TAFE Teachers Go Back to Industry with IONNIC

Staying current with the latest technologies and industry trends is critical for automotive educators – By Rick Sullivan, Senior Auto Electrical Teacher, TAFE Queensland Gold Coast

Recently, TAFE Queensland Gold Coast and TAFE SkillsTech Brisbane Auto Electrical teachers attended a full-day professional development session with the IONNIC Technical Systems team, hosted at IONNIC's head office in Archerfield, Brisbane.

The training focused on emerging auto electrical and electronic ancillary fitting technologies—now integral to vehicles across sectors such as mining, agriculture, and emergency services.

As modern vehicles increasingly rely on CANBUS (Controller Area Network Binary Unit System) and J1939 communication networks rather than traditional wiring, the need for educators to remain at the cutting edge has never been greater.

Brett Sawyers, Michael Martin and Rick Sullivan with the CANBUS Simulation Tester

As many technicians know, even simple installations—like an LED light bar or handbrake warning system—now require an interface with a vehicle's communication network.

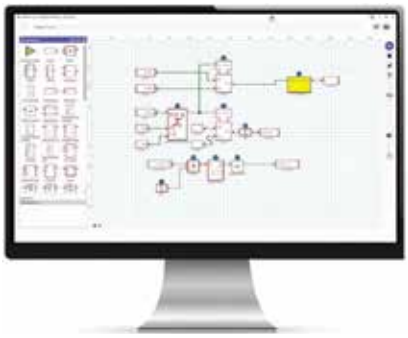
IONNIC's technology simplifies this process, making their products invaluable to modern workshops.

IONNIC is a market leader in automotive safety and warning systems, and their training showcased how CANBUS signals can be interfaced with programmable electronic relays to control a wide range of accessories and automated functions.

These systems are now commonplace in Australian fire service appliances and mine-spec vehicles, ensuring that OEM wiring remains intact while allowing for tailored accessory integration.

A highlight of the collaboration was the design and development of a custom-built multi-use simulation tester for TAFE Queensland Gold Coast.

This unique training tool allows students to safely collect, interpret, and program CANBUS data just as they would in a real vehicle—without risking damage to communication circuits or components.



The simulator represents a significant advancement in the practical delivery of auto electrical training and will be used across Queensland's TAFE automotive programs.

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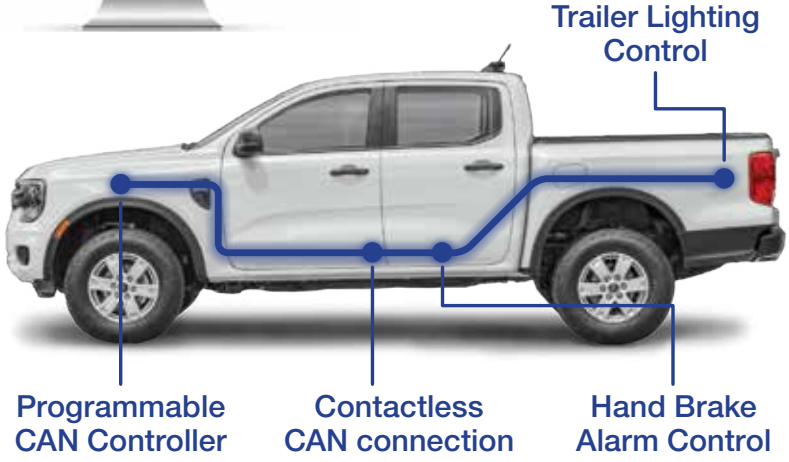
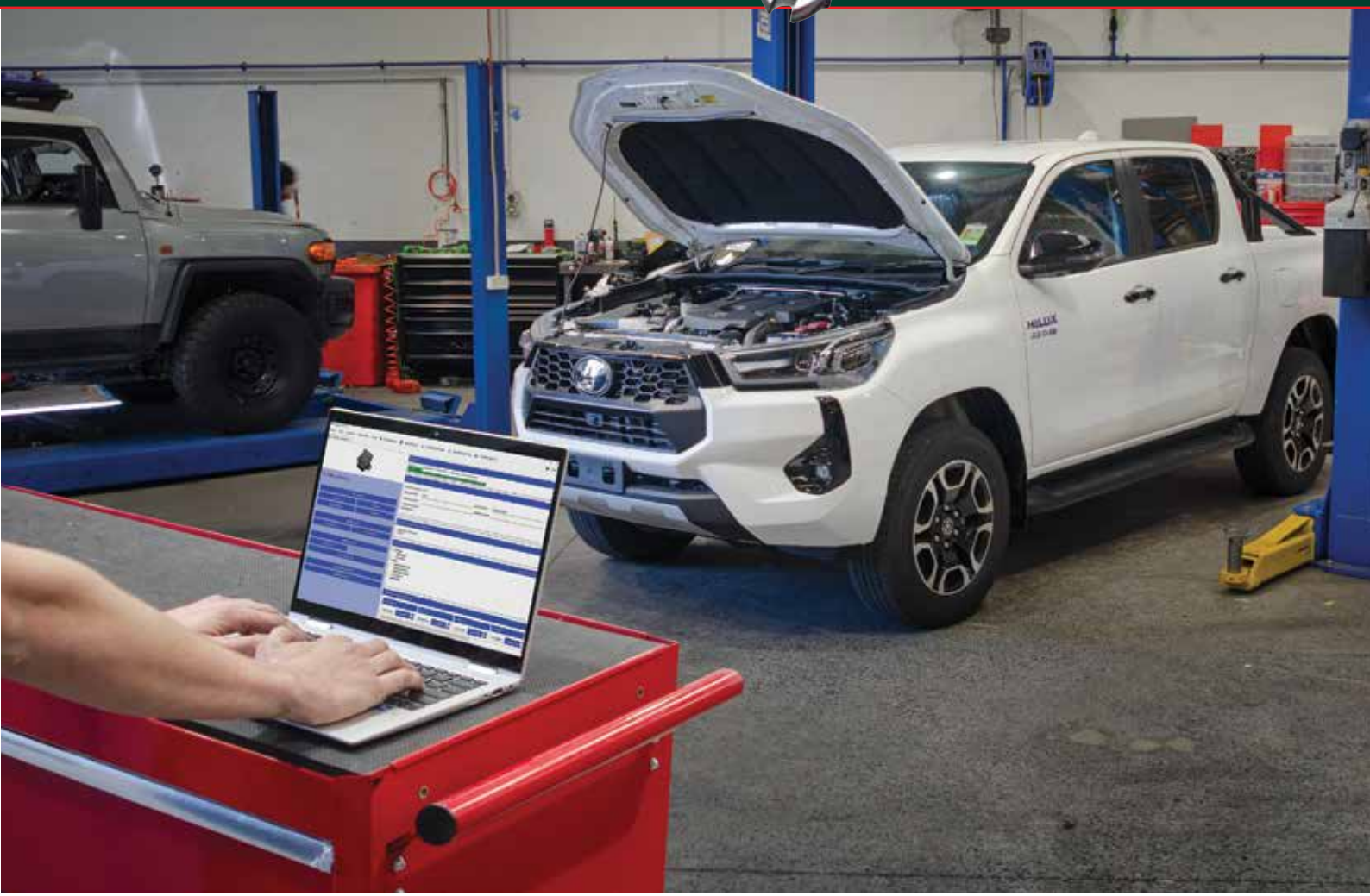
During the session, the TAFE teachers worked through CANBUS theory, software applications, and hands-on programming of modules in test vehicles.





The IONNIC team, including company founder and respected Queensland Auto Electrician Norman Haupt, shared their expertise and provided a behind-the-scenes tour of AEI's impressive warehouse and distribution facilities.

Thanks to this collaboration, TAFE teachers are now equipped to deliver advanced, industry-relevant training—ensuring Queensland's next generation of Auto Electricians are job-ready for the complex electrical systems of today and tomorrow.

A special thank you to Norman Haupt, Sam Draper, Tyler Haub, Michael Martin, Nathan Smith, and the entire team at AEI and IONNIC for their continued partnership with TAFE Queensland.

Together, they're building a stronger, smarter automotive electrical workforce for the future.

IONNIC head office, Archerfield, Brisbane

About the Author

Rick Sullivan is a Senior Auto Electrical Teacher at TAFE Queensland Gold Coast and the Chief Judge for Auto Electrical at WorldSkills Australia.

With over 50 years of industry experience, Rick is passionate about developing strong industry partnerships and preparing the next generation of automotive electricians for an increasingly technology-driven trade.