

REINVENTING LEADERSHIP

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John Mullen's battle
on the wharves

JAZZING UP JETSTAR

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Wiring business for
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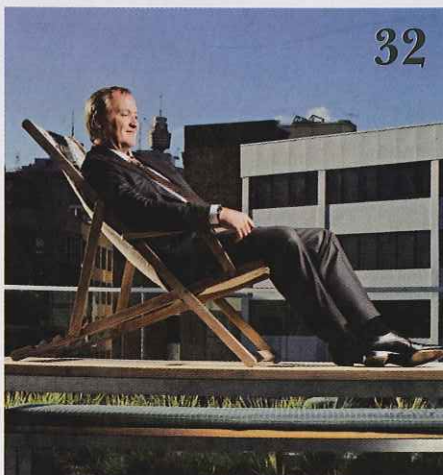
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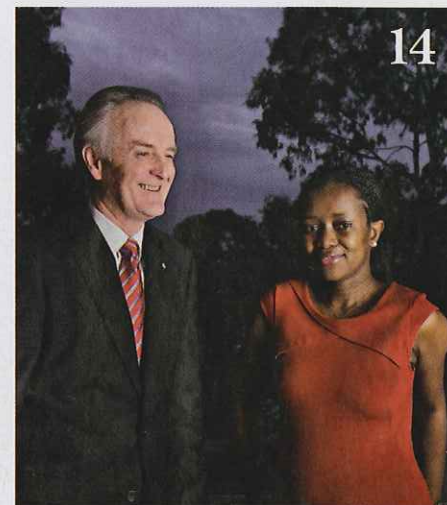
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STUDY LEAVE

Winning an Australian scholarship to a prestigious British institution opened up new perspectives for mining engineer Todd Myers.

STORY NARELLE HOOPER PHOTOGRAPHY GLENN HUNT

It is a rare luxury to be able to take a year out from work to advance your education without having to fret too much about the costs and impact on your job.

Todd Myers, right, who works as principal mining engineer in integrated planning with the BHP Billiton Mitsubishi Alliance in Brisbane found it an invaluable development experience.

In late 2010, thanks to the Cranfield Australian Alumni Scholarship Foundation, along with support from his boss, Myers and his wife Alison packed up their then three-month-old daughter and shifted to the English countryside.

They spent the year in Bedfordshire, on the former World War II airfield that is home to Cranfield Management School, 75 kilometres north-west of London.

Spending time with a largely global cohort opened up a new network. Myers also had the surreal experience of being immersed in a crowd of cricket tragics: the only non-Indian on the campus cricket teams.

He and his study cohort also had to tap their communication skills and survive a simulated media conference over a company controversy.

"A real strength of the course was a strong focus on personal development," he says.

"I'm pretty confident with my technical skills but I learnt that how far I go in my career depends on how good I am as a leader and how well I interact with others."

After starting with construction contractor Thiess, Myers joined the BHP Billiton-Japanese joint venture in 2003 and spent time in central Queensland before moving to Brisbane in 2007.

While he had well-developed technical skills and had completed a master's degree in applied finance, he was keen to broaden his knowledge



with an MBA. The HR department told him of the 12-month scholarship offered by Cranfield. He liked the notion of a one-year course. "You work harder and cover a lot of things," he says.

He scored well on his GMAT exam, was interviewed by executive search firm Egon Zehnder and wrote an essay on contributing to Australia's future. Then, after missing out in 2008, he reapplied and was accepted in 2010.

He says personality profiling, group work and feedback mechanisms gave him useful ways to think about the his own impact and about teamwork. Cranfield uses a team profiling tool called Belbin, named after developer Meredith Belbin. It holds that effective teams have members who must cover several key roles. Out of that Myers realised one of his strengths was as a big picture thinker. But he has to be mindful as an engineer of being forced into the detail.

"It does force you to do a lot more thinking at a high level about how you interact with people, which you don't necessarily do in the day to day," he says.

He ended up winning the Henry Ford II Scholar Award for the student with the highest marks for the course. Since returning late last year, he has moved into a new role at work – and Alison has given birth to a second daughter.

The Cranfield Australian Alumni Scholarship was established in 2005 and co-funded by patron and former ANZ Bank chief John McFarlane and the Cranfield School of Management. It aims to help talented Australians accelerate their professional, personal and leadership development.

The school has an active global alumni network and with about 225 alumni in Australia, strong local representation. The foundation has an ethos of contribution and "paying it forward".

Myers says the experience impressed on him the need for a global perspective.

"One thing I've found, within Australia – even though it is changing – is that we're still very internally focused," he says. "Ten years ago it wasn't an issue. Now those cross-cultural skills are becoming essential." **B**