



**Australian**  
**24/04/2007**  
**Page: 34**  
**IT Today**  
**Region: National Circulation: 135000**  
**Type: National**  
**Size: 230.26 sq.cms**  
**MTWTF**

# Office to give way to social centres

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Trends

WORKERS of the future could swap the office for social and community centres with a high telepresence in a bid to address health and environmental concerns, a conference has heard.

Futurist Sohail Inayatullah, of Tamkang University in Taiwan, told the Australian Information Industry Association ICT workforce of the future forum in Melbourne last week that linking urban design and technology was an emerging issue.

Professor Inayatullah, who is also adjunct professor at the University of the Sunshine Coast, in Queensland, said an alternative work environment was needed because those who worked from home often felt isolated.

“When I talk to chief executives they always complain that they don’t want workers to work from home, even though it increases productivity, because of a lack of surveillance,” he said.

“People who work from home say they love it. However, there are issues of child care and social isolation.”

Working from social and community centres could benefit a worker’s wellbeing and reduce carbon emissions by cutting commuting time, he said.

In the future, Professor Inayatullah said, ICT workers could be employed not only because of their technical skills but their “emotional” and possibly “spiritual” skills.

“If you want to train new ICT graduates, it is teaching them how to respect other cultures, and to understand how other genders think and look at nature, so it is not just the skills, but the context of the skills.”



**Alternatives:** Sohail Inayatullah

AIIA’s first education and industry linkages forum, which attracted about 100 participants, explored alternative workforce scenarios as well as workforce issues that influence technology businesses.

AIIA chief executive Sheryle Moon said there was concern that the industry was still failing to attract young Australians at the right level.

“In 2002, for every ICT vacancy across the country there were six suitably qualified and skilled people,” she said.

“At the end of last year, that had dropped to two and in some states and territories, like the ACT, it was 1.3.

“The situation is clearly not sustainable.”

Ms Moon proposed a national campaign to attract young people into the sector as well as a National ICT Week along the lines of National Science Week.

The AIIA is running a seminar series in every capital city in the last two weeks of June to provide advice for women.

“It is to help them ask employers for the workplace arrangements that they need to stay in the industry while continuing to deliver productivity gains,” Ms Moon said.