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VICTORIA UNI STUDENTS WIN ACCESS TO HI-TECH CAREERS

Three final-year Victorian ICT students have been given a valuable career boost, winning \$5,000 scholarships and eight-week work placements, through Victoria University (VU), industry-partner Flexible Drive Agencies and the Victorian Government, said the Minister for Information and Communication Technology, Marsha Thomson.

“Through strategic collaboration between government, local business and VU, these talented scholarship winners – Mr Sophanna Ing, Mr Tinh Nguyen, and Mr Milan Pavicic – are embarking on excellent work-experience for their budding careers,” said Ms Thomson.

“The Bracks Government contributed \$15,000 to these scholarships, as part of its \$1.9 million ICT scholarship package, encouraging clever students to study ICT at the tertiary level.

These three scholarships are the first of 27 now available to VU students through the Victorian Government’s ICT Industry Skills Scholarships program. Working in collaboration with the School of Computer Science, and the Faculty of Business and Law, several local industry partners provide each scholarship holder with a work placement of at least four weeks.

“Responding to industry demand, our ICT Industry Skills scholarships are designed to link study and industry-based learning, so that students graduate job ready,” Ms Thomson said.

“In particular, these scholarships support students to gain business skills and commercial know-how, addressing one of the main workforce development needs of today’s ICT sector,” she said.

Local companies from a wide range of industry sectors are benefiting from this collaboration. In addition to Flexible Drive Agencies, SpiritWest, Homestead Financial, Kennedy Guy, Werribee Football Club, Mathews Steer, Claytons Group, Australian Unity and Pan Event Entertainment are also participating in this scholarship project with VU, valued, in total, at almost \$500,000.

“ICT is now vital for the running of almost any enterprise – from football to finance, from manufacturing to multimedia design. It’s great to see such a wide variety of companies participating in the program, so ICT students can get a real sense of the varied types of jobs available to them once they graduate,” said Ms Thomson.

Flexible Drive Agencies’ Managing Director, Mr Ian Hocking said that the program was a win-win situation for his business, a mechanical and electromechanical manufacturing company headquartered in the north-western suburb of Kensington.

“We have experienced great benefit in facilitating two project teams from the university. The students have been keen to fulfil the tasks assigned and our people have also benefited from the interaction,” said Mr Hocking.

The scholarship winners are equally enthusiastic about the program. Already, in July this year, they undertook their first four-week placement, which included work on ICT business systems, in areas such as finance systems and database development.

“During my work placement, I’ve learnt how to work in a dynamic team to solve real life problems. I have made new IT contacts and have gained hands-on experience in the IT industry. I’ve found that practical work on a real project can be a very effective way of learning,” said scholarship recipient, Mr Tinh Nguyen.

The Victorian Government ICT scholarships are part of the *ICT Industry Plan 2005-2010*. For more information go to www.mmv.vic.gov.au/ICTIndustry.