



**FACULTY OF BUSINESS AND LAW**  
**School of Business and Management**  
**ER & HRM Group**

## RESEARCH SEMINAR

**TOPIC:** 'Unions and Training in Australia: A Conceptual Outline'

**SPEAKER:** **Dr Richard Cooney**  
Department of Management  
Monash University

**DATE:** Friday 24<sup>th</sup> October 2008  
**TIME:** 12.00 noon – 1.30 pm  
**VENUE:** **SRS04**, Callaghan Campus

### THE SPEAKER

Richard Cooney is a Senior Lecturer in the Department of Management at Monash University and is a Research Fellow at the Monash University-Australian Council for Educational Research, *Centre for the Economics of Education and Training*. His teaching areas include managing quality, innovation and knowledge and re-engineering the organisation. His research focusses upon business innovation and improvement, workforce development and teamworking. Richard is the co-convenor of the *Conference on Training, Employability & Employment* and he is a member of the international organizing committee for the *International Workshop On Teamworking*. Richard is currently editing a book examining trade union involvement in VET policy formation. Richard has most recently undertaken consulting work for the International Labour Organization and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia.

Recent publications include:

Cooney, R. & Sewell, G. (2008) From lean production to mass customisation. Recent developments in the Australian automotive industry. pp. 127-149. in Pulignano et al. (Eds.), *Flexibility at Work: Critical developments in the International Automobile Industry*. Palgrave.

Cooney, R., & Gospel, H., (2008). Inter-firm cooperation in training. Group training in the UK and Australia. *Industrial Relations Journal*, 39(5), 411-427.

Cooney, R. (2004). Empowered self-management and the design of work teams. *Personnel Review*, 33(6), 677-692.



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**ABSTRACT**

There has been an increased emphasis upon employee skill development at and for work. Employee training has assumed a growing significance as part of the employment relationship. One consequence of this is that training has become a more highly contested matter in the workplace. How unions respond to these new demands and challenges is a matter of considerable interest. Do they engage with education and training systems in order to shape national and industry systems of skill formation, or do they focus their efforts upon representing members in individual workplaces?

Union strategy in response to the growing importance of training has been seen as an important aspect of union renewal in the workplace but how and why might this renewal happen? The paper examines the role of Australian unions in vocational education and training (VET). The paper identifies three dimensions of union engagement with VET issues and it highlights the way in which different dimensions have been to the forefront of union activity over training. The paper provides case studies of the engagement of three unions, each with a different focus upon training issues.

**A short paper is available on request.**

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**ALL WELCOME**  
A light lunch will be provided