

Student survey shows calculated gamble

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Education reporter

A STUDY of university students' attitudes to maths and science should ring alarm bells for the country's future, says Universities Australia.

Less than half the first-year students surveyed nationwide, including the University of Tasmania, fully agreed that science was critical to maintaining Australia's way of life.

The study revealed a growing lack of appreciation of the relevance and career potential of science, technology, engineering and maths.

The Universities Australia report found students were often disillusioned and said their teachers' lack of enthusiasm affected their own interest.

"This trend should be setting off alarm bells as it poses a risk to Australia's future as an innovative nation and an international leader in research," chief executive Glenn Withers said.

"With the Government reviewing the funding and quality of higher education teaching, we have an opportunity to radically rethink the way we teach science and maths in our schools to ensure commencement rates increase."

One student with no shortage of enthusiasm is Alice Herbert.



SMART MOVE: Alice Herbert, 19, of Geilston Bay, is studying to be a maths and science teacher. Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE

19, of Geilston Bay. She is in her second year of a Bachelor of Science and wants to follow that with a Masters in teaching. "This year I'm doing operational research, which is exciting, and second-year calcu-

lus and data and statistics," Ms Herbert said.

"There are so many different branches of science. With maths alone, I am choosing two out of 24 maths subjects."

Among survey results, more

than 40 per cent did not feel encouraged by their high school teachers to do well in maths and science; one in three were influenced by past teachers in their university choices; and one in five sci-

ence, technology, engineering or maths students believed the "nerd" stereotype in science.

The study comes as Tasmania grapples with a lack of qualified maths and science teachers.