefit for the economy.

"There is a lot of effort going into increasing awareness and influencing people to take up STEM careers. But these efforts must be better coordinated and targeted if we are to meet the demand for these skills," he said.

"This is what the STEM Skills Strategy we are outlining will deliver.

"The South Australia we want to see in 20 years time will be shaped by the decisions we make today.

"Forecasts show that demand for engineers, environmental scientists, ICT systems analysts and allied tradespeople such as electricians, toolmakers, and structural steel and welding trades workers is set to increase dramatically over next 10 years.

"The need for STEM skills in our growing defence, mining, bioscience, clean-tech, food production and other industries is outpacing the supply of skilled men and women.

"We must attract more people into studies in these fields at school, university and vocational training if we are to meet these demands."

The State's Training and Skills Commission estimates that between 2008 and 2015 there will be more than 21,000 job openings – including job openings for over 3,000 engineers, 1,800 ICT professionals and more than 700 natural scientists, including food and environmental scientists. There also will be employment growth in trades, with forecast job openings for over 3,300 steel and metal workers, and 2,600 electricians and electrical workers.

"Addressing these demands requires concerted and focussed action - this is the aim of our STEM Skills Strategy," Mr Weatherill said.

"For South Australia to realise the benefits of new and emerging industries, all sectors of the community must be working together – from industry to government, local government, trainers, universities and scientists."

The strategy establishes:

- policy and program priorities for Government investment in STEM

- an executive reference group chaired by Raymond Spencer, chair of the Economic Development Board and including executives from relevant Government departments

- a Cabinet taskforce that includes Ministers responsible for Science and Information Economy, Education, Trade, Defence Industries, Mineral Resources, and Employment and Further Education.

"The strategy will bring industry and government together to shape our STEM activities, but also presents an opportunity for us to engage with educators and training organisations," Mr Weatherill said.

"Through these connections, we will create greater community awareness of the study, training and career opportunities available in the fields of science, technology, engineering and mathematics.

"While the demand for STEM skills is a national, and indeed a global challenge, South Australia is determined to lead the way.

"Through innovative and effective approaches to target the people, the programs and the opportunities, we will build the skilled workforce our State needs, now and into the future."