So what links a stem cell scientist and the manager of a prominent hotel? Or a chef on his way to Dubai as supervisor to 800 chefs and an Yr10 student from St George College?

Plenty it would seems! They were part of an impressive line up of sponsors, speakers and guests who attended the Hospitality Careers Night organised by Western Futures at the Graduates training restaurant, a part of the TAFEsa world class Regency Centre for Hospitality, Leisure and Food Studies.

Over 260 people enjoyed a three course meal as an astounding array of the best in the industry spoke of the banquet of experiences and opportunities that a career in hospitality offers.

As Andrew Worrall EO of Western Futures said, “we wanted to debunk the myth for both students and parents, that Hospitality is not a dead-end job – it has enormous potential for a long and fulfilling career in many areas and the projections into the future are very positive.”

The key message that flowed throughout the night was that hospitality is not just a job you take in between jobs or extra money to get you through university but a serious option for a fulfilling and lucrative career. Speakers told of the growth in the industry, the diversity of options, the overwhelming demand for qualified staff. Common words used were passion, travel, business acumen and people skills.

That the event was so enthusiastically supported by the best in the business says something. Industry sponsorship and support included Hospitality Group Training (HGT); Business SA Apprenticeship Centre; Australian Hotels Association; Australian Culinary Federation; TAFE SA, UniSA, Mark Butler, member for Port Adelaide and previously of the Hospitality Union and chefs from some of the most prestigious restaurants and hotels including executive chefs from The Lakes, Adelaide Convention Centre and Stamford Group. They were joined by teachers, parents and young people interested in finding out about career paths in hospitality.

Tze Khaw, head chef from the Adelaide Convention Centre & recently appointed SA President of the Australian Culinary Association opened with a tour of the countries he has lived in as a result of his career. He told of the growth in the industry whereby now it was common to have 2,500 people attending a conference in Adelaide, and the resulting wealth of opportunities for qualified hospitality staff. Tourism currently accounts for 3.7% of GDP with inbound tourism and conventions expected to increase that figure substantially over the next 5 years.
Western Futures – Hospitality Career Advice Dinner

Wendy Ettridge from HGT, the largest employer of hospitality apprentices and trainees in SA spoke of their focus on mentoring students and the ability to offer rotation through different businesses during an apprenticeship or traineeship resulting in rounded experience and an 86.4% success rate for their students.

Brett Jurgens graduated from HGT in front office management seven years ago and is now the youthful General Manager of Quest on King William with 20 staff under him. He says that the number one skill is what you learn from dealing with customers day to day, interpersonal skills. As he said “I used to be nervous now I am here addressing 260 people at the dinner”.

Belinda and Heidi gave a great outline of TAFE paths through the two streams of hospitality, front of house and cookery. Start Certificate 1 and 11 while still at high school, with another six months training you could have a Certificate 111 which would give you qualifications enough to travel and work overseas. Do another month’s training and a Certificate 1V would make you a supervisor. If your dream is to own your own restaurant, then another 6 months covering business, legal & finances would give you an Advanced Diploma. And from there, you can go on to do flexible modules towards a Business degree, suitable for executive managers or business owners.

Ryan Giles, TAFE SA graduate and new lecturer at Le Cordon Bleu spoke of the benefits of having the years of experience in the industry by the time he finished his TAFE course. He has since gone on to do a Master of Business Administration.

About that stem cell scientist? Jennifer Back was a stem cell scientist in Scotland but had a burning desire to be a chef. Now with Spotless Catering, her approach shows the new breed of people entering the industry. She told of the importance to be confident working with computers, use analysis and to build skills from day one with budgets and the management of staff.

And the feedback from the night? The career pathways are now clear. Decisions were made – it is the area I want to work in. Parents were now supportive, can now see the progression; it’s not a dead end job.

A student from St. George College has become the first School-based Apprentice with HGT, a Seaton High School student gained an apprenticeship at the Lakes Resort Hotel and seven other students are currently being interviewed for apprenticeships as a result of the dinner.