

Friday, 30th October 2009

The Editor
The Warrnambool Standard
Raglan Parade
Warrnambool VIC 3280

Dear Sir,

I write with great disappointment at the loss of a wonderful local facility that was skilling future trades people whilst enabling them to remain at school.

Despite wide-spread industry and community support our local Australian Technical College (ATC), which for the past 2 years has been allowing students to learn a trade and begin their apprenticeship while still at school, will close its doors in 2010 and take away with it the promise of a fulfilling and worthwhile career head-start for those local students who want to learn a trade and still obtain a well-rounded education.

In a case of deja-vu, it seems that once again Labor Governments are intent upon removing trades training from our schools. Wouldn't you think they could learn from past mistakes?

Over past decades it has become abundantly clear that while TAFE and other training organisations provide good training outside of the school environment, they aren't supported to provide this important training while students are still at school.

The ATC concept demonstrated that if you set up a facility, managed by people committed to vocational education, designed to cater for school kids in a school environment, and combine it with local industry governance and support then you have got a winner.

Our local Tech College, one of 24 nation-wide initiated by the former Coalition Government, was keeping future trades people at school learning a whole range of other subjects like maths and English which will assist them in business later in life, whilst at the same time getting a head start in their apprenticeship.

The Tech College also had highly specialised facilities that aren't available in other schools.

Don't forget that statistically only 30% of students go to university. For once we had an initiative providing something of value for the other 70%.

It is therefore with great sadness that, after a long fight with both the Federal and State Governments, I see trades training once again relegated to the back blocks.

I would like to thank ATC Executive Manager Tony Austin and his staff, local principals, parents and students, and the many local industry leaders who gave this wonderful facility so much of their valuable time and support.

Yours sincerely

The Hon David Hawker MP
Federal Member for Wannon