



# Gillard's Illawarra visit runs into a brick wall

By GREG ELLIS

DEPUTY Prime Minister Julia Gillard's scheduled visit to Wollongong on Monday has been thrown into doubt by the turmoil in Canberra over the emissions trading scheme.

Ms Gillard was to be the keynote speaker at Monday's State of the Illawarra Regional Leaders Summit, but yesterday she announced the House of Representatives had been recalled to sit on Monday.

Ms Gillard hopes to make it to the region for a scheduled speech at the University of Wollongong on Monday night, but attendance at the summit appears to be impossible.

Parliamentary secretary for regional development Maxine McKew is expected

to be granted leave to attend the summit.

International planning expert Professor Ed Blakely will deliver a paper on identifying and capitalising on the region's economic potential at the summit.

Meantime, Wollongong TAFE student Daniel Dovern got an insight into Ms Gillard's hands-on approach when he visited Canberra this week as part of the WorldSkills Try A Trade initiative.

He made the most of the opportunity to teach Ms Gillard some bricklaying skills and share some of his views.

She was a fast learner, and asked several questions, such as how much it costs to lay a brick.

Mr Dovern was invited to pass on some of his techniques to senior politicians after winning a gold medal at the 2009 Regional WorldSkills Competition.

He was named in the 20-member Illawarra team for the 2010 National WorldSkills competition in Brisbane at a TAFE Illawarra dinner on Wednesday night.

Winners from that competition will join the Australian Skillaroos team at the 2012 international competition in London.

Last year's national team won 12 medals in Calgary and Australia is now ranked fifth in global trade skills.

Illawarra TAFE's Shane Ashton and Nigel Croke both performed well, with

Mr Croke winning bronze in the bricklaying category.

At the dinner, Illawarra TAFE director Dianne Murray encouraged the business community to get behind the WorldSkills team.

She said it was important because young people selected to represent the region were its future.

In Canberra, WorldSkills Australia chief executive Mark Callaghan described the Government's Apprenticeship Kickstart program as a great initiative that would boost the number of apprenticeships.

WorldSkills Australia is a not-for-profit organisation which raises the profile of skill-based jobs through competitions.



**Building blocks:** Daniel Dovern gives some tips to Julia Gillard in Canberra. The Deputy Prime Minister, who is due to visit Wollongong on Monday, supported the strengthening of training at this week's WorldSkills Try A Trade initiative in the capital.