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Freelancer.com chief blasts government's IT skills shortage denials

Edmund Tadros and James Hutchinson - 04 Feb 2014 11:34:39



Freelancer.com's Matt Barrie says University of Sydney IT graduates are currently more expensive to from Stanford. **Photo: Louie Douvis**

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Freelancer.com chief executive Matt Barrie has described a federal government report asserting there is no sk technology sector as “rubbish”.

The 2012-13 Skills Shortage report (<http://docs.employment.gov.au/system/files/doc/other/skillshortagesaustro>) no shortage of seven specific types of IT workers, including analyst programmers, developer programmers and

The Department of Employment report, released last September, is in stark contrast to the message coming o with bosses complaining about how difficult it is to recruit qualified IT staff.

“It’s just so hard to find qualified software engineers – at all levels,” Mr Barrie said.

“It’s an absolute national tragedy what is happening in technology.

“Basically, it’s more expensive to me on a cash basis to hire a University of Sydney graduate than a Stanford c

The Skills Shortage report found there were 46.5 applicants per software engineer job on average but only 2.7 by employers.

The report concludes “demand for ICT professionals is subdued and employers have little difficulty recruiting v expectations”.

The report, based on qualitative and quantitative research done with employers and recruitment professionals, worker, Mr Barrie said.

“What they’re talking about are technician level jobs, literally IT tech support roles. They’re not talking about sc that you need in a modern technology company,” he said.

“I would like someone to explain what the difference between ‘developer programmer’ and ‘software engineer associate professor in the space and having hired hundreds of people in the industry I have no idea.

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Many local employers turn to overseas to fill their IT worker requirements, with around 1800 developer programs according to the Department of Immigration.

This made it the fourth most nominated occupation for temporary visa applications granted during the past five

Tech companies fighting for graduates

Mr Barrie said too few Australian undergraduates were studying IT, leaving technology companies to fight for top courses like computer science each year.

He added that many of the courses did not produce graduates with the right skills needed in a modern technology

An analysis by The Australian Financial Review of university course take-up by domestic undergraduate students showed a decline in IT student enrolment.

Another local technology boss, 99designs' chief Patrick Llewellyn, wrote last September that Australia faced a shortage of (information and communications technology) professionals (http://www.afr.com/p/australia2-0/four_ways_to_make_australia_more_UkQWZ25w5qwDxhBJ9u54BJ).

This mismatch between what is being measured and what employers want might extend to what universities are

“The real issue is how are we teaching, what we’re teaching and why aren’t we making it so compellingly interesting first, and second, that they want to finish,” Australia’s chief scientist, Ian Chubb, said.

A government report specifically looking at the IT sector found many graduates “experience difficulty in finding jobs at graduation”.

The ICT Workforce Study (<http://awpa.gov.au/publications/Documents/ICT-STUDY-FINAL-28-JUNE-2013.pdf>) by the Workforce and Productivity Agency, said employers found the graduates were not ready for the workplace.

“Despite the young age profile of the ICT workforce, there appears to be a limited number of entry-level positions in the age group, with many employers complaining that tertiary graduates do not possess the desired combination of technical, business and communication skills to contribute effectively in the workplace,” the report stated.

“The apparent shortage of entry-level opportunities contributes to the relatively high level of occupational wastage

Department defends research

The Department of Employment defended the accuracy of the Skills Shortage report.

“In 2013, the research into the labour market for ICT Professionals included contact with around 150 employer representing more than 200 advertised vacancies for six ICT Professions,” spokesman Matthew Eggins said in

The department found a “high proportion of surveyed ICT vacancies were filled (82 per cent).”

“This is second only to Teachers across the 19 occupational clusters included in the research programme,” he

“Positions that were unfilled or hard to fill generally required highly specialised skills.”

Mr Eggins said the Clarius Skills Indicator had also reported an oversupply of 1600 professionals and 200 ICT quarter compared to a shortage in same period for 2012.

“The department’s Internet Vacancy Index for December 2013 shows that advertised vacancy levels for ICT Professional level,” Mr Eggins wrote.

“Preliminary data from Graduate Careers Australia, indicate that around 70 per cent of bachelor degree student Information Technology (IT) and were available for full-time work, were employed full-time four months after graduation for all bachelor degree students (71.3 per cent).

“Slightly less than 60 per cent (of those in full-time employment) secured employment as an ICT Professional.”

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