



## Investment in machinery and software a boost for the industry

Swan TAFE has recently invested in new machinery and software from International Industry Leaders the German Homag Group, ensuring it delivers the latest relevant training to apprentices and the industry.

“The recent machine and software installations are a culmination of exhaustive research that started with discussions amongst the College and industry,” said Swan TAFE Portfolio Manager for Furniture Technology, Arthur Drage.



Throughout the research process, Swan TAFE determined that the strongest demand in the industry was for Computer Numerical Control (CNC) skills and flexibility in regards to who the College trains and when that training takes place.

Fast becoming one of the key drivers of cabinet shop fitting and furniture manufacture in Australia, CNC based design and manufacture has meant a shift in focus and direction for the College to ensure it continues to deliver the most relevant and up-to-date training and assistance.

“We’re aligning ourselves closely with what industry really wants,” Arthur said.

As a result, the College now offers industry standard CNC design training with programs such as Microvellum and they’re taking this through to manufacture with software and machines from the Homag Group.

“The new training regime covers both traditional apprentice training, where all apprentices are now required to complete CNC modules and, fee for service training programs for established people or new employees within these industries” Arthur said.

The discussions outlined a strong push for training relevance and the College was also able to note what machines and software are already in wide use throughout the industry.

“Seeing that there are a large number of local companies already using machines and software from Homag was a definite factor in Swan TAFE’s decision to invest in their machinery” Arthur said

With this in mind, the College had adopted a separate training initiative for 2007 which will see them offer training to local industry using Homag equipment modules.

“This is a huge positive for the College as it will enable us to easily train new staff and up-skill existing operators on top-class equipment” Arthur said.

Swan TAFE’s agreement with Homag also ensures the College continues to use the latest versions of CNC software, including programming software WoodWop, nesting module WoodNest and optimising and production control software CutRite in order to maintain industry relevance.





The first machine to be purchased by the College was a flat bed router to teach 'nest based' manufacture.

"Here in West Australia nest based manufacture has become the system of choice and its uptake is growing rapidly" Arthur said.

"We wanted to focus on this but also not limit ourselves to just flat bed full sheet nesting so, a machine with true flexibility was an absolute must."

After an evaluation of all the options at the AWISA exhibition, and an open tender process, Swan TAFE decided on a *BHP200* from Weeke, CNC specialists of the Homag Group.

"With Weekes unique table system we have unmatched flexibility to machine a wide range of work including timber components" Arthur said.

"The machine is incredibly strong and accurate meaning work like MDF doors and precise drilling depths are made much easier".

Alongside the *BHP200* is a Beamsaw from Holzma, the most successful and largest manufacturer of this type of machine worldwide, and also part of the Homag Group.

"The Beamsaw has been networked to the Swan TAFE's software training room and it utilises modern label based manufacture" Arthur said.

"I spent considerable time comparing the software interface or, front end, of the Beamsaws and saw Holzma as significantly ahead - their software is very clever, clear and intuitive."

Some of the other factors considered when selecting Swan TAFE's new machinery included the overall standard of engineering, parts and service backup and, considerable weight was placed on recommendations from industry users in Western Australia and the Eastern States.

"Having analysed all aspects of the machinery, an overwhelming 'thumbs up' was given to the Homag Group which together with the endorsements of Homag from Industry gave us the final assurance that we were making the right decision" Arthur said.

New focus, new course structures to suit today's demands and the latest in CNC technology...it's fair to say Swan TAFE have reshaped themselves to meet today's demands from industry and they're ready to add some real value.

