Threat of China trade war a 2018 issue: economist

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President-elect Donald Trump’s threat to start a trade war with China involving punitive tariffs, which could hurt Australia’s economy, is unlikely to occur until 2018, if at all, says a prominent economist.

Deloitte Access Economics partner Chris Richardson said Mr Trump would probably try a range of other tactics in the coming year before imposing tariffs on Chinese products.

“Something bad could happen out of the combination of Trump, trade and tariffs but it is not the most likely to happen this year,” Mr Richardson said.

“This is more likely to be a 2018 risk. A lot of Trump’s political promises and putative strengths are in his concern over loss of jobs in US rust belt states and the size of the US trade deficit. The problem is a higher US dollar makes those problems worse.”

In the days around Mr Trump winning last November, a US dollar rally in November, the US dollar fell against the Australian dollar from a peak of US75¢ to a low of US71¢ in late December.

“There is a chance come 2018, if he’s not getting progress on the indicators he wants, and those mid-term elections are starting to loom, then yes he might reach for the tariff lever around China. But it’s not the main game for 2017,” Mr Richardson said.

Deloitte will release a report called “Ten years might come to an end, improving income recession” of the past five years might come to an end, improving the budget bottom line,” Mr Richardson said.

“The potential for better news lies in a linkage that not enough people have noticed,” he said. “If commodity prices are good enough for long enough it shows up in wage growth.”

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Just 13 per cent of engineers in Australia are accepted in each intake, and only if the young people more employable in the digital age. Just 6.2 per cent of year 12 girls studied higher maths in 2015, down from 11.9 per cent in 2001, Engineers Australia says. Even among boys the percentage doing higher maths at year 12 slid from 15.9 per cent in 2001 to 11.5 per cent in 2015. “It’s devastating, isn’t it?” said Chris Stoltz, Victorian president of Engineers Australia.

He blamed a lack of engineer role models compared with doctors, lawyers, police and teachers in the community and on TV. The University of Queensland has used role models and industry partners to achieve a 26 per cent female graduation rate.

The proportion of girls taking higher maths continues to slide.

“Folks just take running water and open the gate and let the run off. We have got to educate our kids in all these other fields and think of engineering as a career.”

Mr Stoltz said: “You don’t make an appointment to see your engineer”.

The Turnbull government’s Advanced Manufacturing Growth Centre has highlighted knowledge gaps in disciplines considered vital if Australian manufacturers are to compete in global markets – from robotics and automation to nanotechnology, data analysis, micro-manufacturing and virtual reality.

Flight Lieutenant Pavlovic’s opportunity came when the RAFA’s Aircraft Research and Development Unit realised it had had no female applicants, and reached out to them.

She attended a motivational camp for flight test engineering at the Edinburgh RAFA base in October. If personal circumstances allow, she will apply for the gruelling two-year selection process this year. If she is accepted she will be the RAFA’s first female flight test engineer (a female test pilot). But she is no slouch. Only four flight test engineers are accepted in each intake, and only if they all measure up.

“It’s quite hands-on and very maths and physics heavy, which I love,” she says. "I never saw a glass ceiling or [stigma]. I can’t play with cars or anything else. I can’t play with cars or anything else."