



IRISH-AUSTRALIAN JOINT VENTURE SENDS 2500 AUSTRALIAN EDUCATIONAL STAFF 'BACK TO SCHOOL' FOR NEW COMPUTER SKILLS

Irish Minister of State commends joint venture advancing computer literacy

SYDNEY, Australia - 19 March 2004

A three year initiative to improve the computer literacy skills of 2500 educational staff has been given international recognition recently in an official visit by Mr Tom Kitt, Irish Minister of State with responsibility for Overseas Development and Human Rights.

The project which focuses on schools in the NSW Diocese of Broken Bay Catholic Schools is the largest professional development project of its kind in Australia, and jointly managed by the Australian Computer Society (ACS) and Irish software training company, Electric Paper.

The program is geared to help the teachers make better use of computers in today's classrooms and has been shown to dramatically improve efficiency, according to Susan Moore, General Manager, Electric Paper Australia.

Mr Tom Kitt, Irish Minister said "The educational professionals in Broken Bay recognised the need for their teachers to be skilled in ICT and partnered with Electric Paper - an Irish company that is the leader in the field. I understand the success of this program to date has encouraged other Dioceses and States in Australia to consider implementing a similar program. I would like to congratulate Electric Paper on this great success and wish them all the best for their future growth in e-learning, here in Australia and beyond. I would also commend the Catholic Schools Office in Broken Bay for their vision in working with an Irish company to provide the best base-level skills for their teachers."

The educational tool used to enable this skill development is the "International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL)", the competency standard for IT literacy recognised in over 135 countries. Teachers who successfully complete the program will receive the internationally recognised ICDL qualification. The ACS is distributing this computer literacy accreditation Australia-wide.

Today, Minister Kitt and the visiting delegation will have the opportunity to meet and speak with teachers and students at St. Leo's Catholic College in Wahroonga, who are undertaking their ICDL. The delegates will witness, first hand, the live application and how it is implemented.

Commenting on the success of the project in Australia, Electric Paper's General Manager for Australia, Susan Moore said: "This is an exciting partnership for Electric Paper and the ICDL program, as it demonstrates our commitment to providing quality learning and assessment resources. From similar projects around the world, we have seen dramatic reductions in teachers' workloads after achieving their ICDL and an increase in the application of ICT in the classroom. The project also offers a model for other dioceses and the education sector in general who have similar objectives of raising teacher standards and awareness".

Brother Tony Whelan, Director of Schools, Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Broken Bay said: "Our teachers will have the chance to inject new passion into their subjects, adopting fresh approaches to familiar material and thereby expanding their career potential. Teachers have gained much through the ICDL."

The ACS President Edward Mandla said: "Minister Kitt's presence recognises the significance of the need for a global standard of computer literacy skills. We welcome the opportunity to work with Electric Paper to take the ICDL to all Australian teachers and students and applaud the pioneering efforts of the NSW Broken Bay Catholic Diocese. We look forward to working with other Catholic Education Offices across Australia."

"There remains an enormous digital divide in this country – not only between independent, Catholic and public schools, but increasingly, between the skills of our young people and their international counterparts. This initiative highlights the need to ensure that the education community, both teachers and students have appropriate support and resources to facilitate this essential life-skill."

Further information:

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BACKGROUND INFORMATION:

About Electric Paper:

Electric Paper specialises in providing IT literacy training, assessment and testing materials to the educational sector. Electric Paper has worked extensively with experts in the field to develop materials that are motivating, stimulating, practical and proven to increase success and completion rates. The quality of teaching increases, with more time allowed for individual student attention. Moreover, class preparation time is considerably decreased, freeing up more time for the teacher.

The company's interactive courseware is accredited to the European Computer Driving Licence (ECDL), International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) and Certificate 1 in Information Technology.

Electric Paper's Australian office is based in Melbourne. Visit www.electricpaper.com.au
About the Australian Computer Society (ACS):

The ACS (Australian Computer Society) is the recognised professional association for those working in Information and Communications Technology, seeking to raise the standing of ICT professionals and represent their views to government, industry and the community. A member of the Australian Council of Professions, the ACS is the guardian of professional ethics and standards in the ICT sector, committed to ensuring the beneficial use of ICT for all Australians. It provides both members and non-members with opportunities for professional education, networking and certification, as well as enabling them to contribute to the development of their profession. The ACS is also the licensee of the ICDL program for Australia and Papua New Guinea. Visit www.acs.org.au for more information.

About the International Computer Driving Licence:

With more than 3.75 million participants in 135 countries across the globe, the International Computer Driving Licence (ICDL) is internationally recognised as the world's leading end-user computer skills certification program.

The ICDL is internationally recognised as the global benchmark for end-user computer skills and is the leading certification to be adopted by governments, international organisations and corporations alike.

The ICDL certifies that the holder is competent in the use of a personal computer and common computer applications and knows the essential concepts of IT.

About the NSW Catholic Education Office:

Across New South Wales, Catholic Education is administered by eleven separate, autonomous educational bodies. Each of these bodies is responsible for the Catholic Education system within their designated region (each region is known as a 'Diocese'). The Diocese of Broken Bay is one of these bodies. There are approximately sixty Catholic schools within the Broken Bay diocese.

Recognising the need for the staff in their schools to be skilled in ICT, the Catholic Schools Office, Diocese of Broken Bay has invested in an ICDL training program, having partnered with Electric Paper to provide both training and testing e-learning materials. This ICDL program is the biggest ICDL professional development initiative within education in Australia.

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