



# Job qualifications defy PM's line on degrees

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TWO-thirds of jobs created under the Howard Government have needed a university degree as a prerequisite.

Since 1996, jobs requiring a university degree or higher increased by 42 per cent, while Australian undergraduate enrolments increased by less than 5 per cent, an analysis by the parliamentary library reveals.

The analysis found that while an overwhelming proportion of jobs required a degree, the Government had failed to increase enrolments of Australians in undergraduate courses.

Labor frontbencher Craig Emerson, who commissioned the study, said the Government had sharply increased the intake of foreign university students to help fill the gap, but acute skill-shortages remained.

Based on Immigration Department figures, the study estimates that since 1996, 63 per cent of settlers in Australia have had university-level qualifications.

Labor is positioning itself as the pro-university party, while the Coalition has argued that university is not for everyone.

John Howard said last year: "Not everybody is suitable for a university education, and we have to get back to the time when a prized and valued technical qualification was as important to somebody's future as a university degree."

But Dr Emerson said the Immigration Department had nominated a record number of occupations as experiencing skill shortages, including more than 30 service-sector professions requiring university qualifications.

Dr Emerson said that while a strong skilled migration program was important, the Government should offer significantly more places to hard-working talented Australian students. "Instead, the Government is bludging on foreign students because it doesn't have to contribute to the cost of their education," Labor's spokesman for the Service Economy, Small Business and Independent Contractors said yesterday.

"The Prime Minister has been telling us we don't need to fuss about a university education, because gaining a trade qualification is just as good. But the Parliamentary Library figures

reveal that the great majority of jobs created since Mr Howard became Prime Minister have required university qualifications.

"We shouldn't be bludging on the education systems of other countries to meet all the growth in our needs for university graduates."

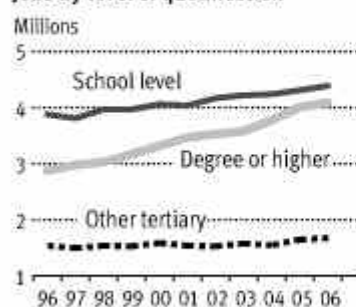
The Government relaxed the visa requirements for full fee-paying foreign students in 2001, making it easier for them to migrate after completing their degrees by allowing them to apply for permanent residence while still in Australia.

Dr Emerson said he supported this move, but the Government was using it as a low-cost method of obtaining university graduates.

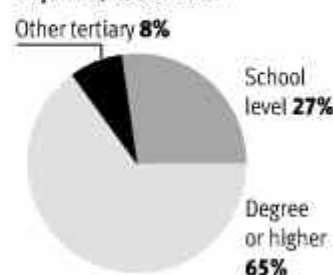
"Australia's service economy is facing acute shortages of university graduates, but the Government is refusing to increase the supply of subsidised Australian graduates, choosing foreign full fee-paying students as the least-cost option. Australian high-school students are missing out, and so are foreign students' home countries that have funded their high-school education."

## WORK LESSONS

Jobs by level of qualification



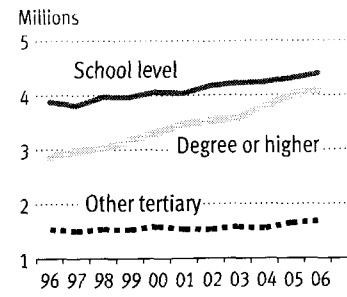
Growth in jobs by qualification required, 1996-2006



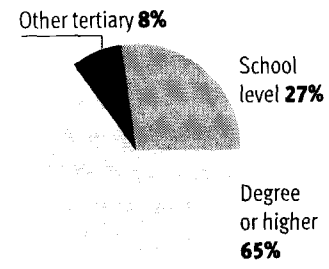
Sources: ABS, OIM, parliamentary library

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