Second Rate?

Reflections on South Tech and secondary technical education

1960-90

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Abstract

A personal conviction that Victorian secondary technical education was not necessarily ‘second rate’ prompted this study - the history of Shepparton South Technical School. This thesis examines the evolution of a secondary technical school until its demise under the 1982–89 State Labor Government.

The technical schools were under threat from their inception following the 1910 Education Act. The first Chief Inspector of Technical Instruction, Donald Clark, warned that their executive school councils and their links with the senior technical colleges were bulwarks against their extinction. Clark argued that there was a need for strong leadership and vigilance if they were to retain their distinctive philosophy. The wording of the 1910 Education Act did not specify the development of a dual system. Yet the tech schools flourished because they were popular with boys and parents, because of their executive Councils, and because of their relationship with industry.

The junior techs evolved into secondary techs during the 1950s and 60s, staffed by teachers with industrial experience who were qualified to teach apprentices, as well as the junior students. A Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools travelled throughout Victoria to disseminate information and mentor technical school staff. DTE Ted Jackson’s 1970 policy gave principals unprecedented autonomy to respond to the needs of young people within their local community.

In the 1960s, a second technical school was demanded in preference to a second high school in the Goulburn Valley. In 1966–68, South Tech’s inaugural students and staff were housed at the Shepparton Showgrounds, a novel environment which fostered positive attitudes towards the innovations introduced in the 1970–80s by Jock Thomlinson, the new principal. Thomlinson introduced general studies, media studies and social biology. He gained funding for resources, including television equipment. The school’s 1973 in-service was pivotal in assisting the staff to articulate a child-centred philosophy.

A fall in enrolments in 1975 resulted in staff and Council analysing their image in Shepparton and district. A public relations campaign was mounted to explain the school’s philosophy and programs to the local community. South Tech’s enrolments had increased by 1980, when a furore over sex education arose. The school’s social biology program became a focus for public debate following media scrutiny.
South Tech Council minutes reveal the rapid changes that were thrust upon the school under the State Liberal Government’s 1972–81 decentralisation policy, and the 1982–89 Labor Government’s restructure. Only comprehensive post-primary schools were built after 1984. In 1985, the Blackburn Committee recommended one post-primary system, and one Year 12 qualification, the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE). By 1990, South Tech’s most successful Year 12 Secondary Technical Certificate had been replaced by the VCE, and the school was reclassified as Shepparton South Secondary College. South Tech no longer existed as a technical school.

The Federal Australian Labor Party and the Liberal National Coalition 2004 education policies both identified boys’ disinterest in education and a lack of skilled tradesmen, both of which were effectively managed under Victoria’s former technical education system.
Declaration

This is to certify that
(i) the thesis comprises only my original work towards the PhD,
(ii) due acknowledgement has been made in the text to all other material used,
(iii) the thesis is fewer than 100,000 words in length, exclusive of tables, maps, bibliographies and appendices.

Lesley Florence Preston

Date
Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to my mum and dad, Florence and Ern Preston, my sisters, Betty and Athalie, and my brothers, John and Bill Preston.

Acknowledgements

I wish to express my deepest appreciation to the people who contributed their expertise and supported me during the course of this thesis. I interviewed more than a dozen people, and thank them all for their time, their enthusiasm, and their willingness to reflect on their experiences. Catherine Herrick unfailingly provided archival material. Betty Lawson helped in any number of extraordinary ways. Betty was a pioneer in this field and still brilliantly exemplifies the tech spirit. My supervisor, Associate Professor Marjorie Theobald, is an inspirational scholar and person, and was a constant source of guidance and loving support. Professor Ron Adams, mentor and friend, describes a finished thesis as ‘a beautiful artefact’, and first inspired me in this direction. His consistent enthusiasm for this study enabled me to keep going. Dick Armitage gave me a job in 1974 and, twenty-six years later, a title. Finally, I wish to thank my friends and family, including Lil and Peter Kennedy, and our beloved Jack, for their love over the years.
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<tr>
<td>ACPPIV</td>
<td>Association of Councils of Post-Primary Institutions in Victoria</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ACTIV</td>
<td>Association of Councils of Technical Institutions in Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>ADGE</td>
<td>Assistant Director of General Education</td>
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<td>ADTE</td>
<td>Assistant Director of Technical Education</td>
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<td>APVTI</td>
<td>Association of Principals of Victorian Technical Institutions</td>
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<td>BA</td>
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<td>BCom</td>
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<tr>
<td>BITS</td>
<td>Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools</td>
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<tr>
<td>BRISEC</td>
<td>Benalla Regional In-Service Education Committee</td>
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<tr>
<td>CAE</td>
<td>College of Advanced Education</td>
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<td>CAT</td>
<td>Common Assessment Task</td>
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<td>CEP</td>
<td>Country Education Project</td>
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<tr>
<td>CG&amp;CS</td>
<td>Counselling, Guidance, and Clinical Services</td>
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<td>CPA</td>
<td>Concerned Parents Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>DGE</td>
<td>Director General of Education</td>
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<td>Dip.Ed</td>
<td>Diploma of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>DTE</td>
<td>Director of Technical Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>FIT</td>
<td>Footscray Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>GNER</td>
<td>Goulburn: North-Eastern Region</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVGS</td>
<td>Goulburn Valley Grammar School</td>
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<tr>
<td>GVSBG</td>
<td>Goulburn Valley Social Biology Group</td>
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<tr>
<td>H&amp;HR</td>
<td>Health and Human Relations</td>
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<tr>
<td>HERC</td>
<td>Health Education Resource Centre</td>
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<tr>
<td>HOD</td>
<td>Head of Department</td>
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<td>HR</td>
<td>Human Relations</td>
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<td>HSC</td>
<td>Higher School Certificate</td>
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<td>LAC</td>
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<td>LLB</td>
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<td>MOE</td>
<td>Ministry of Education</td>
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<td>MP 6</td>
<td>Ministerial Paper, No. 6</td>
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<tr>
<td>P/P</td>
<td>Post Primary</td>
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<tr>
<td>PEP</td>
<td>Participation and Equity Program</td>
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<td>RBE</td>
<td>Regional Board of Education</td>
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<td>RDE</td>
<td>Regional Director of Education</td>
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<td>Abbreviation</td>
<td>Full Form</td>
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<tr>
<td>RMIT</td>
<td>Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology</td>
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<tr>
<td>SADEC</td>
<td>Shepparton and District Education Committee</td>
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<td>SBRC</td>
<td>Social Biology Resource Centre</td>
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<td>SCV</td>
<td>State College of Victoria</td>
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<td>SDSRPC</td>
<td>Shepparton District Schools Reorganisation Planning Committee</td>
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<td>SIP</td>
<td>School Improvement Plan</td>
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<td>SRU</td>
<td>Schools Reorganisation Unit</td>
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<td>SS</td>
<td>State School</td>
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<td>SSAV</td>
<td>Soldier Settlers Association of Victoria</td>
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<td>SSCC</td>
<td>Shepparton South Secondary College</td>
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<td>SSTS</td>
<td>Shepparton South Technical School [generally referred to as <em>South Tech</em>]</td>
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<tr>
<td>STC</td>
<td>Secondary Technical Certificate</td>
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<td>T12</td>
<td>Technical Year 12 Certificate</td>
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<td>TAFE</td>
<td>Technical and Further Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>TOP</td>
<td>Tertiary Orientation Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>TSAV</td>
<td>Technical Schools Association of Victoria</td>
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<td>TSD</td>
<td>Technical Schools Division</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTAV</td>
<td>Technical Teachers Association of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>TTUV</td>
<td>Technical Teachers Union of Victoria</td>
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<tr>
<td>VASST</td>
<td>Victorian Association of Social Studies Teachers</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCAB</td>
<td>Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>VCE</td>
<td>Victorian Certificate of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VCROSS</td>
<td>Victorian Council of Social Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>VFSSPC</td>
<td>Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs</td>
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<tr>
<td>VHSPA</td>
<td>Victorian High School Principals Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>VICSSO</td>
<td>Victorian Council of State School Organisations</td>
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<td>VIIS</td>
<td>Victorian Institute of Inspectors of Schools</td>
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<td>Victorian Institute of Secondary Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>VPPA</td>
<td>Victorian Primary Principals Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>VSTA</td>
<td>Victorian Secondary Teachers Association</td>
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<tr>
<td>VTU</td>
<td>Victorian Teachers Union</td>
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Introduction

This thesis documents the history of Shepparton South Technical School from 1966 to 1990. In a sense, it explores the rise and fall of an innovative technical school. It describes aspects of the dismantling of the Technical Schools Division as they affected South Tech, and some immediate effects of its aftermath: the inadequacies of the Victorian Certificate of Education compared to the Secondary Technical Certificate, and the stress suffered by staff and school councillors as a result of the rapid introduction of new policies. Most importantly, this thesis explores an innovative technical school from the inside, follows the development of its aims and philosophy, and shows how it worked in practice.

This topic is an important one, as technical schools are still on the agenda, and still being discussed. Recently, in December 2004, Prime Minister John Howard lamented the decline of ‘old-style tech schools’.¹ He claimed that ‘this country made a big mistake thirty or forty years ago when it turned its back on the old system of having technical schools. We now must reinvest in the future of the seventy per cent of young Australians who do not go directly to university when they leave school’.²

This thesis demonstrates that, since 1910, technical education was effectively managed in Victoria, initially in the junior technical schools, and then in the secondary technical schools. The homogenisation of the secondary system did not put into place the sustainable alternatives offered by the previous dual system. I argue that the loss of the Victorian techs evoked deep personal trauma for a great many students and teachers, in addition to what is now a cause for public redress and regret.

* * *

Before continuing, it is first necessary to disclose that I was employed as a teacher at the Shepparton South Technical School from 1974 to 1985, and was thus a participant in some of the events that this thesis describes. As a result, it is worth providing a brief biographical sketch so that conclusions about my own biases and agenda can be drawn.

My formal education began at Budgeree South East State School No. 3504, where my brothers Bill and John attended. It was a bush school, housed in a large room with small windows, a fireplace, a porch and an outside flagpole. The enrolment peaked at about twelve,

² ibid.
from myself, an infant, to a young man who sat at the back desk studying for matriculation. After eighteen months in this intimate environment, the school closed, and I enrolled in the Correspondence School, Fitzroy.

My remaining primary education was spent out of doors on a farm, with a minimum of time spent cramming in the last few days before posting my ‘sets’. My tutors were my sister Athalie, my brothers, and my parents. My teachers, via letters, were personal friends, with whom I shared all the details of my life. In 1956 I attended Healesville Central School, and I still recall my shock at discovering that the other students regarded the teachers as an enemy.

Despite an offer from Melbourne University, I enrolled in a science degree at the relatively new Monash University in 1964. Monash was reputedly for the second rate students, those rejected from Melbourne. My sister Betty and her husband offered me accommodation in their home. Although I had very limited funds, I rejected the idea of an Education Department Studentship. I despised a system that, in my opinion, stifled the desire to learn. Instead, I accepted financial insecurity, and began the rollercoaster ride of almost full-time work and a full-time course.

Living from week to week with diminishing funds, I occasionally approached the Education Department Recruitment Officers. I was saved from the perils of the classroom by word of mouth jobs: babysitting, clerical work, waitressing, cleaning, even working in stables. Failing my first year, I appeared before the Unsatisfactory Progress Committee. The empathic Chairman of the Department of Physiology offered full-time technical work in the medical school, with the opportunity to study part-time.

Lacking self-confidence, and on my sister Athalie’s advice, I undertook a Diploma Course, which led to an Advanced Course in Mannequin Training at the Suzan Johnston School of Deportment and modeling work. I refused an instructor’s position with the School in favour of completing my degree. I earned money when opportunities presented themselves, such as cooking for first year botany students on a field trip to Wyperfeld National Park.

With limitations on my social life, I contemplated joining the Monash University Labor Club. Accustomed to evening Branch meetings of the ALP where participation in heated debate was followed by tea and biscuits, I recall my amazement at the prospect of an afternoon meeting, followed by wine and cheese. It all seemed so decadent, and my interest waned immediately.
Around this time I began to notice that the reactions I received on the catwalk were very different from those I received while wearing a white coat in the laboratory. Students involved in practical work, with few exceptions, treated me as an inferior; but outside the lab, I was indistinguishable from a common worker or a professor. These early experiences taught me much about differing perceptions of equality.

I studied full-time during the second year, with part-time work; however, work became untenable in the third year, when I was advised to accept a student loan. I graduated with a B.Sc. in 1970, with majors in Physiology and Biochemistry, and an urgent desire to repay the loan. Work offering the highest salary, ironically, was a teaching and residential mistress position at Queen’s Church of England Girl’s Grammar School in Ballarat.

Resigning from Queen’s in September 1970 to travel, I gained employment in the Physiology Department, Manchester University, England. Four months later, a British Postal Union strike resulted in the non-delivery of a cable concerning the sudden death of my mother. In a telephone call, my Dad told me of her funeral, and advised me not to hasten home - to wait until the union allowed the workers to deliver mail. (Communication was mostly by mail and overseas telephone calls were expensive). Shocked, and an altered state of consciousness, I did what my Mum would have wanted - continued as before - until I read her death notice in a newspaper in Australia House in London. I immediately flew home.

A vacancy in the Science Department at the Sacred Heart College, Shepparton, led me unwillingly back to the classroom. For two years, the nuns, lay staff and girls nurtured me through my bereavement, and their loving care tempered my opinion of teaching. I enjoyed working with the girls. On Friday afternoons the science benches became catwalks, as we worked on deportment and self-confidence: ‘don’t trip over the gas jets, gels!’

Because of increasing pressure to undertake teacher training, on my Dad’s advice, I resigned from SHC to train with the Technical Schools Division in 1973. Three days a week I attended the Technical Teachers College, Hawthorn, the remaining two days were spent teaching, and observing lessons in humanities, art, and trade at Shepparton Technical College.

A TTC supervisor inspected my lessons, with mixed results. During one lesson, he took over my spirited Form Four boys, but failed to convert or divert them from their anarchic behaviour, despite his dramatic accounts of blood and guts adventures. His request to have me relieved of this class was countered by my request to keep them. (‘A difficult class to love’, as the nuns would have said.)
Despite my best efforts, by mid-year I was on the point of resigning; my philosophical problems with schools returned. Before making a final decision, a TTC lecturer encouraged me to listen to Jock Thomlinson’s 1972 audiotaped address to the TTC staff. Thomlinson’s first words in his characteristic Australian drawl immediately brought me to full attention. He recalled ‘a character called Donald Clark’, and highlighted Alec Clegg’s emphasis on the need for empathic teachers who fitted education to the needs of children. I subsequently attended the 1973 South Tech in-service. There was a definite ‘buzz’, and an air of gentleness in the music room, where the staff and visitors gathered for the first plenary session. The opening address was friendly and impressive, as was the list of speakers, who included the Director of the Technical Schools Division, Ted Jackson, and Psychology and Guidance officer, John McLeod.

During our talk a few days later, Jock Thomlinson asked why I disliked schools, listened to my answer, and then challenged me to join his staff and develop a sex education program. Like John Kumnick, I didn’t take the offer seriously. But Thomlinson followed up, and on further persuasion, I accepted the challenge. Staffing Officer, Dick Armitage, arranged my appointment to South Tech in 1974.

My TTC lecturers encouraged me to focus on Health and Human Relations. My ‘hard to love’ class responded with alacrity to analysing cigarettes in science classes; and produced their own supplies to measure tar content. Vice Principal Jack McCormick, who told me I was ‘wet’ after his inspection of my early lessons, later changed his mind. He vociferously urged me to remain at the College, gain experience, and seek promotion in the system.

By the end of 1973, I’d survived the typical challenges of being the sole female, and a non-unionist, in the all male, staunchly unionist, Shepparton Technical College. I had a band of brothers, including Jack McCormick, and Senior Master Bill Probst, who were invariably very kind; they enhanced my teaching skills, and sharpened my sense of humour. I witnessed, and was an active participator in a kaleidoscope of human interactions. I was very sad to leave North Tech.

My South Tech program led to the position of GNER consultant in H&HR, which was terminated at the close of 1986 by budget cuts. The final year in this position convinced me that my time was better spent in returning to work with the companionable, loyal, and skilled women on a fruit factory assembly line. With the benefit of hindsight, the family environment at Budgeree South East and my correspondence school studies predisposed me to alternative education. As this study reveals, I never had much patience for meetings filled with jargon.
I commenced part-time, off-campus studies at Deakin University in 1984 to further my knowledge and understanding of human behaviours, which culminated in membership of the Australian Psychological Society in December 1999, and the APS College of Community Psychologists in October 2001. ‘Academically’, I was now ‘qualified’ for the work in which I had trained school communities twenty years earlier.

Following completion of an M.A. in 1998, my co-supervisor, Ron Adams - himself a former tech student - encouraged me to undertake a Ph.D. reflecting on Victorian technical education. Ron described secondary technical education as *carnivale*: ‘the usual world is turned on its head and power is given to all those who are on the bottom’. Research into the ‘old-style tech schools’ lamented by the school cleaner and Prime Minister Howard reveals a paucity of literature in the recent past. Their past is perhaps too recent and I argue that historians of education may have a tendency to overlook junior techs reflecting a general tendency to privilege academic schools over their vocationally oriented counterparts. Literature on Victorian technical education falls into five broad categories including broad general texts, institutional histories, texts specifically concerned with junior technical schools and texts written by committed, impassioned ‘insiders’. The fifth category dealing with a body of related literature useful in understanding the ethos and philosophy of South Tech is discussed in more detail in chapter three.

Four general texts which I found useful in discussing the emergence of technical education and developing a framework over time are Murray-Smith’s 1966 doctoral thesis, focussing on technical education in Australia prior to 1914, Bessant’s 1972 article on the emergence of State Education, the Victorian Education Department’s 1973 centenary production *Vision and Realisation*, and Selleck’s 1982 biography of the first Victorian Director of Education, Frank Tate.

In 1961, Murray-Smith limited his history of technical education in Australia to the period before 1914. He chose this course in order to avoid superficiality when initial research revealed the complexity of his task and its wide-reaching implications. Murray-Smith was supported initially by a Nuffield Foundation Fellowship and later, a Williams scholarship and an agreement with the University of Melbourne to submit his findings to the University in the form of a doctoral thesis.

Discussing colonial Australians’ attempt to adapt to their environment and train young workers, artisans and technologists, Murray-Smith traced the mechanics institutes development in relation to their local environments. In the mid 1850s the Victorian goldfields shaped their local schools of mines technical education curriculum. The stimulus for vocational training came from the need to provide unskilled and unemployed young people with apprenticeships in Victoria and New South Wales in the nineteenth century. Universally throughout Australia, technical schools performed multi-functional tasks and developed into grammar schools for poor men. They developed programs to meet the needs and provide

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opportunities for educationally and socially underprivileged boys. Murray-Smith suggested that between 1860 and the 1890s, Victorian technical schools revealed the juxtaposition of two tendencies, one being idealistic, the other, a tendency to grow out of the environment with which they had an innate kinship. He argued that technical education remained affected by its ambivalent origins into the late 1960s.

In his 1972 article on the emergence of state secondary education, Bessant claimed that it was not by coincidence that each Australian state Education Department developed post-primary education in 1905-1915. Each state administrator, including Frank Tate in Victoria, was aware of the need for competent technologists to establish Australia as a bulwark within the British Empire. Tate saw the necessity for a hierarchy of schools leading from primary school to the technical college or university. Vocationally oriented schools emphasising citizenship and in close partnership with commerce, industry and agriculture were proposed to be integral units within this structure. However, in each Australian state, secondary high schools developed with a bias towards public examinations controlled by universities. Following the 1910 Education Act, Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, Donald Clark’s junior technical schools with their close links to senior colleges were to replace Tate’s failed agricultural high schools in Victoria.

By the 1920s, most students completed their education in primary schools with the elite only attending secondary schools. Bessant argued that education was often dominated by political expediency rather than planning. Australian educationists were influenced by overseas trends, such as the 1923 Hadow Report’s recommendations for a Modern school system. However, at a 1936 conference of Education ministers, New South Wales Country Party Minister for Education, D. H. Drummond proposed that technical education should be funded by the federal government. Bessant noted that Drummond’s proposal began a prolonged campaign for federal funding for education. He asserted that in lieu of developing a unique Australian secondary education system suited to local needs, education administrators slavishly followed overseas trends.

Reflecting on the first centenary of State education in Victoria in 1973, historian L.J. Blake coordinated a team of specialist education historians, and also teams of local and regional committees whose combined writings produced Vision and Realisation. This first of three volumes contains eleven books and records the rise of national schools in the 1850s, the common school period in the 1860s, the 1872 Education Act, teacher supply, organisations and special services. Separate books outline the development of the three divisions, primary, secondary and technical. Volumes II and III were useful in providing a pen-portrait of individual schools.

The role and influence of the first Director of Education is described in a biography of Frank Tate by R.J.W. Selleck, who also illuminated general structures within Tate’s time. Selleck traced the development of Victorian education from its origins in the 1850s, through the 1890s depression, the 1914-1918 World War and its aftermath, the uneasy 1920s which preceded the 1930s depression. Selleck pointed out the difficulties faced by Tate when he took charge of a disheartened Education Department in 1902. During his incumbency, Tate worked with governments characterised by their indifference to education, rural conservatism and economic stringency. Selleck argued that before the 1960s, electorates did not demand education policies from their politicians. He claimed that Tate was a formidable character whose effectiveness was partly due to a powerful personality.

Personality was a main theme running through the three institutional histories
discussed below. Such histories usually are produced by independent schools which are privileged over state schools, and within the latter category, academic schools are privileged over technical schools. Docherty’s 1981 *The Emily Mac*, Murray-Smith and Dare’s 1987 *The Tech*, and Rasmussen’s 1989 *Poor Man’s University* extended my understanding of the evolution of techs’ strong community links, the role of executive councils and the leadership role of principals.

A history of the *The Emily Mac* was commissioned following the formation of the Victorian Institute of Colleges (VIC) in 1965. Council member of the Emily MacPherson College, Trevor Kilvington suggested that research be undertaken while records and documents were accessible and past and present staff interviews were possible. James Docherty was chosen to write this history on the basis of his ‘insider’ status and his involvement with the recently published *Vision and Realisation*. Docherty had a forty-five year association with the Education Department as a Principal and Inspector of Humanities in the Technical Schools Division.

Docherty recalled two observations made by the Directress of Cookery, Mrs. Annie Fawcett Story, that interest me. Firstly, her credo that children would resist the attractions of the streets if their homes were appropriate to their needs may be as appropriate in the 2000s as it was in the early 1900s. Secondly, Mrs. Story lamented that domestic science was not recognised as a science even by women. Indeed, it was a female Victorian politician who encouraged young women to study mathematics and science, and oversaw the demise of technical education in the 1980s. (chapter eight) Domestic science, underrated by women themselves, was nevertheless championed by Victoria’s first lady in 1904, Lady Talbot, also Janet Lady Clarke and journalist, Miss Vaile, ‘Rita’. The first College Council appointed in 1912 was composed of nine members, including Drs. Jane Greig, Constance Ellis, Miss Robertson, Mrs. Barrett, Mountain, and Osborne. Mrs Osborne’s (later, Dr. Osborne) persistence gained funding for a new building. Women continued to play an enduring role throughout the life of the Emily Mac.

Nearly seventy years later, the Emily Mac’s independent status was threatened in 1969 when, because of funding needed to build new schools, the Technical Training Grant funds were no longer available to the College. Following the inauguration of the VIC in 1965, the College’s recurrent funds were to be included in the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology’s (RMIT) grant. The imposed amalgamation with RMIT and the loss of identity as a consequence of the merging of the Fashion School with RMIT’s Department of Design was deplored by Council President, Mrs. W.E. McPherson in 1978.

Murray-Smith and Dare were given licence to write the centenary history of the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology without restriction or censorship. The authors’ conclusion that Australian society has not matched its rhetoric about the value of technical education with tangible support or funding was particularly interesting. Their three findings were paradoxical. Firstly, they found that, overall, the Tech’s role in advancing social mobility also presented a threat to working class values, thus the Tech enjoyed only a tenuous relationship with the trade union movement. Secondly, in spite of its ambiguous role, the

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Tech nevertheless remained the most prestigious technical institution in Victoria, if not in Australia. Thirdly, the Tech had played a major role in service to the community, for example, their World War I rehabilitation program. This history deepened my understanding of society’s ambivalent attitude towards technical education.

In Poor Man’s University, Carolyn Rasmussen noted that Footscray Tech ceased to exist when Footscray Institute of Technology (FIT) came into existence in 1968. Rasmussen noted Council change and composition, as neither the former administrative arrangements catering mainly to adolescents nor the new arrangements imposed by the VIC were appropriate to create a coherent system. The assumption that engineers alone could administer a technical institution was tested with political scientist Irwin Herrman’s appointment following Director Doug Mills death in 1986. Herrman, who followed earlier administrators, Hoadley (1916-1947), Aberdeen (1947-1951), Beanland (1951-1967) and Mills (1970-1986), claimed that Hoadley stood out amongst his peers for promoting women’s education. Aberdeen died soon after his appointment. Rasmussen recalled Beanland’s leadership style as firm, decisive and dynamic whereas Hoadley was warm and informal. Mills’ transformation of the engineering school into a multi-purpose college of advanced education occurred as a result of the tech’s demise.

Texts useful in describing the evolution of junior technical schools as a result of the failure of secondary high schools to adequately prepare students for senior technical college include Robson’s 1967 thesis,11 Docherty’s 1973 history of technical education in Vision and Realisation, and Lawson’s 1987 unpublished manuscript ‘The Rise and Demise of the Technical Division’.12

Derek Robson traced the development of junior technical schools from the 1880s to the early 1960s. He analysed the 1868 Technological Commission’s obsession with drawing and Schools of Art rather than technological skills. Independent Schools of Mines with a charter to educate miners arose on the goldfields when the disappearance of alluvial gold demanded advanced mining skills. Robson claimed that technical institutes supplied the education missing from high schools. The 1901 Fink Commission’s recommendations forced the Education Department to introduce some reforms to elementary education, however little was done to assist the struggling techs.

Robson pointed out that Frank Tate aimed to carry to fruition the Fink Commission’s recommendations for bridging schools to fill the gap between primary and technical schools. Tate’s aim to establish a secondary education system was facilitated by the 1910 Education Act. However, his scheme for one secondary system was sabotaged by secondary schools preoccupation in competing with private schools to prepare students for university examinations. The belief that anything other than academic studies was second rate developed. However, Chief Inspector of Technical Education, Donald Clark, fought tenaciously for an alternative, equal system of junior technical schools whose mandate was to prepare students for entry to senior technical colleges.

Although the junior techs were popular with working class boys and their parents, they were severely limited financially by the effects of World War I, the 1930s depression and World War II. However, with a soaring birth rate and increased immigration in the

1950s, the government was pressed to build and finance technical schools in response to the consumer demand. Robson claimed that university examinations prevented the merging of the two systems. He pointed out that time was not allocated to re-think the aims of secondary education, thus the bipartite system of secondary education continued.

James Docherty’s account of the development of junior techs in Vision and Realisation covers much the same ground as Robson’s history. However, his report of criticisms from overseas educators who observed serious deficiencies in secondary technical schools drew my attention. In 1954 R. Freeman Butts, Professor of Education from Columbia University, claimed that technical schools were hampered by their second class status - a claim commonly held by educators of academic institutions. In 1960, visiting academic, R.W.B. Jackson, Professor of Educational Research at Toronto observed that techs retarded the development of their students. Criticism of techs was not restricted to overseas visitors. Local critics claimed that some techs were authoritarian, administered corporal punishment indiscriminately, practiced gender discrimination and limited career opportunities. They would argue that the techs that blossomed under Jackson’s 1970 policy (chapter three) were a minority. Liberal and Labor politicians in the late 1970s and early 1980s seized upon such arguments to push for reform in education and for one post primary system.

Betty Lawson initially encountered discrimination which she successfully overcame on appeal to become the first female principal of a co-educational secondary technical school. Lawson found that, in spite of this battle, she experienced no further acrimony. On the contrary, she was accorded help and encouragement. Lawson, who entered the techs ‘by accident, loved the work and the atmosphere’ became an ‘aficionado’ for the rest of her working life.13 Having worked in all three Education Department Divisions, Lawson researched the years 1963-1983 covering the rise and demise of technical education. Writing some years after retiring from teaching, her main purpose was to ‘capture some of the unique features of the Technical Division before the human side with its amusing and amazing stories is lost and we are left with merely historical data’.14

Lawson wrote of the mid 1960s to 1970s era of expansion and development, including the demand for co-education, career opportunities for women in technical education, the early beginnings of the Technical Teachers Association of Victoria, the growth of middle level courses and Technical and Further Education, and the Technical School Division’s demise. Of great importance in achieving her aim, Lawson’s final chapter highlighted lighter, humourous incidents in the techs. Whereas Robson and Docherty’s history of the junior techs had provided a framework of understanding and outlined the techs development in a manner suited for an M.Ed. thesis and a commissioned history, Betty Lawson’s work introduced me to the writing style of an experienced, committed, impassioned ‘insider’.

Betty Lawson’s manuscript heralds the work of a group of committed, impassioned insider writers including Howard Beanland,15 Bill Johnson,16 John McMahon,17 Robyn

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14 ibid, ch.1, p.1.
Characteristically, these writers embed within their text strong emotion and felt experience. While the writers of commissioned and institutional histories assisted my understanding of the technical education’s development, this latter group fleshed out that understanding and breathed a heart and soul into its people.

Howard Beanland commenced his education as a student at Ballarat Technical School in 1915, his retirement in 1967 signalled the completion of almost thirty seven years as a principal. Beanland recalled that as a young, inexperienced principal, he called for a technical principal’s conference. With the assistance of Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, O. E. Nilsson, the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions was thus formed, its first regular conference held on 31 January 1941. Beanland’s autobiography reflects a recurring problem in technical education that contributed to its demise. Grade six parents and teachers lacked an understanding of its benefits. In 1943 at Box Hill, Beanland attempted to rectify this problem by visiting every primary school in the district. The Director of Technical Education, J.L. Kepert recalled Beanland’s partnership with industry and the introduction of appropriate courses to service their needs at Footscray Technical College.

W.H. (Bill) Johnson spent more than forty years with the Victorian Education Department. He taught for one year in a primary and a high school. Johnson worked for over thirty years as a teacher, then a principal and administrator in technical schools. Johnson was the Director of the Department’s Northern Metropolitan Region for five years. Although he retired from the Ministry in 1988, Johnson’s interest in state education remained, thus he wrote the history of The Association of Councils of Post Primary Institutions in Victoria. He recalled that researching and writing this history gave him much pleasure. His ‘insider’ status facilitated access to former technical educators and Councillors. An archival search led him to analyse reports, papers and minutes, theses and dissertations, articles and books.

Johnson’s history of the Association of Principals of Victorian Technical Institutions (1967-86) The Final Twenty Years stimulated my search for material to analyse his claims. Johnson argued that school principals were basically excluded from discussions on school operations. In a veiled reference to George Orwell’s Animal Farm, Johnson claimed that ‘under Labour all would be equal, but the 5 Orgs would be more equal!’ His description of the ‘farce’ concerning the almost total exclusion of school principals from key school operations discussions needed to be tested. Johnson’s apparent rage that this exclusion occurred, ironically, ‘not under an elitist, conservative government, but under the aegis of a government of the people’ may be understood.

In a passionate presentation delivered to the Australian and New Zealand History of Education Society Annual Conference in 2000, Erica Jolly asked if education historians perpetuate the conflict by rewriting and reinterpreting ordinary peoples’ experience and language in academic language. An experienced teacher of forty years, Jolly became deputy

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19 E. Jolly, We Came to Marion. Celebrating Forty Years of Marion High School, Flinders Press, Adelaide, 1995.
22 ibid. 1993, p.76.
principal (curriculum) at Marion High School in South Australia. Jolly observed a conflict between elite intellectual academics and those educated outside academia. She was critical of education historians’ tendency to ‘abstract and dehumanise education’ and to marginalise the experience of significant others, for example, parents and families. Arguing that statistics are a poor tool for measuring affective educational characteristics such as attitude, Jolly also claimed that lavatories, the places of ‘revulsion and refuge’ may be more important than libraries in school life.

In her 1995 book *We Came To Marion: Celebrating Forty Years Of Marion High School*, Erica Jolly used former students, staff and volunteers’ written recollections to record their experiences in appropriate language. Continuing her quest to accurately portray real life education, Jolly collected a further 220 recollections from those who learnt or taught in South Australia’s technical high schools for her book *A Broader Vision*. In a letter addressed to ANZHES conference delegates, Jolly requested contributions to help publish this ‘history from below’, such a history being rare, pointing out that she could not herself afford more than $1000. Analysing secondary academic and vocational education, Jolly attempted to avoid oversimplification and generalisation by identifying what matters to people within schools.

In her 2002 M.Ed. thesis, Mary Kennedy reviewed what mattered to herself and her peers at an alternative educational institution they attended as students in the early 1970s, Collingwood Community School. Kennedy argued that this school was inadequately staffed and funded, with a liberal curriculum unsuited to working-class students. She used her own voice balanced with the voices of former students from oral history interviews - a technique also utilised by Ken Eckersall in his 2002 doctoral thesis.

Eckersall used personal narratives to tell the story of technical education during the years 1931-1988. As with Kennedy, he embedded in this narrative his own story as a technical student, then a teacher in the system. Demonstrating his high regard for his ‘technical people’, Eckersall included in an appendix a Roll Call, which identified each participant in his study. This Roll Call fleshed out personal details, such as their parents, grandparents, siblings and family situation. In an address to the Annual Postgraduate Students’ Conference, University of Melbourne, 2000, Eckersall described his history as exploring a range of educational concepts, values and their implications, arguing that technical education had been of personal and social benefit.

The latter group of committed, impassioned ‘insider’ writers especially contribute to my departure in some measure from an overtly theoretical framework. I attempt to find meaning through the traditional historian’s craft, the narrative style, with spaces for voices and interpretation. I ranged far and wide for archival material to balance the problem of subjectivity – that is, inserting my own voice within the text. It soon became apparent that my insider status gave me access to people who were prepared to be very frank. Like the latter group of writers, these insiders also had time for reflection.

Lawson’s unpublished manuscript informs my thesis extensively and I admire her writing style. Like her I want to write a personal account reflecting my own experience yet allowing space for other voices to tell their stories. Erica Jolly’s identification of the flaws inherent in following a traditional methodology encourages me to write a thesis that remains within the University of Melbourne imperatives yet avoids reinterpreting ordinary peoples’

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educational experiences in academic language. First names rather than surnames will indicate people known to me, the researcher, and bring to life within these pages the exceptionally informal environment, the essence of South Tech.

Johnson’s claim concerning the ‘5 Orgs’ stimulated my search for parliamentary publications including statutes, debates, Victorian and Commonwealth papers, annual reports, royal commissions and reports, unpublished sources from the Public Record Office of Victoria and the former Education Department archive collection. The Butlin Archives, Canberra, holding past Union papers yielded a rich vein of data. The retrieval and analysis of this archival material and the material held at South Tech temper the memories of my experiences.

Rather than making a discrete statement of methodology emanating from a body of theory, this thesis will rely on an unspoken, underpinning methodology. I will interweave narrative with primary source material and interpretation, including references to secondary literature. On a personal note, Betty Lawson gave me letters written to her by James Docherty concerning her manuscript; he claimed that his 1973 history left off before ‘the high drama was about to be acted out’.24 He also observed that ‘very few people could with any confidence give an account of the upheaval even though it was happening around them’.

Docherty also wrote that future students of the history of education would be interested to have an outline of what the innovators, principals like Tony Delves, Gerry Tickell, Danny Costigan and Jock Thomlinson, ‘were trying to do and the organization they evolved to achieve their goals’. He described their schools as ‘idiosyncratic ... in a complimentary sense’. South Tech is thus not representative of secondary technical schools. This history explores what happened under an enlightened policy and an administration that placed the needs of children above inappropriate academic demands and political expediency. As a participator in this idiosyncratic milieu, my thesis is a history of Shepparton South Technical School, 1966-1990.

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24 J. Docherty to B. Lawson, mid 1980s.
Chapter 1: Junior Technical Schools

Shepparton South Technical School - hereafter South Tech - was a rural, co-educational secondary technical school located in the Goulburn Valley, Victoria. The City of Shepparton is 180kms north of Melbourne. It is in the centre of an extensive fruit growing area, which, during the period under study, 1966 to 1990, attracted large numbers of interstate and overseas workers. Although South Tech developed in a relatively conservative, culturally diverse area, it produced some of the Victorian Technical School Division’s most innovative and controversial programs.

South Tech opened in 1966 to relieve the overcrowded Shepparton Technical School. The need for technical education was such that a second technical school was built before a second high school, a unique situation at that time. In that first year, 123 students and ten staff commenced classes in temporary accommodation in the Shepparton Agricultural Showgrounds. The inaugural principal, Jack Hennessy and his staff, began to develop a traditional, trade-oriented secondary technical school.

However, the novel beginnings in the Showgrounds moulded the school community into a mindset conducive to the educational innovations brought by the second principal, Jock Thomlinson and the move into new buildings in 1968. Although the STS Council had requested that the new school be co-educational, this plan was thwarted when the Shepparton High School relocated 200 girls and nine teachers to its former site to create the Shepparton Secondary Girls School; co-education commenced at South Tech only in 1971.

Inaugurated in the Shepparton Agricultural Showgrounds, South Tech’s move into new buildings in July 1968 preceded their new principal’s appointment by five months. Jock Thomlinson was a commercial artist, unlike a majority of his peers, who were trained in science or engineering. Thomlinson enlisted the support of School Council and recruited staff to develop integrated curriculum utilising modern communications, technological, trade, artistic and aesthetic resources in all learning areas. His philosophical commitment was to develop individual staff and students’ aptitudes, abilities and relationship skills.

Under Jock Thomlinson’s administration, the school’s aims aligned with that philosophy, a philosophy that earned my respect when I began work at the school in 1974. I found that human relations education was well under way prior to the beginning of social biology. Formalities within the school were reduced to a minimum: staff who preferred it
were addressed by their given name or initials - ‘J.K.’ rather than ‘Mr’, ‘Mrs’, ‘Mam’, or ‘Sir’; school uniform and homework became optional; recreational activities replaced competitive sport. All learning areas were based on a theory and practice philosophy and were of equal value and status.

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South Tech’s heritage originated in the senior technical colleges that developed on or near Victoria’s gold mining areas in the 1800s. These technical colleges left a permanent legacy articulating the system that followed the 1910 Education Act, when Chief Inspector of Technical Instruction Donald Clark’s junior technical schools met needs unfulfilled by Director of Education (DE) Frank Tate’s agricultural high schools. Despite the academic and social class stereotyping that classified them as second rate, secondary technical schools survived and evolved until the 1980s - when the Labor Party, the same political party that in 1930 preserved their existence - brought about their demise.

In 1899 a Royal Commission under the leadership of Theodore Fink was established to inquire into technical education. In five Reports issued in 1899-1901, the Commission broadened its focus and dealt with the State education system, including its administration and organisation. The Fink Commission recommended the development of continuation schools: a non-specialised, more advanced stage to extend the work developed in State primary schools which would lead into ‘systematic technical education’. It also recommended the appointment of a permanent head of Department, and that the Education Department have a Technical Instruction Branch controlled by a Director of Technical Instruction, responsible only to the Minister. In 1901, Education Act 1777 legislated for an Education Department with one Director, but did not provide for a separate Technical Instruction Branch. Frank Tate, appointed Director of Public Instruction in February 1902, had a profound effect on education during the early years of the century when there was extreme instability in Parliament and the Director of Public Instruction was in a powerful position. His understanding and ability to carry educational reform to fruition was enhanced by the Fink Commission’s recommendations.

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25 Victorian Parliamentary Papers, Legislative Assembly, Royal Commission on Technical Education, Minutes of Evidence, 1901.
26 Royal Commission on Technical Education.
27 Ibid.
The 1910 Education Act legislated for State secondary education, and opened the way for technical training through a system of ‘Higher Elementary Schools and District High Schools, Continuation Classes, Preparatory Trade Classes, Trade Schools and Technical Schools’. The plan that junior technical education should be located within the high school system, with streams leading to technical institutes, proved unsuccessful, although initially the DE, Frank Tate and the Chief Inspector, Donald Clark, were in agreement on the merits of this scheme.

In a biography of Frank Tate, R.J.W. Selleck noted that he was born at Mopoke Gully, Victoria on 18 June 1864. Before his appointment as Director of Public Instruction in 1902, Tate graduated with a BA from Melbourne University in 1888, lectured at the Training College and was appointed District Inspector in 1895. Selleck recalled that Tate was in agreement with the Fink Commission’s findings and, in keeping with their recommendations, he reorganised administrational procedures, including inspections and examinations. He was determined to establish a system of State Secondary Schools.

The first Chief Inspector of Technical Instruction, Donald Clark, was born at Ashby, Victoria on 17 February 1864, and trained for a career in engineering. Clark became Foundation Director of the Bairnsdale District School of Mines in January 1880, encountering, in his opinion, a less than sympathetic Education Department. After being in charge of technical schools for twenty years, Clark was appointed Chief Inspector of both senior and junior techs in 1911, and experienced a lack of support on both fronts. Donald Clark wrote a series of papers in which the issues he raised are as salient in the 2000s as they were during the years he fought to develop and preserve his technical system.

Reflecting on the technical system in a 1929 paper, Some Notes on the Development of Technical Instruction in Victoria, Clark pointed out that the early system of preparatory technical education was ‘built outside the Department by those who experienced the weakness of the primary school system’. Attributing credit to the Fink Commission for the more sympathetic treatment that technical schools received from 1901 until 1910, Clark claimed that the history of the early technical schools was largely ‘the history of local

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33 Victorian Statue, An Act to further amend the Law relating to Education and to Officers and Teachers of the Education Department, no.2301, 4 January 1911, p.649, the State Library of Victoria.
34 Ibid, p.8.
36 Selleck, Frank Tate, 1982, p.259.
37 Australian Dictionary of Biography, vol.8, p.5.
38 Ibid.
effort’. Reflecting that ‘technical education should be a natural growth’, Clark recalled the fight for technical schools’ existence from 1890 to 1910, and predicted ‘stronger reasons in the near future for preserving at least what has been gained’. In making these claims, Clark seems to be recalling the intellectual freedom that arises in ‘schools possessing freedom of action or from those which have had the opportunity for trying out new ideas’. Donald Clark foresaw the sapping of initiative as educational organisations become larger, and pathways were ‘fixed by regulations and instructions issued from headquarters’.

Clark and Tate’s initial common aim was to develop a system of high schools including streams leading to technical institutes. Clark believed that ‘from a theoretical standpoint no better scheme [with equal streams leading to technical or academic education] was ever evolved than that outlined in Victoria in 1912’, where every person could receive education suited to their needs. However, Tate favoured Denmark’s broad humanistic training and technical instruction. His proposal for the new high schools was a two year common course, followed by specialised courses. James Docherty claimed that, while Clark agreed with Tate on the need for continued education, they disagreed in almost all the other details: aims, emphasis, length of course, curriculum and staffing. Docherty argued that ‘from these differences grew the dual system of secondary schools in Victoria’.

Confronting the powerful University of Melbourne in his 1910-11 Annual Report, Clark argued that the entrance examination they required was not appropriate for the ‘great majority of those whom we must cater for’. He had anticipated a system of multipurpose schools under the provisions of the Education Act 1910, where students could proceed on an equal basis to technical, business, schools of mines, agricultural or university institutes. Clark claimed that ‘the objective of the whole system is not the University, but the technical school and the University’.

The Annual Reports record that the first junior technical schools were established by 1912-13. In 1913-14, there were plans for amended elementary school courses to be

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40 Ibid, pp.15,10.
42 Ibid, p.16.
44 Ibid.
49 Ibid.
50 Annual Report to the Minister of Public Instruction, Government Printer, Melbourne, 1910-11, p.113.
51 Ibid.
52 Ibid, p.112-19; Annual Report, 1912-13, p.45.
articulated with the junior technical course’, with these schools acting as ‘feeders to the junior technical schools’. In 1914-15, Clark argued that the work carried out in junior schools ‘should bear the same relation to technical education as the entrance examination work of the secondary schools does to University education’. Technical schools were always expensive to maintain; at a Conference called by the Hon. H.S.W. Lawson ‘to consider whether we were moving with our system of technical instruction’ in 1916, it was resolved that if work was to be effective, classes must be small, teachers must be specialists, and the ‘first cost for equipment high’.

In a paper delivered at the sixth Annual Conference of The Technical Schools Association at Warrnambool in October 1922, using an historical context, Clark outlined his theories on the development of boys and the advantages of junior technical schools. Arguing for early training in ‘manual dexterity ... the co-operation of brain, hand and eye’, Clark described how aptitudes and abilities for particular skilled trades emerged naturally. He further claimed that some trades required ‘a high degree of intelligence, a wide technical knowledge, and the best manipulative skill’. Pointing out the necessity for a theory and practice curriculum, Clark observed that ‘almost every young boy delights in practical work’. As Education Minister Kosky found in 2003, boys like to do things; in the 1920s, as now, boys do not find much ‘ordinary school work’ appealing.

Clark suggested that the connations of the word ‘school’ did not accurately describe what he was trying to do with his alternative schools. The secondary technical schools appeared to become superficially similar to high schools in the 1960s to 80s. However, the techs retained their practical programs which remained as an alternative to the highs, and South Tech’s philosophy made it unique among both techs and highs.

In 1923, Clark reflected that a ‘very objectionable feature’ had emerged: the ‘creation of class distinction’. If teachers were to classify children who failed as the ‘industrials fitted

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53 Annual Report, 1913-14, p.42.
55 Clark, Some Notes, 1929, pp.22-27.
56 D. Clark, The Training of the Craftsman and Operative, Paper read at the sixth Annual Conference of the Technical Schools Association (established 1914), Warrnambool, 17-18 October, 1922, Working Men's College Printing Department, Melbourne.
58 Ibid, pp.9,10.
59 Ibid, p.15.
60 Herald Sun, 2 November 2003, p.32.
61 Clark, The Training of the Craftsman, 1922, p.15.
62 Ibid.
63 D. Clark, Reminiscences of Technical Education in Victoria, Working Men's College Printing Department, Melbourne, 1923, p.13.
only for Technical Schools’ these pupils would receive a stamp of inferiority for life’.64 The techs would also ‘suffer from such a narrow policy’.65 Yet Clark himself was satisfied that the junior school was fundamental to the success of the senior school where the two worked as a unit without any distinct line of cleavage.66 Donald Clark identified the junior techs’ strength as their unique theory and practice curriculum, their links with the senior techs, and the School Councils that ‘often stood between them and extinction’.67 As Clark argued, ‘past experiences should be safeguards against putting the hands of the clock backwards’.68 Eternal vigilance against its opponents, the need for strong leadership and protective community structures bred a distinctive culture and remained vital from the beginning of the Victorian technical system.

Clark claimed in his 1927 paper, The Future of Technical and Industrial Training in Victoria, that technical schools ‘came into existence because public spirited men realised that primary schools, secondary schools, and the University left untouched the great majority of people who needed instruction in subjects connected with their occupations’.69 With great prescience, Clark prophesied the dangers should junior technical schools become popular: firstly, ‘other schools will attempt to carry out the same programme, but a programme is one thing and the carrying out of it is another’; secondly, ‘pressure will be brought to bear for the introduction of a “common course”’; thirdly, ‘the addition of subjects very often looked upon as the only educational subjects by the school teacher whose training has followed traditional lines, constitute a real danger’.70

The opposition to the dual system of technical and high schools came to a head when Martin Hansen succeeded Frank Tate as Director of Education in 1928. Hansen, born at Crosbie, Victoria in January 1874, was educated at Scotch College, Melbourne, before graduating with a BA (1898) LLB (1899) and MA (1900).71 His career was spent in the teaching profession, initially with the Education Department as a junior teacher in 1891, followed by two years at the private University High School, before rejoining the Department as an assistant at Warrnambool in December, 1896.72 Martin Hansen was committed to multi-purpose schools, and viewed the Victorian dual secondary school system as an anathema. He set up committees in 1929 to co-ordinate a system of post-primary education.73

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64 Ibid.
65 Ibid.
66 Ibid, p.15.
67 Ibid, p.16.
68 Ibid.
70 Ibid, p.17.
72 Ibid.
73 Ibid, p.190.
In spite of Donald Clark’s best efforts, the junior technical school system may not have survived beyond 1930 but for the Labor Minister of Public Instruction, John Lemmon, in the Hogan Labor Government. Ned (Edmund) John Hogan, farmer and politician, was premier for three years over two terms beginning in 1927 and 1929. John Lemmon was reared in the Trades Hall where his father was the caretaker; prior to entering parliament as Member of the Legislative Assembly (MLA) for Williamstown, he was a carpenter, cutter and union organiser. Unlike Labor parliamentarians in later years, Lemmon - himself a product of the Working Men’s College - ‘never threw off the traditional Labor bias towards technical schools’. John Lemmon blocked Hansen’s plans to establish multipurpose secondary schools in 1930.

John Lemmon had bipartisan support for technical schools, if not the finance to fulfil the need for technical education. Liberal MLA for Caulfield in 1929, Frederick F. Forrest, formerly a soldier, secretary and estate agent, argued that:

> education, and particularly technical education, is on parallel lines to the development of the health of the child. If we develop the health of the children and are able to give them a good education, particularly a technical education, then they become a wonderful asset to the State.

William A. Moncur, Country Party MLA for Walhalla, a school teacher and farmer, requested the Government to provide either a technical school or facilities in a State school for ‘technical equipment and machinery’. In reply, John Lemmon claimed that his Labor Government would ‘do its utmost to maintain and extend the existing [technical education] system’ in 1929. However, in spite of his support for technical education, Lemmon pointed out the government’s financial limitations. He also asked that ‘the non-party attitude that [had] been displayed respecting the need for facilities for the technical education of school children also showed itself in relation to the matter of providing the wherewithal to permit of

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74 The Minister was known as the ‘Minister of Public Instruction’ prior to 1949, when the title was changed to ‘Minister of Education’; Index to Victorian Parliamentary Papers 1950-92, compiled by T.J. Strehlow, Law Press, University of Melbourne, 1995, p.55.
78 Ibid.
79 Ibid, Biographical Register, 1985, p.70.
81 Browne, Biographical Register, 1985, p.157.
82 Victorian Parliamentary Debates, 1929, p.602.
83 Ibid.
such facilities’. As Lemmon was aware, the working class techs demanded specialist staff and industrial quality equipment; they were outnumbered by high schools and were expensive to maintain.

When Clark retired in 1930, there were twenty-six junior technical schools and twenty-nine senior techs, with the rider that ‘junior technical schools are not independent establishments. They are worked in conjunction with Technical Schools’. While the wording of the 1910 Education Act did not specify the development of a dual system, the separation of the techs from the dominant University of Melbourne was a result of a number of factors. This included the techs' popularity with boys, parents and the community, as well as their autonomous Councils, their relationship with industry, and the determination of their advocate, the Chief Inspector, Donald Clark.

Hansen also put pressure on Clark’s successor, Ernest Eltham, to eliminate the junior levels and introduce comprehensive post-primary schools. Holloway observed that, as Eltham was an inspector in 1922, he ‘supported Clark’s determination to establish a junior section in the technical schools, and he chose to continue with that policy’. Hansen’s attempt to relieve Eltham of responsibility was overruled by Cabinet’s confirmation of Eltham’s appointment as Chief Inspector and president/chair of the Apprenticeship Commission in 1928. Ernest Eltham joined the Working Men’s College staff in 1912, became an instructor and principal at Footscray Technical School in 1921, and was appointed an inspector of technical schools in 1922. The outbreak of World War II resulted in Eltham’s secondment to the Commonwealth Department of Labour and National Service in the role of Director of Industrial Training, and he transferred in 1947 to direct the Reconstruction Training Scheme. Eltham steered the TSD through the difficult depression years of the 1930s and the aftermath of the 1931 McPherson Inquiry into the Education Departments’ expenditure, administration, organisation and co-ordination.

William Dean acted as chief inspector during Eltham’s secondment from 1940 to 1947. Dean, educated at Wesley College and the National Gallery, worked as a commercial artist, and studied for several years in Britain and Europe, where he taught in technical education.

84 Ibid.
87 Ibid.
schools. Appointed inspector of art in August 1926, Dean brought a liberal approach to art teaching. William Dean organised two significant curriculum changes: ‘one giving a place to humanities teaching that Clark would not have conceded’, the other was to extend the junior technical school course to four years from January 1945.

The McPherson Inquiry gave a snapshot of technical education in Victoria in 1931. There were twenty-eight technical schools with junior and senior sections. In nine of the junior schools, provision was also made for girls. Fourteen schools were under the control of the Technical School Councils. The Inquiry noted that junior technical schools were expensive compared to other forms of secondary education. Eltham successfully opposed McPherson’s recommendations pertaining to financial stringencies and rationalisation of classes. He argued that increasing academic subjects and introducing common courses potentially diminished the technical schools’ concentration on practical work.

Like his predecessor, Donald Clark, Ernest Eltham feared future threats to technical education, ‘especially through moves to create a cleavage between the junior and senior sections’. This actually occurred in 1965 as a result of the Martin Report’s recommendations; the subsequent Victorian Institute of Colleges Act (VIC) was proclaimed in 1965.

The Annual Reports of the Minister of Public Instruction record that junior technical school enrolments increased to 600 by 1913, and to 2,972 by 1920. A decade of financial crisis followed the Depression of the 1930s. In 1940, there were twenty-seven junior techs with an enrolment of 10,385; in 1950, thirty junior techs with enrolments totalling 12,572. During the period of post-war optimism and stable, conservative government in the 1950s, adults and young people eagerly sought apprenticeships and diplomas in the senior colleges to expedite their entry to the plentiful range of trades and professions. In addition to catering for their traditional clients, techs also met repatriation needs for returned soldiers.

Oliver E. Nilsson, appointed chief inspector on 10 November 1947, was educated at...
South Melbourne College before pursuing a science degree in mechanical engineering.\textsuperscript{104} Joining the Education Department in 1921, Nilsson was appointed Principal of the Railways Apprentice College in 1922, and in 1930 he became an inspector of technical schools.\textsuperscript{105}

In 1959-60, Chief Inspector Nilsson reported that there were six additional junior schools opened, bringing the total number of schools with junior sections to sixty-four.\textsuperscript{106} One was solely for girls, forty-nine for boys, and fourteen for boys and girls: a total enrolment of 35,000.\textsuperscript{107} In 1965, enrolment was 49,326 over eighty-seven schools.\textsuperscript{108} Yet threats to the separate existence of the junior technical schools were never far from the surface. In his 1959-60 Report, Nilsson mentioned the possibility of ‘a common course for all post-primary students in the first and second years’.\textsuperscript{109}

The 1960 Ramsay Report addressed the same issue. A brief history of the education system and a summary of its strengths and problems was prepared.\textsuperscript{110} The Committee wrestled with the complex transition of adolescents to post-primary education, eventually deciding in favour of retaining the established Divisions.\textsuperscript{111} The Committee argued that parents and students should be responsible for their choice of post-primary education, with teacher assistance where required; the possibility of limited career paths in the future could be overcome by curriculum changes to ‘facilitate inter-school transfer within the first two years’.\textsuperscript{112} This recommendation was in line with the Committee’s belief that ‘individual aptitudes and interests do not become apparent’ until after the first two years in a post-primary institution.\textsuperscript{113}

Chief Inspector Oliver Nilsson played a crucial role in the Ramsay Committee’s decision to retain the dual system.\textsuperscript{114} According to James Docherty, Nilsson intervened with some ‘astute and high pressure activity’, persuading the Committee ‘to modify its stance’.\textsuperscript{115} The Ramsay Committee adopted two of Nilsson’s recommendations: the regional organisation of technical colleges and schools, and the formation of a State Advisory

\begin{footnotes}
\item[104] Holloway, \textit{The Inspectors}, 2000, p.399.
\item[105] Ibid, p.399.
\item[106] Annual Report, 1959-60, p.45.
\item[107] Ibid.
\item[108] Ibid, p.42.
\item[109] Ibid, p.41.
\item[113] Ibid, p.151.
\item[114] Ibid.; Correspondence, J. Docherty to B. Lawson, August 1987.†
\item[115] Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
Committee on Technical Education (SACTE). Oliver Nilsson established and operated eight technical school regions. He also developed a mutually beneficial relationship with school and college principals in the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions (APVTI).

Oliver Nilsson retired on 3 November 1961, having spent fifteen years as Chief Inspector of Technical Schools and forty years in the Department. His successor, A. Ronald Shannon, was educated at Fairfield State School and Scotch College, before his appointment as a junior teacher in 1919. Before becoming an inspector responsible for technical school staffing, Shannon had experience as head of the Mathematics Department at Collingwood Technical School. In the 1961-62 Annual Report to the Minister, Chief Inspector Shannon outlined the technical schools’ general education programs:

English, social studies, music, physical education, and religious education; the new and broader approach to practical subjects; the substantial growth and use of school libraries; and the considerable extension of corporate and extra-curricular activities.

However, as Clark had foreseen, curricular reform was a Catch-22 situation. Criticised for being narrowly vocational, the techs developed a curriculum seen to be more humanistic, which rendered themselves more vulnerable to their opponents. In 1962, the word ‘junior’ was dropped in favour of ‘secondary’ technical schools.

While Chief Inspectors Clark, Eltham, Dean, Nilsson and Shannon fought to retain their system and its distinctive characteristics, Victorian parents continued to support the junior technical schools. Following years of attack, setbacks, stress and uncertainty, the junior technical schools not only survived but thrived.

Former Assistant Chief Inspector to Ronald Shannon, John L. Kepert’s comments in his first Report to the Minister, 1964-65, centred on the Martin Report and the technical system’s diversity and innovational curriculum, including the extension of secondary technical education into a fifth year in 1964. Kepert graduated from the University of

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121 Ibid.
124 Annual report, 1964-65, p.54-68; *Tertiary Education in Australia. (Martin Report)*, Report of the Committee of the Future of Tertiary Education in Australia to the Australian Universities
Melbourne with distinction in engineering.\textsuperscript{125} In 1948, with a ‘breadth of engineering experience behind him’, he was appointed, ‘an “outsider”, to the position of Assistant Chief Inspector’.\textsuperscript{126}

The Martin Committee conducted the first inquiry into the totality of Australian tertiary education. The Committee found that technical colleges had a history of inadequate funding and support, and required expansion into a ‘well defined organizational structure’.\textsuperscript{127} Following the Martin Report, the Victorian Institute of Colleges (VIC) was inaugurated with the 1965 Act of Parliament.\textsuperscript{128} In this way, one of the important structural defences articulating their role in the total education system - the link between junior and senior techs - was broken.

In his history of the Victorian School Councils Association, W.H. Johnson claimed that, with the departure of the senior colleges following the Act, the ‘single entity of technical education was gone forever’; the former powerful Association of Councils of Technical Institutions in Victoria (ACTIV) lost status and influence.\textsuperscript{129} With only middle level colleges and secondary schools remaining, the TSD nevertheless ended the 1960s optimistically. Secondary technical school enrolments across the State were increasing, and its guardian associations, the APVTI and the School Councils Association, Victoria, (formerly the Technical Schools Association of Victoria, TSAV) were coping with their changed situations. However, James Docherty recalled a period when:

\begin{quote}
we of the Board [Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools, BITS] were taken with the feeling we were under siege - the loss of the diplomas and suggestion also that certificate courses also were being targetted. The feeling grew so strong I remember, that, when Jack Kepert came down to Richmond where we were inspecting, several of us revealed our forebodings in such a manner Jack was shaken; and, as was revealed very soon, himself went to Fred Brooks [then Director General of Education]. The upshot was we had a private session with Fred who in his calm way reminded us there had seldom been a time when the Tech Division was not under some threat or other, but as for the present he could see no danger. His reassurances we accepted because of his great integrity, and the slump in our morale was arrested.\textsuperscript{130}
\end{quote}

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\footnotetext[125]{Holloway,\textit{ The Inspectors}, 2000, p.406.}
\footnotetext[126]{Ibid.}
\footnotetext[127]{The Martin Report, 1964, vol.1, p.127, pt.5.(i)}
\footnotetext[128]{\textit{Victorian Statutes}, Act, no.7291, vol.1. An Act to constitute a Body Corporate under the Style and Title of the Victoria Institute of Colleges, and to confer on such Body Corporate such Powers as are necessary or expedient to co-ordinate and advance the Provision of Tertiary Education on certain Institutes, 9 June 1965, pp.319-337.}
\footnotetext[129]{Johnson,\textit{ Technical to Post Primary}, 1992, p.80.}
\footnotetext[130]{Correspondence: J. Docherty to B. Lawson, August 1987.}
\end{footnotesize}
Echoing the fears of Donald Clark in 1923, the Martin Committee noted that technical education was ‘undervalued because of the overvaluation of the social status of a university degree’. In contrast, the Victorian Branch of the Australian Labor Party (ALP) seemed to argue in its 1964 policy, *Looking to the Future: Labor’s Plan for Education in Victoria*, that problems of social equity would be overcome by a comprehensive secondary school system. The Joint Committee responsible for this policy was chaired by Clyde Holding, MLA, with Race Mathews as secretary. (Allan) Clyde Holding was a solicitor who gained an LLB at the University of Melbourne. Educated at Trinity Grammar School, Holding ‘did various jobs to matriculate part-time’. (Charles) Race Thorson Mathews was a school teacher, speech therapist and, in 1967-72, principal private secretary to Gough Whitlam. Educated at Melbourne Grammar School, Mathews gained qualifications from Toorak Teachers’ College, the College of Speech Therapy, Melbourne and Monash Universities.

The 1964 ALP policy ignored the techs’ established community links; it claimed that the ‘people’ should control state school education ‘through their democratically elected’ parliamentary representatives, rather than ‘the senior public servants ... employed to administer the system’. (Senior public servants were defined as ‘the Director, Assistant Director and Chief Inspectors’). Labor’s policy further suggested that ‘to allow civil servants to determine policy issues which it is their duty to administer’ denied democratic principles and resulted in an ‘omnipotent bureaucracy, unresponsive to public demands’. Their criticism of the Ramsay Committee findings lay in the alleged ‘bureaucratic control of policy’ resulting from the composition of the Committee, which they said was ‘composed largely of Departmental officials’. Eighteen years later, the ALP proposed that the powers vested in the Director of Education should be transferred to a Board of Education.

The Board would be composed of full-time salaried officers, and be vested with powers previously held by the Director of Education. The ALP proposed that representative people should determine policy and replace education professionals. In-built inequalities in the secondary system were associated with the problem of social class - the

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133 Ibid, preface.
137 Ibid.
139 Ibid, p.7.
choice between private and public schools - and, within public schools, ‘the problem of social class and technical education’.\textsuperscript{143} This policy was to be crucial in the 1980s when the Cain Labor Government came to power in Victoria.

Despite the ALP’s critical appraisal, the techs continued to thrive; the four year technical Intermediate served as a basis for awarding the Commonwealth Technical Scholarships in 1964.\textsuperscript{144} The Leaving Technical Certificate, inaugurated in 1964, stressed the system with demands for additional qualified staff and accommodation, but proved its value. Furthermore, a very co-operative attitude existed between the TTAV and the TSD, such that it was accepted by industry, commerce and gained the recognition of the Victorian Universities and Schools Examination Board on the same terms as the School Leaving Certificate.\textsuperscript{145} The three year Junior Technical Certificate was abandoned in 1965; the four year internal intermediate was retained.\textsuperscript{146} In 1967, ‘for many reasons ... [including] the need for autonomy, freedom to act as and when necessary in a division with quite different needs, aspirations and outlook from the other two divisions’, technical teachers broke with the Victorian Teachers’ Union to form the Technical Teachers’ Association of Victoria (TTAV).\textsuperscript{147}

The TTAV’s first president, George Lawson, who was Principal of the Northcote Technical School, designed the organisational framework which included ‘numerous committees’.\textsuperscript{148} Betty Lawson claimed that the Education Committee, convened by Gerry Tickell, had a very large membership.\textsuperscript{149} Claiming that a very co-operative attitude existed between the TTAV and the TSD, Lawson observed that it was ‘very hard to decide exactly where initiatives for reform really started in many cases’.\textsuperscript{150} The TSD offered the TTAV membership on committees; for example, the Technical Schools Committee and the Technical Colleges Committee.\textsuperscript{151} As Lawson says:

The TTAV was composed of people who had little real interest in ‘status of the teaching professions’.\textsuperscript{152} Their members were all teachers, but they were also engineers, architects, skilled tradesmen, etc. and encompassed a wide range of experience and expertise ... They saw education as a many faceted facility to be moulded to the needs of the individuals of vastly different abilities but each with a need to utilise these abilities to the fullest extent ... as

\textsuperscript{143} Ibid, pp.18,19.
\textsuperscript{144} Docherty, \textit{The Technical Division}, 1973, pp.712, 713.
\textsuperscript{145} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{146} Ibid, p.713.
\textsuperscript{147} Lawson, \textit{The Rise and Demise}, 1987, ch.4, p.1.
\textsuperscript{148} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{149} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{150} Ibid, p.2.
\textsuperscript{151} Ibid, p.3.
\textsuperscript{152} VTU Handbooks, 1970s; TSD Handbooks, 1970s
an integral part of community living, an ongoing integrated part of life - not just an isolated era in a person’s life.\footnote{Lawson, \textit{The Rise and Demise}, 1987, ch.4, p.4.}

Thus, in its early years, the TTAV and the TSD seemed characterized by a sense of unity and purpose, in line with Connell’s working class characteristics (chapter eight). In the later 1970s, the TTAV reunited with the other unions to form a federation. The growth and evolution of the secondary technical schools was reflected in the development of their junior and senior courses. Yet the forces against the dual system were never far from the surface. When DTE Jack Kepert retired in 1969, the new Director, Edward ‘Ted’ Jackson, was left with a Division depleted by the loss of the senior colleges. Jackson was educated at Geelong High School before joining the Education Department in 1932; from 1939, he taught mathematics, physics and chemistry at Brighton, Stawell and Sale Technical Schools.\footnote{Holloway, \textit{The Inspectors}, 2000, p.408.} Before becoming Assistant Chief Inspector in 1962, Jackson was appointed to the Board of Inspectors in 1956.\footnote{Ibid.} With his appointment as DTE in 1968, there was a ministerial rider that he act as Director-General ‘during the absence of W.E. Russell, or at any time’.\footnote{Ibid.} Ted Jackson was the first DTE with a non-technological background.\footnote{Ibid.}

In his 1970 policy, Jackson outlined a new structure of middle level technical colleges.\footnote{Shears, \textit{Administrative structures in education}, 1984, pp.10-14.} He planned to strengthen the Victorian Advisory Council on Technical Education (VACTE); accordingly, the VACTE became the State Council for Technical Education (SCTE) in 1971.\footnote{Ibid, pp.10-14.} The DTE also planned to develop regional councils, giving them ‘broader powers than the existing regional committees’.\footnote{Ibid, pp.10-14.} The 1974 federal Kangan Report with its legitimating power gave technical and further education (TAFE) image, status and definition. This phase in the struggle over TAFE was complicated and prolonged. It began with the 1964 Martin Report and continued until the Post-Secondary Education (Amendment) Act of 1983 brought TAFE under the sole jurisdiction of the Minister of Education.\footnote{Ibid, pp.10-14.}

In the early 1980s, Labor MLA for Footscray, Robert Fordham, argued against the Liberal Government’s attempt ‘to run down the staffing establishments [of technical schools],’\footnote{Victorian Parliamentary Debates, Education, Appropriation (1980-81, No.1) Bill, vol.354, p.2594.} on the basis that ‘technical schools have a difficult and important task and they need an additional degree of flexibility in staffing to allow them to relate to the needs of
children in their care’. All the evidence suggested that techs were popular with students and their families, but they only survived because of strong leadership and protective structures. While it is difficult to assess if the 1970s Liberal Government, which introduced regionalisation and disbanded the TSD, would have retained the secondary techs, Shadow Minister Fordham’s argument augured well for their survival. However, in 2004, twenty years after the secondary technical schools were dismantled, the poor performance of boys in secondary schools has raised a debate concerning alternative curricula to hold their interest and encourage entry into the skilled trades.

Robyn Whiteley’s biography of Donald Clark fully delineates his battles with the Education Department hierarchy. Clark was the first to exhibit the strong leadership that was to characterise Chief Inspectors and technical educators who continued to defend the technical system from the 1930s to the 1970s. There were also Education Ministers who staunchly defended the value of the technical system. In his 1923 Reminiscences of Technical Schools in Victoria, Donald Clark reflected on Charles Pearson, the 1889 Minister of Public Instruction, claiming that the majority of the country technical schools in Victoria in the 1880s owed their existence to him. In 1930, Minister Lemmon blocked Director Hansen’s plans to amalgamate secondary schools. In the 1970s Minister Lindsay Thompson defended the techs against claims that they were turning out ‘delinquents’, and took pride in South Techs’ innovational curriculum. In 1982, Shadow Minister Fordham proclaimed the technical system as ‘one of the great strengths of Victorian education’. Yet with the changed administration of the Education Department following the 1965 Act, regionalisation in the 1970s, and the death of inspirational Director Ted Jackson in 1975, it is doubtful that the system could recover sufficiently to fight what Donald Clark had encountered between 1911 and 1930.

Apart from the years of expansion and growth following World War II, finances were limited during the 1930s Hogan Labor, the 1970s Hamer Liberal, and the 1980s Cain/Kirner Labor Governments. Despite this, Education Minister Joan Kirner claimed that one of her Government’s biggest advances was that there would be ‘no such thing as technical schools and high schools to divide and layer students’ after 1 January 1990. Further, that all secondary colleges would offer ‘through their comprehensive curriculum, technological studies to all students’. Where Hansen failed to bring down the dual system in the 1930s,

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164 R.H. Whiteley, Donald Clark, the First Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, M.Ed. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1980.
165 Clark, Reminiscences, 1923, p.3.
168 Ibid.
the Labor Party, with activist and union support, succeeded in the 1980s.

**History of Shepparton**

Shepparton South Technical School was located on a swamp site a short distance from a bend in a meandering river, where Patrick McGuire established a punt and erected Shepparton’s first building, the Emu Bush Inn, in the early 1850s. McGuire’s punt capitalised on the movement of diggers between goldfields in Bendigo and the Ovens to those more recently discovered in Beechworth and Avenel. Shepparton historians Raymond West and Ron Michael claimed that the area that became known as McGuire’s Punt was renowned for its illegal activities, and was a ‘rendezvous of horse stealers’.

Prior to European settlement, the indigenous people found a rich food supply in the water birds that frequented the swamp, the fish in the river, and the wild life that drank from the floodwater courses and billabongs. The land was sacred to the tribes along the Murray River between Deniliquin, Echuca and Cobram: the ‘Bangerang’, ‘Pangerang’ or ‘Taungurang’ nation. In recent years, tribes have been distinguished by their language; the language differences among tribes on the Murray were unusual, indicative of a unique event in their history, according to *The Encyclopaedia of Aboriginal Australia*. The Shepparton and district Aboriginals are now known as the Yorta Yorta.

This Aboriginal community did not give up their land without a struggle. Many deaths resulted from reprisals in 1838, when drovers employed by the Faithfull brothers were killed by indigenous people on a Goulburn tributary, the Broken Creek. With attacks such as this, the indigenous people resisted the European intrusion, and they were among the first to lodge a land claim in 1859, petitioning for land ‘to farm like white men’.

Driven from their familiar territories, their landmarks abrogated, their boundaries no

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170 West, *Those were the days*, 1962, pp.34,35.

171 Ibid, pp.28,29.


174 Ibid.

175 Ibid, p.984.

longer holding meaning, tribes were forced into the company of other tribes previously unknown to them.\(^{177}\) Unable to marshal the resources to fight effectively, their attacks on white people drew reprisals from the settlers.\(^{178}\) Lacking immunity to introduced contagious diseases, their numbers declined from illness more than acts of hostility.\(^{179}\)

The Goulburn Aboriginals came under the control of a Port Phillip Protectorate in the 1840s; before the abandonment of the Protectorate in 1850, a school had been attached to the Goulburn Aboriginal Protectorate Station in 1842.\(^{180}\) When this form of administration was abandoned the Goulburn people were relocated to missions, firstly, to Coranderrk from the late 1860s, later Maloga, and then Cummeragunja.\(^{181}\)

Shepparton’s population increased as a result of the 1869 Land Act.\(^{182}\) This Act was influential in changing the area from ‘collections of shanties’ to a town, further alienating the indigenous population, whose numbers decreased significantly.\(^{183}\) Koori language and culture were decimated in the 1800s; they had little to assuage that loss, to placate their anger and nourish their spirit. Displaced from the Goulburn Valley district to the missions, thence to the Housing Commission, meagre vestiges of their spiritual links with the land remained in areas with ‘names ending in an abbreviation of -goopna’, meaning the ‘deep water holes in the river, by which the natives camped’ - such as Mooroopna, Tallygaroopna, Congupna and Kotupna.\(^{184}\)

Fewer indigenous people inhabited the land around Shepparton and district as the number of immigrants increased.\(^{185}\) However, indigenous networks were again strengthened after the orchards were planted, and kinfolk arrived to pick fruit.\(^{186}\) Subsequently, the indigenous people were moved into housing commission estates at Shepparton and nearby Mooroopna, where family links were maintained with the local, Cummeragunja and Melbourne communities.\(^{187}\) With the establishment of Rumbalara Aboriginal Village in 1958 in nearby Mooroopna, Shepparton had the second largest rural indigenous community in Victoria.\(^{188}\)

\(^{177}\) West, *Those were the days*, 1962, pp.17,18.
\(^{178}\) Ibid.
\(^{179}\) Ibid, p.18.
\(^{183}\) West, *Those were the days*, 1962, p.49.
\(^{186}\) Ibid.
\(^{187}\) Ibid.
In the 1980s and 90s, Shepparton and Mooroopna became a major regional centre for a number of Aboriginal organisations, including the Yorta Yorta Tribal Council. In 1984, the Yorta Yorta Tribal Council lodged compensation claims for the havoc wreaked on their cultural heritage by the newcomers and a land claim for the Barmah Forest. In December 2003, they lost their land claim appeal to the High Court of Australia. In 2004, the Bracks State Labor Government entered ‘a historic co-operative agreement with the Yorta Yorta people covering public land, rivers and lakes in north central Victoria’. The Attorney-General, Rob Hulls, signalled that ‘an eight member body comprising five Yorta Yorta and three government representatives will manage the designated lands and waters’. The Environment Minister, retaining ultimate decision-making authority, will receive advice from the joint body.

The first incursion into the traditional lands of the Yorta Yorta occurred in 1824, when Hume and Hovell camped in the area now known as Trawool, and renamed the river the Goulburn, after the Colonial Secretary, Frederick Goulburn. In 1835-36, Major Mitchell explored the land downstream from Shepparton near Nagambie, and liked the river’s native name: ‘Bayunga’ or ‘Bayungun’. The explorers were followed by squatters who illegally settled their flocks and herds on the best watered land they could find. In 1838 Joseph Hawdon and his men were the first white men to camp in the Shepparton area. The Tallygaroopna run, which Edward Khull abandoned in 1843, was taken over by Sherbourne Sheppard.

In 1853, the area surrounding the former McGuire’s Punt was named for Sheppard. The name ‘Shepparton’ first appeared in the Government Gazette on 26 October 1853, making public an ‘impounding notice’. Shepparton was proclaimed a township in 1860, and the McGuire’s Punt name was dropped; one of the first buildings carrying the town’s new name was the Shepparton Hotel. Sheppard left the area in 1857 to become a

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190 Ibid.
191 Ibid.
193 Ibid.
194 Ibid.
195 Ibid.
196 West, Those were the days, 1962, pp.18-20.
201 Ibid, p.45.
stockbroker with J.B. Were, his father-in-law, in Melbourne.\footnote{Ibid, p.40.}

In 1863 gold was discovered at nearby Rushworth and Whroo.\footnote{Ibid, p.81.} With an increased population during the gold rushes, the unlocking of sheepwalks for new settlers became political; Duffy’s \textit{Land Acts} attempted to establish small farmers on the land.\footnote{Davison et al., \textit{The Oxford Companion to Australian History}, 1988, p.374.} These \textit{Acts} initially failed in Victoria; however, they were successful in the long term.\footnote{Ibid.} Introduced pests and natural disasters such as drought and erosion in the last decades of the nineteenth century resulted in the government reviewing their land policies; irrigation and closer settlement followed the espousal of a ‘scientific’ approach to farming.\footnote{Ibid.}

Agriculture and industry gradually developed in Shepparton and district. In 1873, John Hare Furphy established a blacksmith business; it later produced the Furphy water-carrying tanks used on the battlefields of Gallipoli.\footnote{West, \textit{Those were the days}, 1962, pp.127-132.} Dookie Agricultural College opened in 1886, a bacon factory and the Shepparton Co-operative Butter Factory opened in 1894, the Dethridge Wheel was introduced to measure water in 1911, and the Shepparton Fruit Preserving Company (SPC) was established in 1917.\footnote{Michael, \textit{On McGuires Punt}, 1988, p.41; West, \textit{Those were the days}, 1962, pp.219-223, 249-253,119.}

The United Echuca and Waranga Water Trust was established to supply the district with water for stock and domestic use in 1882.\footnote{West, \textit{Those were the days}, 1962, pp.92-94.} The Gillies Government authorised the construction of the Goulburn Weir in 1886, with work on it beginning in 1891.\footnote{Ibid, pp.102,103.} Three miles from Shepparton, Ardmona was an early pioneer in irrigation and fruit growing.\footnote{Ibid, pp.93,94.} Unlike Mildura, Ardmona’s irrigation scheme was not government sponsored.\footnote{Ibid.}

Paddle steamers were used to transport produce on the Goulburn between Shepparton and Echuca in the 1870s and 1880s.\footnote{Ibid.} The railway was extended from Mooroopna to Shepparton in 1880, and from Shepparton to Numurkah in 1881.\footnote{West, \textit{Waradgery}, carrying wheat from Shepparton to Echuca, was the last steamer to carry wheat on the Goulburn.\footnote{West, \textit{Those were the days}, 1962, pp.66-69.} The railways also replaced the Cobb & Co coaches in the district.\footnote{Michael, \textit{On McGuires Punt}, 1988, p.168.}} In 1888, the \textit{Waradgery}, carrying wheat from Shepparton to Echuca, was the last steamer to carry wheat on the Goulburn.\footnote{Ibid, pp.77,78,91.}
With reliable irrigation and efficient transport, more workers were needed in agriculture and industry. In 1910 a deputation led by Young, Vibert and Bailey put a proposition to Council that the Shepparton Progress Association purchase more land for ‘closer settlement’. This was a government initiative involving the ‘repurchase, subdivision and reallocation of large estates’ to establish small farms.

Shepparton historian Ron Michael noted that, at the original Grahamvale closer settlement, of the 160 holdings, one third had owners with non Anglo-Celtic names. The No. 2 settlement at Orrvale and Shepparton East contained the first real cosmopolitan community in the district with first generation Australians, people from the British Isles, and Jewish families escaping persecution in White Russia. Shepparton quickly established its reputation as a premier wheat and fruit growing area, and sheep and cattle grazing diminished. Lamplit since 1889, Shepparton streets were converted to electric power in October 1913.

Nearby Orrvale mirrored Shepparton’s settlement history. The fruit growing area attracted, and was influenced by, immigrants from the British Isles and Palestine in 1913, soldier settlers and Jewish migrants in the 1920s, and, after WWII, Greek, Italian, Yugoslavian and Albanian settlers. The Jewish newcomers required a synagogue, which was established in Shepparton East shortly after their arrival. In Ron Michael’s words, the ‘squattocracy’ had developed into an ‘orchardocracy’.

The effects of closer settlement, efficient transport, and irrigation that resulted in successful intensive agriculture, transformed an insignificant stop on the way to the goldfields into the city of Shepparton.

**History of State Secondary Education in Shepparton**

On a visit to Shepparton in 1907, Frank Tate, Director of Education, outlined the advantages for the district of opening an agricultural high school. This school, the Shepparton High School, opened in 1909, sharing the premises of the Shepparton State

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221 Ibid.
222 West, *Those were the days*, 1962, pp.49,50.
225 Ibid.
227 Ibid, p.41.
School in Fryers Street. With Shepparton’s reliance on irrigation and intensive agriculture, it is not surprising that the school was unique in its success among Tate’s failed agricultural highs. The high school began with an enrolment of thirty-three students and seven staff under Headmaster A.E. Watson. The fifty-six acre farm, under managers Ramsay and Gilchrist, was located on Old Dookie Road. Until 1927 the farm was profitable; however, the Great Depression resulted in its financial demise. The school was notified to omit the term ‘agricultural’ in 1933; the Education Department closed the farm in 1938 and sold it in 1939.

Enrolments at Shepparton High School escalated. With 209 students in 1918, extensions were planned to accommodate science and sheetmetal in 1919. With a further escalation of enrolments in the 1920s, a Junior School was built in Verney Road (now known as Hawdon Street), the site of the present Shepparton High School.

In the 1955 school magazine Goulburnia, SHS Headmaster E.N. Downe, recalled that accommodation and facilities at both sites were proving insufficient by 1937. Thus the Verney Road Junior School was enlarged and an Arts and Crafts building was constructed at Fryers Street. The Verney Road school became known as the High School, with the senior classes transferred there in April 1937, and the Fryers Street buildings became the High School’s Arts and Crafts branch. The schools were about a mile apart, and thousands of ‘student miles’ were walked or cycled by students who received a ‘soaking or a roasting’ on the way.

An extract from J.J. Martindale’s Some Vocational Aspects of a Secondary School in a Rural Community appeared in the SHS December 1938 magazine, Goulburnia:

in each form, a substantial number of boys follow agricultural pursuits; and girls, domestic occupations. It is not surprising, in a closely settled rural area, that a large number of boys should turn to the land, and it is to be expected that many girls should assist in the home after leaving school. The canneries provide seasonal employment for a great number of girls, who, however, are

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231 Michael, On McGuires Punt, 1988, p.44.
233 Ibid.
236 Ibid.
237 Ibid.
thrown back on their homes for the greater part of the year.  

Martindale concluded that ‘an examination of the organisation, courses of study and buildings of the present institution shows that the multi-purpose type of school is best fitted to serve the needs of this district’.  

H.G. Martindale’s *The Story of the Shepparton High School* reveals that the first bus to serve the more remote areas collected children from Murchison and Tatura in 1939, and Harston, Undera and Ardmona in 1940. With a change in Government policy, free bus transport for rural children was introduced in 1944.

Unlike headmasters who regarded technical education as second rate, SHS Headmaster James O’Connor, claimed in 1939 that the industrial world was ‘calling for leaders, for artisans and for experts’. O’Connor believed that ‘brains are just as essential in the industrial world as in the commercial and professional worlds’. With a new machine shop practice room ‘in full working order ... for pupils technically inclined’, SHS had the facilities to begin artisan or technical education in 1940. The main changes were the ‘amalgamation of Technical and Commercial work for the boys, and Domestic Arts and Commercial work for girls’. In 1941, SHS inaugurated an official junior technical course for boys to achieve the intermediate technical certificate standard.

James O’Connor observed that ‘exit pupils will find the world much changed from that which greeted their parents a generation ago’, and advised the boys that, ‘during their apprenticeship stage, no matter what their occupation, they would be wise to prepare for the big positions that are available to men in their forties’. His attitude that ‘nothing so calls for admiration as the sight of a skilled workman plying his trade’ may well have been significant in the later development of technical education in Shepparton and district.

**Technical Education in Shepparton**

The multi-purpose high school ceased to provide technical education for boys after
1953, when a separate technical school was to ‘take over all the technical instruction in Shepparton’. Local parliamentary member and premier, the Hon. J.G.B. McDonald (later Sir John), strongly supported the decision to build a technical school. Those present at an inaugural School Council meeting held on 11 December 1952 included Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, O. Nilsson, inaugural principal, J.F. Barbaris and District Inspector of Schools, R.J. Chapman. School council chairman and president, F. Furphy, claimed that the school could become the ‘most important educational institution in the Goulburn Valley’. He explained that:

The school will be a junior technical institution and will also be a senior school for apprentices. A small section of the existing primary school will continue to be occupied for a time by primary pupils, and the cookery and dressmaking classes will also remain in the arts and crafts block for the present. Everything is being prepared for a trade block in the new school for training apprentices. Classes in trade, art, craft, dressmaking and needlework will all be a feature of the school.

Shepparton Technical School (STS) commenced in 1953 when 300 boys and eight teachers gathered in buildings which were in an indifferent state of repair at the High School’s Fryers Street site. The teachers recalled with ‘grim nostalgia the incredibly difficult early days and the oneness of spirit of the school in the making’. SHS Headmaster, E.N. Downe, signalled in 1953 that the high school had lost many of its boys, with twice as many girls attending the school. In 1959, SHS Headmaster, Cardie McQuillan, noted that, ironically, girls doing practical subjects still had to continue the trek to Fryers Street, until a shuttle bus was established during 1958. The trek continued for thirty years until the SHS became self-contained in 1961, with the departure of 200 girls to attend the Shepparton Girls Secondary School.

Tenders were called for the new premises of STS in late February 1957 but plans that the school should be co-educational were opposed from ‘political, municipal and secondary school quarters’. During 1957-58, the School Council was concerned that the building plans lacked space for the anticipated co-educational provision. Correspondence from the Shepparton High School Advisory Council, received by the Technical School Council on 11

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256 Ibid.
257 Ibid.
263 Ibid.
July 1957, advised that ‘a Girls Secondary School would be established’ - a technical school for girls counter-proposal had failed. The Shepparton Technical College, Silver Jubilee, 1953-1978 publication claimed that the Education Department’s decision to persist with a boys school had created an imbalance of the sexes in all Shepparton secondary schools which ‘may take generations to iron out’. The building program commenced in April 1957, and was occupied by Form One and Two boys in February 1958.

Cardie McQuillan predicted that 200 girls would leave SHS in 1960 to attend the Shepparton Girls Secondary School (SGSS) in Fryers Street, to undertake a ‘course with a homecraft basis’, instead of the high school’s professional or academic course. The Girls School would conduct homecraft rather than professional or academic courses; their Intermediate and Leaving Certificates were not to be confused with the university certificates of the same names that were offered in the high school. Shepparton High School ceased to conduct a special girls course, just as it ceased to conduct technical classes after the Shepparton Technical School was opened in 1953.

By the 1960s, Shepparton Technical School had become overcrowded. At nearby Numurkah High School the percentage of pupils completing academic courses was low and the Shires of Waranga and Nathalia lacked technical education facilities. In July 1965 a deputation composed of representatives of Nathalia, Numurkah and Cobram shires approached the Minister of Education, J.S. Bloomfield. The deputation presented a survey of the potentialities for another technical school in the Murray Valley. They claimed that ‘lads in the area did not become apprentices to trades’ because of ‘lack of training facilities as well as lack of interest created in the earlier secondary school years along the lines of practical craftsmanship’. Their approach was successful, and the Minister made the most unusual announcement that a second technical school, in preference to a second high school, would be built in Shepparton within twelve months. This, then, was South Tech.

How South Tech was influenced by its paradoxical heritage - technical education’s enduring popularity sustained against continued threats to its existence - is explored in the

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264 Ibid.
265 Ibid.
266 Ibid.
268 Ibid, p.5.
269 Ibid.
272 Shepparton News, 16 July 1965, p.3
273 Ibid.
274 Ibid.
275 Ibid.
following chapters.
Chapter 2: The Showgrounds School, 1966-68

Though demographically ideal, the site chosen for South Tech was a swamp that required elevation and filling before building could begin. There were two rumours concerning why the crane was chosen as the school insignia. The most credible suggested the bird symbolised the importance of irrigation to the district; the less credible, that the crane was a forebear who inhabited the site prior to its drainage and elevation.276 Crane, Heron, Swan and Teal were the names chosen for the four inter-school houses.277

The Victorian community still strongly supported technical education in the 1960s. Docherty claimed that a sixteenfold increase in land and building expenditure had taken place between 1945 and 1960; fourth and fifth year courses were added in secondary schools, and the previously rigid curriculum was liberalised to cater for individual students’ abilities and desires.278

The Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools (BITS) and technical school principals were in the forefront of initiatives. There was some acceptance of common courses in the early secondary years, however there was steadfast opposition to merging with high schools. According to James Docherty, comprehensive high schools had been tried and seemingly had ‘disappeared forever from the Victorian educational scene’.279 In the early 1960s, schools were encouraged to reconsider their aims, methodologies and curriculum. Stability and successful evolution preceded the traumatic excision of the senior colleges in the years following 1965.280

Jack Hennessy, South Tech's inaugural principal, addressed a meeting of ninety parents and prospective students in the Shepparton Civic Centre in December 1965.281 As Fargher explained, in the Technical Schools Division (TSD), the principal was responsible for public relations, the administration of finance in accordance with the executive school council, and overall responsibility for staff and students.282

Claiming that technical education had significantly impacted upon the Goulburn

276 Ibid, p.27.
277 Ibid, p.10.
Valley, as evidenced by the demand for a second technical school, Jack Hennessy indicated that Shepparton was the centre for a model based on the Martin Report. Chief Inspector Jack Kepert seemingly endorsed this opinion in an address to the Goulburn Regional Committee at Shepparton in 1966.\footnote{Shepparton News, 21 February 1966, p.3.} In accordance with the Martin Report’s recommendations concerning tertiary technical education, Jack Kepert anticipated that Shepparton would have the ‘next diploma college established in country areas’.\footnote{Ibid.}

Citing the Education Department’s plans for establishing senior regional technical schools, surrounded by feeder schools, the Chief Inspector observed that the Goulburn Region was leading other regional areas in its readiness for technical education.\footnote{Ibid.} Commenting on technical education’s twofold charter - the development of the district’s industrial and rural needs, and the training of young people into responsible citizens in a democracy - Jack Kepert claimed that it was unprecedented that a city with a technical and a high school should ask for a second technical, rather than a second high school.\footnote{Ibid.}

The inaugural Vice Principal, Keith Morrison, announced that the school would open ‘not on the twenty acre site the school will eventually share with Wilmot Road State School’, but in temporary premises provided by the Agricultural Society, in three pavilions at the Shepparton Showgrounds.\footnote{Shepparton News, 3 December 1965, p.1.} A technical school headmaster was responsible for the day-to-day running of the school; he acted as a liaison between students, staff and parents, and in the absence of the principal, he took over the school administration.

Keith Morrison explained in the News that the students would work under artificial and natural light and would have access to showers, toilet facilities, yard space, and an arena shared with neighboring schools.\footnote{Ibid, p.1.} The needlework, cookery, fine arts and photography pavilions were to be divided into six rooms, accommodating six classes of approximately twenty students.\footnote{Past Images, p.4.} Large quantities of new school furniture were moved into the pavilions in January in preparation for the boys who would begin school on 2 February 1966.\footnote{Shepparton News, 26 January 1966, p.3.}

The boys who attended the school lived in the areas west of the Goulburn River and south of High Street, in the areas zoned by the Education Department to ensure the new school had sufficient students, and to divert students from the overcrowded Shepparton Technical School. The zoning restrictions were removed in 1970, when South Tech ‘attracted
more students than it could accommodate’. Feeder schools included those located at St. Germain's, Tatura, Toolamba, Murchison, Kialla, Caniambo, Shepparton East and St. George's Road, Shepparton. Seventy-five per cent of boys travelled to school by bus, with some coming from as far afield as Nagambie, seventy-eight kilometres away.

Entries in the School Leavers Register for 1966-71 indicate the school’s enrolment consisted predominantly of youngsters whose parents were blue collar workers employed on orchards, farms, or in trade; many ethnicities were represented. While the community had requested a second technical school, some parents experienced anguish if their sons, instead of being enrolled at Shepparton Technical School, were directed to the Showgrounds sheds. This attitude was a major obstacle that the principal had to overcome.

In early March, an open day invited parents to view the conditions under which their sons were working and to learn about their educational programs. A second open day, and night, were held during Education Week, when visitors were encouraged to see the school at work. Despite their earlier reservations, parents, instead of criticising the Education Department or threatening to withdraw their sons, supported the fledgling school.

A critique of the early conditions appeared in the school newspaper, Images. Written by Defrim Kutrolli, one of the 123 inaugural students, he expressed confidence that ‘everyone at Shepparton South Technical School will agree with what [he was] about to write’. In sympathy with his teachers, and in praise of their pioneering efforts, Defrim observed the strain they experienced as a result of the lack of equipment, and the extra classes and activities they undertook. Defrim especially recalled the leadership of the Principal, Jack Hennessy.

Jack Hennessy had come to Shepparton from the St. Albans Technical School. He had been a telegram delivery boy in Traralgon in 1939, before serving in the Army in Borneo and Maccassar. Completing Leaving and Matriculation simultaneously in 1947, Hennessy taught at Hutton Street Primary School, Thornbury in 1948. Qualifications in commerce and

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291 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
293 Past Images, p.4.
295 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
300 Ibid.
301 Past Images, p.22.
teacher training followed in 1951-52. A teaching appointment at the Elizabeth Street Primary School, Newport in 1953 led to him joining the foundation staff of the Williamstown Technical School in 1954. Hennessy transferred to the Watsonia Technical School in 1959, where he remained for four years. Prior to his appointment as Principal of South Tech, Jack was the Vice Principal at St. Albans Technical School for two years.  

Jack Hennessy established the ‘orthodox trade-oriented school’ which offered English, mathematics, science, social studies, solid geometry, woodwork, sheetmetal and physical education. Teachers and students initially experienced shortages, or, ‘in some cases, the complete absence of facilities and materials’. Jack’s inaugural staff of ten included three teachers who had transferred from Shepparton Technical School: headmaster, Keith Morrison; woodwork and sportsmaster, Ray McDonald; and sheetmetal teacher, Keith Newham. The Showgrounds experience was a culture change for the teachers, some of whom had previously taught senior, or diploma students, and now worked with Form One students in surroundings that were ‘ancient, substandard, overcrowded and grotty.’ Trotting horses were being trained outside the windows, there was ‘a circus every six months’, and a constant flow of traffic - ‘totally foreign to a normal school’.

Ray McDonald and Keith Newham, whose classes were especially handicapped by the lack of wood and sheetmetal, approached the Shepparton Preserving Company (SPC) with their problem. Ray recalled that SPC was changing its cases from timber to cardboard; consequently, they donated the wooden ends they no longer needed to the school. They also provided material for use in sheetmetal classes. Lack of equipment in solid geometry was less easily overcome, until the science benches were delivered and instruments were purchased. With the prediction that ‘boys would tire of running’, Ray explained the problem to Melbourne Sports Depot, Thora Hail’s Sports Centre staff, who donated sports equipment. This generosity was acknowledged each year in the perpetual trophies award ceremonies. Art teacher Ray Purdey taught ‘finger-painting on the floor’ before his students enjoyed the ‘luxury of painting on fruit benches borrowed from the Shepparton Preserving Company with twenty-five paint brushes’.

While Ray Purdey’s students enjoyed these ‘luxuries’, plans had been approved

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302 Technical schools used both ‘Headmaster’ and ‘Vice Principal.’
303 Past Images, pp.25,4.
304 Ibid, p.4.
305 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
307 Ibid.
308 Past Images, p.9.
309 Ibid, p.5.
310 Ibid, pp.5,10.
within the TSD for a new art wing, with space and storage facilities for multi-activity methods, the first to be incorporated in the new Shepparton South Technical School. The new design was planned to facilitate students’ discovery of their ‘individuality through giving expression to it’ via access to ‘a multiplicity of material and the means to use it’.  

Humanities teachers, Frederica Bottler and Nonie Opie, fared little better than their colleagues; English, social studies and the library classes were conducted with ‘no class maps, inadequate blackboard space, no library books or graded reading material’. Maths and science teacher, Heather Yarker, found the Showgrounds provided a rich environment in the search for ‘mathematical shapes’ and the creation of ‘a panorama of the Nile valley’. However, the lack of gas proved to be an insurmountable problem in science classes. The staff turned adversity into advantage, for example, as a staff member recalled in an oral history interview:

when the circus came they used people from the circus as guest speakers. And the gymnasts and contortionists and all that sort of people taught the students more in a period than the teacher would have taught in a week, because they saw these people in a totally different way. They weren’t seeing them as circus performers, they were seeing them as somebody living a lifestyle. And they, in their own way, related to that situation; they were living a lifestyle in strange circumstances in the pigeon pavilion, or whatever they called their classrooms. The teachers had the ability to translate what was happening all around them into the classroom. And it worked!

In this novel environment, where lifestyle education was incorporated naturally into curriculum, teachers replaced formal examinations with individual cumulative assessment based on a letter scale, to more accurately gauge each student’s progress and achievements.

As the Principal’s office was located beside the trotting track in the Showgrounds, Jack Hennessy was ‘occasionally mistaken as a steward and asked to scratch horses from the evening’s program’. He demonstrated considerable ingenuity and diplomacy; for example, as the school bell was very similar to the one used by the dog trial marshalls, he substituted an air horn to sound the end of a class, momentarily forgetting that the horn was used for fire drills. ‘To the milling throng of kelpies, border collies and bemused sheep on the arena were added 123 excited Form One boys!’

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312 Ibid.
313 Past Images, pp.5,10.
314 Ibid, pp.5,10.
315 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
316 Shepparton News, 7 December 1966, p.17
317 Past Images, p.22.
The school had to be vacated during the Show, which meant that staff and students ‘had to move every single item out, right down to the last drawing pin!’ To ensure the attendance of every student at a camp during this period, the school wrote to Shepparton service clubs and like organisations, inviting financial support to ‘shift the whole school, 127 students, to Harrietville, for two weeks’. In addition to receiving sufficient money to pay for the accommodation, transport, and storage costs, the overwhelming response resulted in the issue of pocket money to all students. In an interview, a senior administrator recalled this community support as ‘the turning point in giving the school kids character’.

At the close of the 1966 school year, Jack Hennessy praised everyone who had played a part in the creative drama of South Tech. In the school’s first year of existence, students participated in swimming and athletics house sports, competed in the combined school sports, and staff and students produced Image, a quality printed magazine. With their ‘make do’ materials, students won ‘three out of a possible four places in the Form One woodwork and sheetmetal sections’ in the Shepparton Show. Their teachers were ‘very proud’.

In common with other schools, the fledgling school kept its parent body informed with regular monthly newsletters. Jack Hennessy believed that these letters contributed significantly to the teamwork which developed between the school and parent body, exemplified by the Mothers Club fundraising efforts, which facilitated, among other smaller purchases, the acquisition of ‘a tape recorder and a music appreciation unit’. Defrim Kutrolli recalled the leaking roofs through which the ‘spring rain drenched the papers on the Principal’s desk’.

The first Speech Night, on 1 December 1966, attracted 400 adults who accompanied 123 students into the Shepparton Youth Club Hall to celebrate the successful completion of the school’s first year. In his address the Principal stressed that technical schools were primarily educational institutions that catered for each student’s individual differences and total personality development.

In 1967, 148 boys enrolled in Form One and the original 123 students were promoted

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318 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
319 Ibid.
320 Ibid.
321 Ibid.
322 Past Images, p.9.
323 Ibid; Image, SSSC, Celebrating Twenty five years, pp.38,39; RMcD, interview, 2000.
to Form Two; the enrolment of 271 in its second year of operation being a record, according to DTE Jack Kepert.\textsuperscript{327} Staff numbers increased with the addition of six new teachers and four portable classrooms, with the ‘relocatables’ swelling the number of ‘adapted’ classrooms to eleven.\textsuperscript{328}

The Director’s attendance at South Tech’s inaugural Council meeting on 6 April 1967 made front page headlines in the local press.\textsuperscript{329} Ken McRae, Principal of Shepparton Technical School, District Inspector Brian O’Neill and Council Vice President F.O. Cameron also attended the meeting.\textsuperscript{330} It is sobering to reflect that Shepparton Technical School, which sponsored the meeting, had expectations of developing into a College of Advanced Education. Instead it lost staff and senior students to the new TAFE College in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{331}

Jack Hennessy welcomed the visitors from Shepparton Technical School, and expressed appreciation to the principal and members of his school staff for their ‘invaluable assistance’ in helping to establish South Tech.\textsuperscript{332} He was pleased by the interest shown by the District Inspector. Welcoming his own Councillors R. Davie, T.H.N. Guild, F.R. Pullar, F. Kendrick, K.R. Ward, K.F. Riordan, D.J. Gardiner, R.L. Mitchell and P.W. Vibert (with apologies from C.G. McCoy and J.G. Pottenger), Hennessy congratulated them on their ‘acceptance of the office of School Councillors’.

The composition of executive technical school councils was to change from ‘selected’ to ‘representative’ membership within the coming decade. The five organisations were the Technical Teachers Association of Victoria (TTAV), the Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA), the Victorian Teachers Union (VTU), the Victorian Federation of State Schools Mothers [later, Parents] Clubs (VFSSPC), and the Victorian Council of School Organisations (VICCSO). They waged a relentless campaign for the reformation of school councils.\textsuperscript{333}

The VTU, ‘unable to agree with the policies finalised’, eventually dropped out of the meetings; however, the negotiations of the remaining four resulted, in 1975, in all Victorian Government schools ‘having the right to choose the kind of School Council which suited them best’.\textsuperscript{334} The TTAV claimed that these meetings were ‘extremely beneficial to each

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{328} Past Images, p.10.
\bibitem{330} South Tech Minutes of Inaugural meeting of School Council, 6 April 1967.
\bibitem{331} Shepparton News, 26 September 1969, p.1.
\bibitem{332} Council minutes, 6 April 1967.
\bibitem{333} Co-operation with other Victorian Parent/Teacher Organisations, Council Report to 8th Annual Conference, 1974, p.4; Z302, Box 5, Noel Butlin Archive Centre, ANU.
\bibitem{334} Ibid, p.4.
\end{thebibliography}
organisation’, circumvented misunderstandings, and ‘prevented the Government and other parties from creating divisions among parents and teachers’.\(^{335}\)

At this first meeting of South Tech’s Council, DTE Jack Kepert commented on the new school’s development and the ‘co-operation between business people, employers and parents in this educationally minded community’. Thanking Councillors for accepting office, he explained the responsibilities of an executive council in relation to spending public money, and the rights, responsibilities, and the regulations under which Council was to operate.

The Director indicated that the remaining stages of the anticipated co-educational technical school would be ready by February, 1968. Officebearers were elected; Keith Riordan became President, with Vice President R. Davie as Treasurer, N. Guild as Secretary, and the Principal and four Councillors forming the Finance Committee.\(^{336}\)

Jack Kepert predicted that the promised co-educational Shepparton South Technical School in Wilmot Road would be ready for a possible enrolment of 400-500 students in February 1968. Its current enrolments were ‘amazing’, and the need for a third technical school could not be discounted; the school would be ‘one of the few’ co-educational technical schools in Victoria.\(^{337}\) He considered Shepparton’s progress in technical education an exemplar of the ‘decentralisation we all want to foster’.\(^{338}\) However, the plan for a co-educational school in the new buildings did not come to fruition.\(^{339}\)

By 13 June 1967, tenders had been called, and the Wangaratta-based construction company, J.H. and I.G. Southwell was engaged.\(^{340}\) The first stage of the school was to comprise an administration wing, trade, humanities and general wings, and an amenities block; the much needed home economics wing was postponed.\(^{341}\) Unlike other schools in the State, South Tech was to be built with cream bricks and a concrete tiled roof. The roof attracted ‘considerable interest’ from members of the building industry. An assembly hall incorporated in the original 1966 Public Works Department plans was not built.\(^{342}\) The new School Council pressed the Education Department for an early start, and for the home

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\(^{335}\) *Five Organisations Disciplinary Procedures*, Executive Meeting, 25 March 1975, Z302, Box 5; *School Councill - Discussions with Dr Chapman and The Five Parent Teacher Organisations*, April 1975, Z302, Box 5; *Co-operation With Other Teacher Organisations*, 6.2 Five Organisations, 1978, p.7; Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archive Centre, ANU.

\(^{336}\) Council minutes, 6 April 1967.


\(^{338}\) Ibid.

\(^{339}\) Council minutes, 18 May 1967.


\(^{341}\) Forster, The Goulburn Region, 1973, p.875; *Past Images*, p.27.

\(^{342}\) Ibid.
Councillors were invited to meet members of the Board of Technical Inspectors during their regular school visit.\textsuperscript{344} They supported the Principal’s action in obtaining a full-time chaplain in August 1967.\textsuperscript{345} Clergy or accredited representatives were permitted in Victorian secondary technical schools.\textsuperscript{346} In the Showgrounds school, Reverend Gordon conducted classes for Protestant boys in the Hall of Industry, and Father Brian Connelly took the Catholic lads in the publican’s booth. A foundation student vividly recalled sitting in the booth listening to Connelly one morning, when ‘mumbling and cursing came from behind a bookie’s odds board and a dishevelled, hung over punter staggered out’.\textsuperscript{347}

Other memorable incidents arose from the school’s music education program; a full-time position for a music teacher was shared by two teachers, Dawn Wilkinson and Lee Cronk, each working two and a half days a week. Lee’s qualifications included an MSA (Associate in Music of Australia), with an Examiners’ Commendation, Melbourne University.\textsuperscript{348} Lee recalled: ‘the very first project we had was the Boys Choir ... they competed in the Lions Club Choral Contest. The school was rather delighted, or the principals were, because we took out third place at our first try in Junior Choir’.\textsuperscript{349}

The School Council requested that ‘letters of congratulations be sent to Mr Morrison, Mrs Cronk, and Mrs Wilkinson on the success of the School Choir and that the boys be heartily congratulated on behalf of the School Council’.\textsuperscript{350} When the Symphony Orchestra came to Shepparton, South Tech wasn’t on the list of invited schools; however, after ‘a few phone calls to Melbourne’, twenty-five seats were obtained. ‘Naturally, the choir boys were first in and we walked down from the Showgrounds to the Town Hall. They were well-behaved children - lovely’.\textsuperscript{351}

Lee recalled the students’ ethnic diversity, and how well the students ‘got on’ with each other. This diversity was used to advantage in their production of the Speech Night play, \textit{The Continental Cafe}, six months after the school opened in the Showgrounds:

It was like a roadhouse, where a lot of truckies would come in for a meal. The

\textsuperscript{343} Council minutes, 21 September 1967.
\textsuperscript{344} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{345} Council minutes, 17 August 1967.
\textsuperscript{346} Annual Report, 1964-65, p.66.
\textsuperscript{347} \textit{Past Images}, p.4.
\textsuperscript{348} LC, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{349} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{350} Council minutes, 16 May 1968.
\textsuperscript{351} LC, interview, 2000.
chef was [played by] a huge Italian boy. He was more or less insulted by remarks about his food - came in waving a big carving knife. We had an English boy there, too. He had a terrific accent. He wanted tea and 'boonns'. Well, when the buns came, they were so hard, he bounced them on the floor, so the chef was insulted again! It was quite amazing, the mixture, and they all got on quite well, too.\footnote{Ibid.}

In the 1960s, Victorian communities - including Shepparton - demonstrated their confidence in secondary technical education; the State’s attendance statistics showed forty-two per cent of boys attended secondary technical schools.\footnote{Annual Report, 1967-68, p.64.} Following the deprivations of the depression, and the strictures of World War II, James Docherty described 1945 to 1965 in terms of expansion and liberalisation.\footnote{Docherty, The Technical Division, 1973, pp.701,703.} When World War II ended in 1945, there were thirty-two technical schools with 34,000 senior enrolments, and twenty-eight junior schools with 10,000 students. In 1965 there were eighty-seven technical schools with 88,000 enrolments, and seventy-eight junior schools with 47,000 students. Docherty noted that the ratio of junior technical to other State secondary students was 1:3.55. By 1965 the ratio was 1:2.81, despite a fourfold increase in the number of secondary schools compared with less than a threefold increase in junior techs.\footnote{Ibid, p.703.}

South Tech mirrored the rapid development of technical education throughout the State. By 1968, the school had 450 students in Forms One, Two and Three, and thirty-eight staff, including the administration, clerical, cleaning and library officers.\footnote{Forster, The Goulburn Region, 1973, p.875; Past Images, p.15.} As a result of this rapid growth, unprecedented challenges faced Jack Hennessy and his fellow principals in the 1960s. They had little formal training for their role (a three day seminar in 1965), and were sustained by their personality, professional competence and previous HOD experience.\footnote{Fargher, The first twenty-five years, 1969, p.25-34; PRO, 9516/PI, Unit 27, New Principals Seminar, 8,9,10 November, 1965}

In his annual report for 1967-68, DTE Jack Kepert predicted that school administrators would increasingly face growing demands, and teachers must be prepared for ‘the role the community will expect of them as heads of schools’; he declared his surprise to discover that, in a ‘so-called centralised system’, schools were ‘individual’ and ‘different’.\footnote{Annual Report, 1967-68, p.57.}

In its first year of existence, no school was more ‘different’ than South Tech. However, its Showgrounds experience came to an end in June 1968. At the June Council meeting, Jack Hennessy made three significant announcements. Firstly, the move to the new
school was scheduled for Saturday 29 and Sunday 30 June. This was fortuitous, because staff and students were ‘sagging under the weight of a task’ which had ‘taxed to the limit the strength and enthusiasm of all concerned’.359 Secondly, discussions on ‘the types of courses to be introduced’ were pending until the Board of Inspectors visit, which was scheduled for 15 July.360 Thirdly, Jack explained that the school’s upgrading to Class 1 meant the positions of principal and headmaster had also been upgraded; consequently, he, himself, could be replaced by a principal with greater seniority.361

Jack Hennessy supervised his school’s transition from the Showgrounds site into the new, incomplete, buildings on 1 July 1968.362 His teachers, in the opinion of one of the staff, were ready to meet their new challenges ‘running’: their attitude was attributed to ‘in-built qualities’, industrial experience, and a response to the students’ needs. In gaining new buildings and facilities, however, they lost their former intimate, unique environment, their co-inhabitants with their varied activities, the overcoming of adversities and the enjoyment of novel events.363 Nevertheless, the move into the ‘palace’ acted as a catalyst for the next big step: the introduction of girls.364 (This happened in 1971 when the home economics wing was completed.) For a short time after the move to the new buildings, novel aspects remained, as Ray McDonald recalled:

the buildings were ready but the landscaping hadn’t been done and the sewerage trenches were still open. Mud was everywhere ... for the first few weeks at that school, all students used to approach the doorways to the school and remove their shoes and walk in in socks! Every student in the classroom had no shoes on, because we couldn’t carry the mud into the school. It was quite a sight ... to walk up to a corridor and see, perhaps a hundred pair of shoes, lined up in the corridor before you went into the building.365

At its meeting in July 1968, Council passed a vote of thanks to Principal, Headmaster and staff ‘for the smooth transition to the permanent site’.366

Before leaving South Tech, Jack Hennessy noted the continued success of his students in the practical areas, reporting that ‘twenty-six students gained awards at the Shepparton Show’. Again, Council passed a motion ‘that staff and students be congratulated on their efforts in the Show’.367 As mentioned above, the role of the principal was changing.

359 Past Images, p.16.
360 Council minutes, 18 July 1968
361 Council minutes, 20 June 1968.
362 Past Images, p.16.
363 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
364 Ibid.
366 Council minutes, 18 July 1968
367 Council minutes, 17 October 1968.
Perhaps, in the intimate Showgrounds environment, Jack was one of the last school principals who could claim to have enjoyed the ‘friendship and help’ of staff, parents and students.\(^{368}\) Jack Hennessy was appointed principal in his former school, St. Albans Technical School, in 1969. He remained there for five years, before becoming Principal at Sunshine Technical School from 1974 to mid-1977. Before his retirement in 1980, Jack Hennessy served as Assistant Regional Director of the Western Region.\(^{369}\)

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What were the legacies of the Showgrounds experience? The new school was presented with many problems, and the staff had ‘to create, literally, something from nothing’. A senior staff member said that they:

had to improvise, and whether it meant anything from cleaning up the mess - sweeping the floor, or how to create a model from the basic materials because there wasn’t sufficient money to order in art materials, timber and sheetmetal and all of those things - they had to find an alternative ... the fact that so many of the teachers came from industry, [they] had the in-built ability to do that.\(^{370}\)

Ray McDonald recalled that, because of the problems that had to be surmounted, his teaching was the most enjoyable, and the school the friendliest, in which he had ever worked.\(^{371}\) One of the students wrote that, while keeping parents informed, Jack Hennessy had organised stalls and sold rags: ‘Yes sir, he [Jack Hennessy], backed by the Headmaster and teachers, is the reason why this school has been a success’.\(^{372}\)

A senior staff member reflected that South Tech staff and students:

were advantaged, because their pride and I guess their dignity put them on their mettle. Because they felt that they were overcoming what so many people saw as adversity. They had all sorts of successes. Academically they were the same, or perhaps better than others. Because they had risen above what they saw as their challenge they felt better. This thing we call pride is priceless.’\(^{373}\)

The legacies of the Showgrounds experience affirmed the community’s earlier confidence in their choice of technical education for their sons, and enrolments continued to increase. The 1974 BITS Report observed the positive personal development that was taking place.

\(^{368}\) *Past Images*, p.23.
\(^{369}\) *Past Images*, p.22.
\(^{370}\) Senior teacher interview, 2002.
\(^{371}\) RMcD, interview, 2000.
\(^{373}\) Senior teacher interview, 2002.
In her biography of Dorothy Ross, the Principal of the Melbourne Church of England Girls Grammar School (MCEGGS), Barbara Falk recalled the far-flung accommodation, the relationships, and the fruits of Ross’ leadership during World War II when the school was taken over by the armed forces. Ross experienced ‘continual physical and mental fatigue’ as a result of visiting campuses throughout Victoria. Nevertheless, she recalled experiencing ‘a complete miracle’ - ‘when there was a job to be done requiring both spiritual and physical strength it has come quietly but surely’. The benefits to the students and staff were ‘establishing new relationships as they shared domestic responsibilities and learned and taught in the way the temporary premises allowed’.

The gains from the evacuation were a decisive factor in Ross’ decision to leave her charges in exile for another year; the communication between academic and administrative staff, and between staff and students, had become more informal. These experiences ‘influenced the school as a social unit’ after the nine scattered units of MCEGGS were relocated to South Yarra. In a similar manner, when the South Tech students and staff relocated to Wilmot Road, they were well prepared to reap the benefits, both from the culture developed in the Showgrounds, and the challenges placed before them by a new principal.

The New Principal, 1969

Jock Thomlinson, at Bairnsdale Technical School, was ‘slightly more senior’ in the newly combined Principal B class. Thomlinson, who replaced Jack Hennessy, found himself in a similar situation to his predecessor. As he recalled:

under the system that operated then, schools were advertised and I was Principal of Bairnsdale Technical School and it was advertised and upgraded. But because I was at that stage very new at the job, it was not certain that I’d get that position, so you had to apply for other positions, just to make sure that you got one. The Bairnsdale job went to somebody from Geelong, so that the head of my list of the schools that were available was Shepparton South.

He became Principal-elect of South Tech, and was welcomed to a Council meeting by the President on 19 September 1968. Keith Morrison retained his position as Headmaster and

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375 Ibid, p.84.
376 Ibid, p.85.
377 Ibid, p.86.
378 Ibid, p.87.
380 Council minutes, 19 September 1968.
staff numbers climbed. A fleet ‘in excess of twenty buses’ was anticipated to transport 600 students to the Wilmot Road School in 1969. Jock Thomlinson was welcomed as Principal in February 1969. One staff member recalled that ‘the timing was unique’. There were new buildings housing the technology area, previously unavailable facilities and:

a new principal who had innovative ideas, and a group of people working with him. I say ‘with him’, not ‘under him’, because they were able to fine-tune his ideas, which he kept on producing and producing, and the students rose with it! That was really the turning point that made Shepparton South different to every other technical school. 

The development and his realisation of his innovative ideas will be evaluated in the following chapters. South Tech also inherited aspects of secondary technical school staff culture and student misbehaviour. Brian Matthews aptly described this inheritance in his experiences at Shepparton Technical School during the late 1950s and early 1960s. Although South Tech’s inaugural staff and students initially ‘rose with’ the new ideas, evidence of set staff attitudes and student antisocial behaviours was obvious by 1974.

The long-standing conservative Australian political climate remained relatively stable during the 1960s. However, unions, parent organisations and feminists were challenging authority figures, gender roles and traditions. These movements were to have significant effects on South Tech and its new administration, as discussed in later chapters. Before continuing the story of what happened in the ‘palace’, one more thing will be explored: the background of the principal who transformed the school from an ‘orthodox trade-oriented Technical School into the foremost innovative secondary school in country Victoria’. 

South Tech’s resident historian, Bill Brearley, claimed that Jock Thomlinson’s name became ‘synonymous with the school’. Brearley was not alone in making this claim. TSD historian, James Docherty, believed that education history should reveal the story of the ‘idiosyncratic’ schools which were marked by their principal’s ‘great individuality and personality’. A brief biographical sketch utilises interviews to review Jock Thomlinson’s ideas in his own words, and illustrate his personality.

Joseph Richard Thomlinson, always known as ‘Jock’, was a middle child. He was born at 67 Mundy Street, Bendigo to Elizabeth and Joseph on 21 January 1927. In Jock’s words, Joe and Elizabeth were ‘literate and numerate, working class’ people who completed

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381 Past Images, p.32.
382 Senior teacher interview, 2002.
384 J. Docherty to B. Lawson, personal communication, mid-1980s.†
their formal education, like many others in those days, in elementary [primary] levels. They considered education a privilege and supported their children through school.385

Joe Thomlinson put a stop to a primary teacher’s efforts to change his son’s left-handedness.386 In later life, Jock Thomlinson claimed that ‘there are all sorts of things that happen to students in schools that make their education more difficult than it need be’, citing his natural left-handedness and his consequent problems constructing models in turning and fitting classes as an example.387

Why Thomlinson’s parents sent him to technical school is unknown; however, his father and the technical school headmaster served together in the Australian Imperial Forces in France during WWI. Jock assumed that the basic reason he went to a technical school was that he came from a working class background.388 A top exit student from Gravel Hill Primary School in 1938, Thomlinson was exempt from the entrance examination to the Junior Technical School, where he learnt the tech ‘language’:

Our language was solid geometry. We had to learn how to draw plans and elevations and how to understand it. That’s a universal language, it doesn’t matter where in the world you went. They would use this method to design houses or machinery ... I was quite good at it. I was very good at displaying it, not quite so good at understanding the more intricate parts of it. One of my memories is they wanted to make sure you understood it. It was very important that you could not only do it, but you could understand it.

This was part of the ethos of tech education, because you had to go to prac classes and make drawings - plans, if you like, of the models you were going to make. So it was important that you did understand what you were doing. It was a form of assessment of the solid geometry course that, when you went to fitting and machining or sheetmetal or woodwork, you would draw up plans of what you were going to make and those models from the plans you’d drawn. You couldn’t do it if you couldn’t understand it.389

Thomlinson recalled that because only one in four students attended secondary school at that time, it was important that they took their education seriously:

discipline was quite rigid, except, I must say, that on a couple of occasions I did a class with the 1Ds instead of the 1As. It was a very different sort of a class. This was because we were all graded and the more able students were working at a level that wasn’t possible for kids in 1D. So the discipline was rather different.

385 JRT, interview, 2001
386 Ibid.
In what way?

The 1As just worked their butts off whereas the 1Ds were more inclined to be frivolous.

Strapping?

Strapping was frequent and administered by all teachers: more so some than others. All teachers were allowed to use the strap and that was the primary method of enforcing discipline. 390

In his later career, Thomlinson came to realise that:

if you inflict physical punishment on a positive student, it might wake him up or it has a detrimental effect. But if you do that to a negative student, you only make him more negative. It should be administered with discretion. The problem with that is, not all teachers have discretion ... I deemed it inadvisable for any teacher to use corporal punishment because some teachers were using it as a defence mechanism. That made it very difficult. It’s always very difficult when you’re dealing with groups of teachers, because like students, you’ve got the very able and those that aren’t very able. To have one rule for the lot is very difficult. 391

His two year Junior Technical Certificate was obtained in 1940. (At the time, this qualification enabled its recipients to become apprenticed, and was normally followed by a third year Intermediate, then the final year of junior technical education.) Selected for his artistic talent from the ranks of the third year of the Junior School, Thomlinson attended art lessons at the Bendigo School of Mines. 392 An empathic art teacher permitted his young student to spend additional time in the art room in lieu of sport lessons. 393

During Thomlinson’s time at Junior Technical School, his absence from sport was noticed and he was compelled to attend. He turned up for cricket at Ewing Park, having never played in any team sport. When asked by the captain of the cricket team what he could do, Thomlinson replied: ‘I open the bowling and batting and field in the slips’. This resulted in the captain trying him out. ‘On the strength of a couple of good bowling deliveries he took me at my word: a very valuable lesson in self-advertisement’. 394 Thomlinson’s good performance at cricket was the beginning of a sporting career that lent balance to his professional life. He later gained distinction as a left-handed slow bowler, playing for North Melbourne in District Cricket.

391 Ibid.
394 Ibid.
After completing three years of secondary technical education, Jock Thomlinson enrolled in the School of Mines art course in 1942 ‘because he was good at it’. In his words, he had ‘reasonable academic ability, very average trade subject ability and no ability at all in fitting and machining’. He recalled how the technical schools treated their students:

The ethos of the tech schools then was twofold. One was a very caring situation. I knew all my teachers and they were concerned about me and wanted to make sure I was going on the right path and doing everything.

How?

In the way they talked to you, the way they discussed things with you and advised you. It was always there.

The second was, for assessment, to make sure that the examinations were conducted in a manner - and this was a sort of a tech invention, that exams were trialled the year before in tech schools around the State - to make sure that the type of questions and the level and degree of difficulty and all the things that go to make a good examination paper were there. Techs were judged on the excellence in their results.

You got the feeling that ‘you are all wanted’ and you were part of a caring system. Remembering that there was an entrance examination to get in the place, so everybody was literate and competent.

I knew all my teachers and they were concerned about me and wanted to make sure I was going on the right path.

Technical school boys attending the School of Mines were at least twelve months younger than their high school peers, having spent three years gaining their Intermediate Certificate; high school boys spent four years gaining a similar qualification.

Jock Thomlinson ignored the age difference and, during the Second World War ‘when staff were in short supply’, showed evidence of the leadership skills and lack of concern for authority which were characteristics of his later career. He passed his examinations by identifying what the examiners wanted students to regurgitate, a procedure in which he was aided by some of his teachers. He ‘learnt very little’ and enjoyed life to the full. This involved being captain of the cricket and baseball teams, and organising, without discussions with the administration, one-off matches against other schools during the war years:

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395 Ibid.
at the School of Mines in Bendigo there was no sport, which I thought was rather regressive. So I appointed myself as sports master and we did play against other schools ... all against the wishes of the administration, of course. Because there was no permission given for this. It was arranged by the students, and we competed because I thought it was most necessary!\textsuperscript{398}

Awarded a Senior Tech Scholarship and thirty pounds a year in 1943, Jock Thomlinson spent four years at Bendigo School of Mines. He completed a ‘Degree Equivalent, lacking a thesis and one subject’.\textsuperscript{399} A recruit in the Air Training Corp during World War II, Thomlinson learnt to play baseball, a game new to rural Australia, influenced perhaps by the proximity of an American Army Base. Football being in recess, he organised sporting fixtures and participated in local competitions; he also introduced baseball to students at the School of Mines.\textsuperscript{400}

Jock Thomlinson’s prerequisite two years of industrial experience was undertaken as a commercial artist with the Forest Commission in Melbourne, working above Flinders Street Station in 1946-47. Teacher training involved two nights at various institutions including the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology. He also attended the Royal Melbourne Technical College for practical experience, as well as Special Method, General Method and lectures. His training as a technical teacher incorporated industrial experience, and compared favourably to the high school teacher training available at the time.

During his stay in Melbourne, Thomlinson was invited to play cricket and baseball with the Melbourne Cricket Club (MCC), a club mainly composed of private school students.\textsuperscript{401} Before playing, he was interviewed by Club Secretary, Vern Ransford, and asked a series of personal questions concerning his school and religious affiliations. Fortunately, his skill at the game enabled him to play, but he never became a member. This delighted him, because he was ‘getting the best of two worlds, playing with a club like this and not paying!’\textsuperscript{402} In his light blue tie, Thomlinson started in the third eleven, and progressed to the seconds. He recalls:

I used to wear a light blue tie, and all the fellows would race up and say: ‘Oh, Geelong Grammar! How are you?’ and I would shake their hand and say: ‘Bendigo Tech. How are you?’ It was, well, very strange.\textsuperscript{403}

His father, Joe Thomlinson, wasn’t allowed to sit in the Member’s part of the Melbourne

\textsuperscript{398} JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{399} JRT, interview, 1987.
\textsuperscript{400} JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{401} JRT, interview, 1987.
\textsuperscript{402} JRT, interview, 1987; JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{403} Ibid.
Cricket Ground to watch his son play. But Thomlinson described his father ‘as a quick learner. I showed him that by walking round the ground and jumping the fence, very quickly you became a member very economically! It worried him a bit, but he got used to it’.\textsuperscript{404}

The MCC’s two dressing rooms were, in Jock’s opinion, a room used for those who ‘hadn’t arrived’, the other for those who ‘had’. Invited to join an offshoot MCC social team for those who’d arrived, he decided to do so; Sunday suited his schedule, and a ‘game of cricket was a game of cricket’, irrespective of the social connotations. After three years, Jock Thomlinson decided the atmosphere was not for him, and retired from the MCC.\textsuperscript{405} Most of the people he played with ‘were members, and I wasn’t’.\textsuperscript{406}

A junior teacher on probation, Thomlinson was appointed to Box Hill Boys Tech in 1948, where his work was valued by Howard Beanland, the Principal. Transferred against his wishes to Maryborough Technical School in rural Victoria in 1949, and finding it regressive, Jock Thomlinson ‘got hold of some kids and brooms and saws and hammers, and knocked the [art room] into shape’. Ordered by the principal to ‘put it all back’ (including work assignments from 1927), the junior teacher inquired if he should ‘put back the dust as well.’ Subsequently Jock was banned from the art room, and taught only English and physical education in a restricted teaching load.\textsuperscript{407} While at Maryborough, Thomlinson reflected that:

\begin{quote}
  even then I used to do a bit of organizing ... I went over to Bendigo and got a chap there to apply for Maryborough, thinking that I could get his job and go back to Bendigo, where I had come from.\textsuperscript{408}
\end{quote}

While at Maryborough, the North Melbourne Cricket Club, based in a working class northern suburb, invited the young teacher to come down and play cricket. Consequently, he was transferred to the South Melbourne Technical School and ‘the chap from South Melbourne went to Bendigo’, which Thomlinson himself had wanted to do.\textsuperscript{409}

Thomlinson’s next position, at South Melbourne Tech in 1949, found him in the same trouble: trying to ‘revolutionise the Art Department’. Again, his activities were curtailed by the principal, and he spent some time assisting Len Watts with the development of Social Studies. A university graduate, Watts filled filing cabinets with written information for student access. These materials, unavailable to mainstream art teachers, motivated the young

\textsuperscript{404} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{405} JRT, interview, 2002.
\textsuperscript{406} JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{407} JRT, interview, 1987.
\textsuperscript{408} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{409} Ibid.
teacher to explore new methods of artistic representation in education.\textsuperscript{410}

Watts gave Thomlinson charge of ‘a small room at the bottom of the stairs’ and ‘all sorts of paints and equipment’. Here Thomlinson worked on ‘the developmental side of it, to illustrate what they were doing’. Len Watts’ innovational program attracted visitors to the school who were interested to learn about the new Social Studies program.\textsuperscript{411} Appointed to the Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools in January 1957, Len Watts became the first Chief Inspector of technical schools with a background in Humanities - History and Social Science.\textsuperscript{412}

South Melbourne Technical School introduced the young Thomlinson to different lifestyles and a cosmopolitan population, who ‘came from communities in Port Melbourne, and might be sleeping four and five to a bed’. They displayed unique survival skills and interests: ‘They belonged to rival gangs, and they used to tell me the tactics they used to avoid getting into blues with them ... Some of them, especially the migrant kids, were keen on their art’.\textsuperscript{413}

At the close of 1951, Thomlinson was appointed to Wangaratta Technical College at the same time as Stuart Devlin, who was to become a colleague and lifelong friend. Devlin, a gold and silversmith, was admitted to the Board of Inspectors in 1964, resigning the same year to further his experience overseas after completing designs for the Australian decimal coins.\textsuperscript{414} Devlin attempted to diminish technical schools’ emphasis on drawing by introducing modern technology, including ovens and lathes, into art rooms.\textsuperscript{415}

Devlin and Thomlinson’s artistic perception influenced the way they understood design and education. For them, design was a series of individual problems to be solved creatively, rather than knowledge to be learnt and regurgitated. In the 1980s, Stuart Devlin explained to Terry Lane on ABC national radio the difficulties of arranging kangaroo tails on the Australian coins from a designers’ point of view, as a problem to be solved. Similarly, using the analogy of a painting, Jock explained the problem to be solved in peoples’ differing perceptions of sex education:

because people are so different, if they look at a painting, they all receive different feelings about it. We can tell them, show them and get them to

\textsuperscript{410} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{411} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{412} Holloway, The Inspectors, 2000, p.412.
\textsuperscript{413} JRT, interview, 1987.
\textsuperscript{414} Annual Report, 1964-65, p.68.
\textsuperscript{415} Holloway, The Inspectors, 2000, p.421.
understand the objective of the painter, but how it appeals to them is quite different. Because students are so different, what happens to them about this information is very different. What is important is they do have the knowledge, understanding and experience.\footnote{JRT, interview, 1996.}

Stuart Devlin and Jock Thomlinson designed tertiary Art courses to complement Wangaratta Technical College’s existing courses.

After six weeks at this school, Thomlinson found himself in more trouble, being hauled into the Headmaster’s office and asked why he had been ‘having a ball when he was Head of Department.’ He readily admitted that he was having a ball, but he was unaware that he was HOD. Finding this out caused him to change his behaviour and take his responsibilities seriously.\footnote{JRT, interview, 1987.} A colleague recalled these troubles, attributing them to Thomlinson and Devlin’s individualism, skill and artistic vision.\footnote{Former BITS member, interview, 1997.} In later years, Thomlinson was to rely on colleague support in training and recruiting specialist teachers to South Tech.

Jock Thomlinson’s role as a teacher and his efforts to help people formulate their own ideas is exemplified by his work with one student: Lorna Chick. Chick, who sat in her car waiting for her sons while they attended evening classes at Wangaratta Tech, was invited ‘ex officio’ by the young art teacher to join his evening class: a ‘group of women who painted as a means of self-expression and enjoyment’.\footnote{JRT, interview, 2001.} On his invitation, Chick subsequently joined his day class. Her paintings were a source of amusement to the other women in the group, ‘in that her visual perception and her interpretation were very different from the norm’. Her unique talent was recognised by her mentor. A ‘naive’ artist, Chick’s paintings now hang in the National Gallery and appear in the\emph{ Worldwide Encyclopaedia of Art}.\footnote{The Art of Lorna Chick Catalogue, Benalla Art Gallery April/June, 1985, Shepparton Art Gallery, June/July, 1985; Tourist News, April, 1985, p.5.}

Thomlinson’s evolving concept of technical education was not necessarily appreciated by inspectors early in his career. Teacher inspection was a routine procedure at that time, and Thomlinson admits to having ‘a blue with the inspectors’ from the first time he was inspected.\footnote{JRT, interview, 2001.} Nevertheless, Thomlinson and Devlin introduced senior art to the Wangaratta Technical School. In 1954 Thomlinson was promoted to Class 3, Head of Department and in 1957, to Class 2. Senior art was not the only activity he enjoyed with Devlin; the two young men were bookies on the local racetracks. His interest in racing

\textsuperscript{416} JRT, interview, 1996.\textsuperscript{417} JRT, interview, 1987.\textsuperscript{418} Former BITS member, interview, 1997.\textsuperscript{419} JRT, interview, 2001.\textsuperscript{420} The Art of Lorna Chick Catalogue, Benalla Art Gallery April/June, 1985, Shepparton Art Gallery, June/July, 1985; Tourist News, April, 1985, p.5.\textsuperscript{421} JRT, interview, 1987.
peaked in 1982 when he became a handicapper for the North Eastern District Racing Association.

In 1964, Thomlinson suggested to John Middleton, Senior Art Inspector who was, fortuitously, in charge of the Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools, that he should be considered as a ‘principal, not a headmaster’. There were three main premises. The first was that he could understand finance, meaning that a sound financial base was necessary for a school to function successfully. Secondly, his ‘educational competence they could judge for themselves’. He was a competent teacher and had confidence in his educational philosophy. Lastly, his capacity for leadership was exemplified by his role as captain of Cricket and Baseball Country Week teams, despite the team having more experienced players than himself.  

After fourteen years at Wangaratta Tech, Thomlinson’s application for the principal’s position at Bairnsdale in 1965 was successful. Awarded an outstanding mark by the Board of Technical Inspectors despite earlier brushes with some members, he was one of the youngest people, at thirty-nine years of age, to be appointed a principal.

With the prospect of applying for the position as Principal, Class 2, at Bairnsdale Technical School in 1966, and the added attraction of an extra ninety pounds in salary, the young teacher decided to complete his Art Teachers Certificate. Typically, he’d ‘had a blue with [the Art Inspector] previously about the subject matter of the thesis’.  

In the 1890s, Bairnsdale Technical School was known as the Bairnsdale School of Mines. It was the school where the first Chief Inspector of Technical Schools, Donald Clark, had discovered that State schools did not adequately prepare children for entry to technical institutions. In 1966, Jock made two observations: firstly, he found the once distinctive school in a seriously dilapidated condition. He ‘knocked walls down, sold off the old equipment and put in a library’. On inspecting the renovations, Jack Kepert, the Director, made one remark: ‘who gave you permission?’ And, of course, no one had.

A trip to the Department the next day ‘to have it out with Kepert’, was preceded by a letter to the Secretary of the Education Department (‘the right avenue at that time’) in which the new tech principal ‘told them all that I had done and asked them to please advise me’.

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Permission was then given.\textsuperscript{425} Secondly, the new principal regarded the school council president as a misogynist. Discovering that significant work had been undertaken for the school by a woman whose efforts had been overlooked, Jock took radical steps to ensure that she was invited to serve on the council. The president subsequently resigned.\textsuperscript{426}

After three years at Bairnsdale, Jock successfully applied for promotion as Principal Class 1 to the relatively new Shepparton South Technical School, the principalship having been upgraded in that school from Principal Class 2 to Principal Class 1. The opportunity to further develop his educational theories in new buildings, supported by an enthusiastic Council, with his staff running in response to high student expectations was irresistible.

As Docherty has suggested, Jock Thomlinson’s biography demonstrates ‘individuality and personality’.\textsuperscript{427} However, his qualities were possibly incongruent with those of high school principals, who work with academic staff to prepare students for university entrance. How Thomlinson’s qualities influenced, and were influenced by, the South Tech community will be scrutinised in the following chapters.

\begin{footnotesize}
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\item \textsuperscript{425} JRT, interview, 1987.
\item \textsuperscript{426} JRT, interview, 2001.
\item \textsuperscript{427} J. Docherty to B. Lawson, personal communication, mid-1980s.
\end{itemize}
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Chapter 3: The Theoretical Basis For Child-Centred Education

In 1969, Jock Thomlinson, ‘very new at the job’, joined headmaster Keith Morrison and a staff of approximately forty teachers. There were thirty-three sections [forms] with 576 students, including the first Form Four class (the students who had done Form One in 1966), in the new Wilmot Road premises. The school was located near a Housing Commission area, where the mix of youngsters’ abilities, behaviours and cultural backgrounds enriched learning experiences on one hand, and caused interpersonal conflict on the other.

The same year Director of Education Ted Jackson put forward an interim policy which encouraged intellectual freedom and autonomy in responding to individual needs in relationship with the local community. His ideas were supported by Australian and overseas educational and psychological research. These ideals can be traced to philosophers such as Socrates, Rousseau, and Goethe. More recently, writers such as Neill, Freire, Erikson, Illich, Reimer, Holt, Glasser, Bantock, McLean and Clegg, in differing circumstances and locations, have all articulated similar views.

Reflecting on Summerhill, the school he established in England in 1921, A.S. Neill claimed that, in psychology, ‘no man knows very much’. In another fifty years, psychologists would ‘smile at our ignorance of today’. He argued that children who exhibited problem behaviours were unhappy, and his school attempted to cure this unhappiness by allowing them freedom to develop as individuals, provided their behaviours did not impinge on the freedom or property of others.

Neill’s educational concept was holistic, and within the school, he addressed subjects such as sexuality and problem behaviours. Summerhill was designed ‘to make the school fit the child’ rather than the other way around. Neill claimed to renounce all discipline, direction, suggestion, moral and religious training. The young people lived within the school grounds, and were housed with a housemother on the basis of age groups. They were not compelled to go to classes. It was a ‘go-as-you-please School’, according to newspapers who considered it a gathering place of ‘wild primitives’ with ‘no law’ and ‘no manners’. Seventy years later, criticisms of this type were levelled against South Tech, and almost certainly against other experimental schools regardless of their location.

431 Ibid.
432 Ibid, p.20.

In 1950, Erik Erikson published his theory on the ‘eight ages of man’ in *Childhood and Society*.\footnote{E.H. Erikson, *Childhood and Society*, (2nd. Ed.) W.W. Norton & Company, Inc. New York, 1963.} Erikson suggested that the age between childhood and adulthood was distinguished by the need to work, to become a ‘potential provider’, and to adjust to ‘the inorganic laws of the tool world’.\footnote{Ibid, p.259.} He observed that all young people have a potential to enjoy participation in productive situations in the ‘fundamentals of technology’.\footnote{Ibid.} In all cultures where there was increasing specialisation and ‘systematic instruction’, there was a real danger that young people could feel inadequate, inferior and lose their identity.\footnote{Ibid, pp.259-260.} Erikson claimed young people must find their place within their family and society, and at the same time come to terms with sexuality.\footnote{Ibid, pp.260-266.} Ronald and Juliette Goldman’s 1980 study of children’s sexual thinking supports Erikson’s theory. The Goldmans’ comparative study of Australian, North American, British and Swedish children, aged five to fifteen, found that children benefit from sexual information at levels appropriate to their age and understanding.\footnote{R. & J. Goldman, *Children’s sexual thinking. A comparative study of children aged 5 to 15 years in Australia, North America, Britain and Sweden*. Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1982.}

Highlighting the value of the community’s contribution to childhood development, Ivan Illich credited his questioning of the value of obligatory mass school attendance to his meeting with Everett Reimer in Puerto Rico in 1958; both men promoted educational networks to separate learning from social control.\footnote{I.D. Illich, *Deschooling Society;* Calder & Boyars, New York, 1971, pp.19, 95; E. Reimer, *School is Dead: alternatives in education*, Anchor Books, Doubleday & Company, New York, 1971.} Reimer commented that this conversation, eventually leading to the notion of alternatives to schools, continued for fifteen
years. Illich argued it was not enough to reform education institutions; he drew attention to the ‘hidden curriculum’: the ceremonial ritual of schooling that, in his opinion, benefited the rich by initiating all people into a consumer society.

Everett Reimer claimed that schools are expensive for communities to run and students to attend, and that they cannot equalise educational opportunity. Schools, paradoxically, educate students both to conform and to ‘beat the game’; they guarantee that those who are incapable of questioning will be overcome by those who profit from a technologically dominated world. He argued that schools performed four functions: custodial care, social-role selection, indoctrination, and the development of skills and knowledge. In *School is Dead: Alternatives in Education*, Reimer pointed out that the future must be based on co-operative community, although most of the creativity conducive to producing such a community could be lost in ‘mindless’ production.

In 1964, John Holt in America promoted schools wherein children’s curiosity and interests could be encouraged, where young and older adults could intermingle in a creative, multifaceted educational community. He based his analysis on schools even with the ‘highest standards and reputation’; in his opinion, these schools fostered ‘bad’ tactics by creating situations in which learning was partial, warped, fleeting, and unrelated to the needs of children.

Blending psychological theory with educational theory in America in 1965, William Glasser pioneered ‘reality therapy’, a new approach to psychiatric problems, which he outlined in his book, *Schools Without Failure*. Arguing against the claim that success or failure is the product of a social system that may preclude success, Glasser’s clinical experience suggested to him that this argument removed personal responsibility, and did not recognise that success is potentially open to all people. He argued that young people usually cannot succeed until they have experienced success in one important part of their life. Glasser argued that the reasons why children were failing should be examined, and an educational philosophy embracing the possibility of success should be implemented. He also maintained that such a philosophy should fall within the existing framework of schools, thus

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445 Reimer, *School is Dead*, pp.4,5,9,10.
449 Ibid, pp.xvi,xvii.
enabling improved outcomes with a minimum of expense.\textsuperscript{452}

In 1969, Bantock in England, and McLean in Australia, both promoted educational theories linking education with mental health and the changing environment.\textsuperscript{453} Bantock suggested that Freudian theory pointed to the need for considering the ‘affective element of human nature’, and the need for a greater emphasis on the arts and crafts, which he claimed ‘mingled the emotional and intellectual proportionately’. He pointed out that such activities received little attention in schools.\textsuperscript{454}

McLean and his collaborators focused on a number of contemporary changes in society, including creative educational thinking, pastoral care, equality and female education, school diversity, changing teacher and administration roles. Attention was also given to the educational value of television, the changing role of libraries and instructional media, tertiary and continuing education, the implications of technological change in relation to education, and education for living - personally, communally, and in the global community.\textsuperscript{455}

Sir Alec Clegg’s biographer, Peter Darvill, claimed that the schools he set up are ‘as relevant today as they were in the early post-war years’. Clegg was the Education Officer in the West Riding, Yorkshire.\textsuperscript{456} He claimed that ‘the object of teaching is not so much to convey knowledge as it is to excite a determination in the child to acquire it for himself’. Clegg believed in ‘recognising, encouraging and testing new ideas’; his ‘pattern of administration’ was characterised by a ‘respect for the intangibles in education’.\textsuperscript{457} He cited examples of how effective school heads transformed staff by enabling them to develop ‘a different quality of concern for the pupils’, rather than simply sitting in an office emitting ‘character’. In this process, parent-teacher ties and community links were also strengthened.\textsuperscript{458} In 1970 Clegg edited an anthology of young peoples’ creative writing, pointing out that, for many working class children, whose language and social skills may have differed from those of their teachers, ‘social pressures inside the school and outside it contrive to blunt the main tool of learning’.\textsuperscript{459}

Clegg visited Australia from August to October, 1957, and - as a visiting

\textsuperscript{452} Ibid, pp.7,8.
\textsuperscript{454} Ibid, pp.63,64.
\textsuperscript{455} D. Lean, \textit{It's People That Matter: Education for social change}; Angus & Robertson, Sydney, 1969.
\textsuperscript{457} Ibid.
Commonwealth fellow - Canada in 1966. He registered deep concern ‘at the oppressive effects of the Australian inspection system’, and the ‘rigid administrative frameworks which restricted rather than supported’ in both Australia and Canada. However, his observations on craft work conducted in India underscored his conviction of their role in education, and contrasted with their low status in Canada. Clegg’s Canadian visit affirmed his opposition to externally prescribed syllabuses, ‘which reduced teachers to the status of low grade technicians’. He established links between English and Scandinavian teachers. He believed that the West Riding teachers were more learners than teachers in furniture design, craft equipment and teaching, painting, drawing and modelling.

In his foreword to *Revolution in the British Schools*, Charles E. Silberman claimed that Clegg’s starting point was to find teachers and principals ‘who exemplified successful practice’. Silberman noted Clegg’s ‘few, deceptively simple questions’ to staff: ‘what does the course aim at achieving? How do you propose to achieve it? What staff do you propose to employ? What tasks will they undertake?’ That is, he challenged them ‘to think about what they are doing, why they are doing it, and what the consequences are’. Clegg said that:

> if the only challenge we can offer the young is that of material prosperity, if we overvalue the quick who can add to it and discard the slow who cannot, the former will despise our values and the latter resent our indifference and we shall blame both for what is *our* failing.

The educational philosophies discussed above are not new; Socrates, Plutarch, Erasmus, Rabelius, Montaigne, Locke, Rousseau, Goethe, Ruskin, Whitehead, and Dewey advocated environments wherein young people are encouraged to develop aesthetically, morally, spiritually and personally, in reaching their full human potential. Contemporary technologies demand that education encompass the promotion of effective local, national, and international relationship skills and linked communities in a rapidly shrinking world: Marshall McLuhan’s global village.

The concept of the global village, and the philosophy of educating young people according to their aptitudes and abilities, are reflected in DTE Jackson’s 1970 policy. With

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463 Ibid, p.255.
465 Ibid.
466 Ibid, p.176.
their new principal, and a distinctive character shaped from the Showgrounds experience, the school was poised to develop autonomously. In James Docherty’s opinion the result was idiosyncratic, in a complimentary sense.469

At a special meeting on 30 June 1969, the South Tech Council instructed the Principal and Vice Principal to wait on the Director of Technical Education to present the case for the long awaited introduction of co-education. They also wanted art and business studies post-Form Five courses, and they proposed to hold a meeting with the Shepparton Technical School Council ‘to discuss matters of mutual concern and interest regarding the future of technical education in this area’.470

A five item agenda was prepared for a Council meeting on 21 August 1969, in anticipation that the DTE would request each Victorian district to prepare a developmental plan. The first item was that the Administration and Council supported the Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools' recommendation that art and business studies be transferred to South Tech; the second, to introduce co-education at the earliest possible date; the third, to develop certificate courses for girls; fourthly, that zoning should be reassessed. Although zoning was dropped in the early 1970s, when the school attracted more students than it could accommodate, a drop in enrolments nevertheless followed the opening of two high schools in the Shepparton area.471 Lastly, Council laid down plans for Form Five technical courses.472

The opportunity to discuss these plans with the DTE, Ted Jackson, occurred in September 1969, when the Shepparton Association of Principals of Victorian Technical Institutions (APVTI) Conference took place in Shepparton; it was at this conference that the DTE presented his 1969 interim policy statement.473

The presidents of South Tech and STS Councils chaired a special meeting on 17 September 1969. Ten South Tech and nine North Tech Council members unanimously carried four resolutions. The first resolution requested that South Tech should be ‘constituted a co-educational school at all levels’; the second that, despite the commencement of a technical wing at Numurkah there was a need for ‘additional classrooms at either or both of the Shepparton schools’. The third resolution requested the establishment of a Standing Committee comprised of representatives from both technical schools ‘to deal with such matters as may be referred to them by the Councils’, and the last, ‘that we press for the

469 J. Docherty to B. Lawson, personal communication, mid-1980s.
470 Council minutes, 19 June 1969.
471 Past Images, p.4.
472 Council minutes, 21 August 1969.
473 In-service manual, 1974.
purchase of ground for a third technical school in this City’. 474

In September 1969, ninety-two members of the Association of Principals of Technical Institutions (APVTI) gathered in Shepparton for their annual conference. Also in attendance were Messrs I. Scott (Association President), G. Brown (Chairman of the Victorian Railways and also a Member of the Victorian Technical Education Advisory Committee), E.T. Jackson (Director of Technical Education), A.E. Eldridge (Chairman of the Apprenticeship Commission, and also Assistant Director of Education) and F. Brooks (Director General of Education). 475

The Shepparton News devoted its front page to a report on the conference, and highlighted Ted Jackson’s interim policy paper on The Future Role and Operation of Technical Schools in Victoria. 476 The forecast that Shepparton’s ‘senior technical school [North Tech] would become a College of Advanced Education’ raised doubts about ‘the exact role these colleges would play in future’. Fred Brooks questioned which courses would be degree accredited, and the effect on traditional technical diploma standards if colleges developed into ‘degree-granting universities’.

Ted Jackson’s interim policy statement was described as ‘controversial’ by the Shepparton News. 477 Proposing to ‘strike a new theme’ in technical education, Jackson emphasised the importance of School Council participation, the role of the wider community in the educational process, and called on principals to utilise fully the ‘diversity and personality’ of their unique teaching staff. He claimed that technical education benefited from staff representatives from a ‘very wide section of the community’, and emphasised the close match between ‘technical schools courses and industry work profiles’. Jackson visualised a very broad base in the first year changing gradually to a ‘significant number of specialities’, with room for reorientation training’. Students and staff would be protected from the effects of inappropriate experimental curriculum by the introduction of time modules within which changes would not be permitted.

**DTE Jackson’s 1970 Policy**

Ted Jackson’s 1970 policy superseded his 1969 interim statement. 478

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474 Special Meeting of Combined School Councils, 17 September 1969.
476 Ibid.
477 Ibid.
document was composed of nine sections: an Introduction; Basic Assumptions; General Principles; Role and Responsibilities of Significant Bodies; definitions of Technical Schools and Colleges; Channels of Communication; Secondary Technical Programs; Post-secondary Technical Programs, Basic Vocational Programs; Technical Education Planning and Development; and Co-operation With High Schools.

In the introduction, Jackson acknowledged comments and recommendations submitted following the 1969 statement; he then outlined a proposal to develop a new technical college structure and emphasised the interrelation of school and community, the importance of school councils, the ‘policy of in-service involvement and the need for effective communication’. It could be argued that Jackson’s middle level college scheme was a forerunner of the late twentieth century’s Australia-wide Technical and Further Education Colleges (TAFE), whose departure from the Technical Schools Division ultimately sealed the fate of the vulnerable Victorian secondary technical school system.

Section two dealt with the Technical Schools Division’s basic assumptions, its nature and public accountability. Included in the terms of reference was, firstly, an investigation concerning the characteristics of the people best able to serve the interests of industry and the community; secondly, the realisation that the communities these people served would be very different to those in which they were born; thirdly, to assemble their characteristics into an ‘educational profile’; and fourthly, to provide the ‘means through which this profile is achieved’. Ted Jackson suggested that success would be achieved by the ‘motivation, knowledge and capabilities of those engaged’ in the service; he believed that capabilities would be reflected in the extent of their involvement in policy and program development.

In the third section, the TDE outlined general principles. He stated that the operating principle would continue to be ‘individual and group development through involvement’, with involvement defined as ‘participation of industry, the local communities, parents, teachers, committees, councils, and educational administrators’. Experimentation, with appropriate observation and evaluation, was advocated, with regular communication occurring between the ‘individuals, schools, committees and administrators’. ‘Involvement’ was not to be interpreted as diminishing the principal and executive council decision-making role, and the schools’prime responsibility was to provide technical education.

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480 Ibid.
481 Ibid.
482 Ibid, p.2.
483 Ibid.
484 Ibid.
In section four, the role and responsibilities of the Victorian Advisory Council on Technical Education (VACTE) and the DTE were outlined - the former, established by the Minister of Education, advised the Minister on the industrial climate in relation to vocational training.\textsuperscript{485} Jackson listed the numerous bodies with whom the DTE was to consult; he noted that principals would be required to ensure there was direct communication between schools and colleges with standing committees.\textsuperscript{486}

Jackson stated that school inspections would continue with inspectors having major responsibilities in ‘advising and encouraging schools in self-development’, as well as the promoting professional teacher responsibility and the ‘free flow of information between committees and schools, between regions and schools and between schools themselves’. Jackson further stated that as the demands for inspectors increased, ‘advisors will be seconded from schools to assist inspectors in their advisory function’.\textsuperscript{487}

Ted Jackson proposed modifications of the regional system, with increasing regional responsibility and effectiveness.\textsuperscript{488} He indicated that Regional Committees would be replaced by Regional Councils, and outlined their composition and responsibilities, indicating that their number would increase to eleven. The school or college was to become the ‘field unit of technical education’, with responsibility for ‘developing its own identity, policy and program within the broad limits of current policy and regulations’.\textsuperscript{489}

A number of bodies would contribute to program effectiveness. A community committee, including teachers, would work as an adjunct to the School Council to promote the school, and monitor community expectations and opinions on program effectiveness. The School Council was also to monitor programs, and maintain continuous contact with staff. An education committee, with other committees as needed, was to advise the principal on curriculum development and implementation, but the principal was to retain ultimate responsibility.\textsuperscript{490}

In the fifth section the communication channels were outlined: firstly, those between the Principal, School President and the Director; secondly, the channels between the Director through the Regional Council, and the Technical Colleges Committee or the Technical Schools Committee; thirdly, for general matters, a link from the community with the Victorian Advisory Council through the School Council and Executive of the Technical Schools Association. Fourthly, Jackson identified the links between industry and the

\textsuperscript{485} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{486} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{487} Ibid, p.3.
\textsuperscript{488} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{489} Ibid, p.4.
\textsuperscript{490} Ibid.
Victorian Advisory Council; fifthly, he proposed the maintenance and extension of direct links between ‘schools, teachers, advisory bodies and standing committees’ with the Technical Schools Branch. Jackson’s sixth communication channel was to encourage interested parties to contribute their ideas on the development of technical education.491

Concentrating on secondary technical programs in section six, Jackson outlined administrative, psychological and educational reasons for opposing school-based Year 12 programs. In his opinion, students in relatively small Year 12 classes would be better served in a more adult environment. Jackson thought that middle level courses and tertiary preparation should be extended in existing facilities, such as those at Ballarat, Bendigo, Footscray, Gordon, Preston, RMIT and Yallourn.492 The new post-Form Five courses in an adult or ‘collegiate institution’ could provide ‘greater motivation, success experience and job opportunity for marginal and average achievers’ than secondary school-based Form Six courses.493

In the lower classes, the new Form I-III curriculum set out in (C69/335) “Curriculum Information Circular 1970/1-Technical Schools” could be developed in accordance with the prescribed principles, and while experimental curriculum was proceeding. (C69/336) “Curriculum Information Circular 1970/2-Technical Schools” would continue to guide the development of Form IV-V curriculum, with appropriate examinations.494 Jackson proposed that investigations into the future of Intermediate Technical courses and examinations would be completed during 1971, with all parties, including the Technical Schools Committee, the BITS, and the Curriculum Standing committees in particular, considering new approaches to Form IV-V curriculum development.495

Ted Jackson drew attention to a number of important factors in the new curriculum, including variety, flexibility, balance, student freedom of choice, non-examinable activities, alternative mathematical, science or technical practices levels, technical subject elective clusters, methodologies and organisational procedures promoting student independent thinking and learning, and appropriate evaluation procedures.496

In section seven, the DTE outlined post-secondary technical programs under the headings of preparatory, basic vocational, middle level vocational, tertiary vocational, special

491 Ibid, p.5.
492 Ibid.
493 Ibid.
494 Ibid.
495 Ibid, p.5,6.
496 Ibid, p.6.
purpose vocational, and adult extension.\textsuperscript{497} This plethora of courses aimed at encouraging individuals of varying abilities and interests to achieve their potential in vocational, enrichment, or recreational areas.\textsuperscript{498}

Section eight concentrated on data collection techniques to facilitate long range planning and development in technical education.\textsuperscript{499} With a recommendation from the VACTE, the DTE proposed to collect a variety of information and statistical data to plan future course development and resource rationalisation. Ted Jackson proposed that the regions would be responsible for the long term development of technical education, in consultation with Regional Councils. His new technical college system would provide post-secondary technical programs, especially tertiary orientation courses, middle level vocational courses and upper level apprentice classes.\textsuperscript{500}

Jackson drew his policy statement to a close by highlighting the need for co-operation with high schools. Where it was uneconomical to run two post-primary schools, the divisions were ‘co-operating in experiments with comprehensive secondary programs’.\textsuperscript{501} For example, technical teachers, with ‘some material and financial support’, were provided at Numurkah High School.\textsuperscript{502} In conclusion, Ted Jackson claimed that consideration in the ‘new’ technical colleges would be given to ‘full-time Form Five level transition courses for approved Form Six students wishing to proceed from high school to technical school’.\textsuperscript{503}

Jackson’s 1970 policy statement was partly responsible for the high personal regard in which he was held. Bill Johnson suggested in 1993 that, had Jackson not died in 1975, his vision of retaining a ‘complete system of technical education’ the system may have remained intact.\textsuperscript{504} Such was Jackson’s status that his educational views were universally recognised and respected: he was the Federal Labor Government’s ‘obvious choice’ to sit on the Interim Schools’ Commission shortly after they won office in 1972.\textsuperscript{505}

Jackson’s proposed system was supported by a newly established union and the Technical School Project. It was also supported by the Victorian education minister, Lindsay Thompson, and the President of the powerful Technical Schools Association of Victoria.

\textsuperscript{497} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{498} Ibid, p.7,8.
\textsuperscript{499} Ibid, p.9.
\textsuperscript{500} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{501} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{502} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{503} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{505} Ibid.
(TSAV), Fred Heaviside. The Technical Teachers Association of Victoria (TTAV), established in 1967 by George Lawson, represented technical staff who held ‘quite different needs, aspirations and outlook’ from those of staff within the Secondary and Primary Divisions. The TTAV represented a group with an understanding of the working class idiom, values, attitudes and behaviours of a majority of the young people with whom they were working. In an unpublished manuscript, Betty Lawson reflected:

> To many, technical education meant a great deal. Some saw it, perhaps, as ‘affirmation of the working classes’, but most saw it as the opening up of opportunities for the full development of the child or the adult, irrespective of class, creed, background or native intelligence.

In 1970, the Minister of Education agreed to the establishment of the Technical School Project, to investigate the ‘best environment to facilitate learning’. It was accepted that students would use existing school buildings in the foreseeable future; however, new schools would be built as a result of discussion between architect, builder, teacher, administrator, local authority, students, parents and the finance authority. Such schools, designed specifically to ensure flexibility of learning, would have ‘moveable partitions and portable relocatable furnishings, equipment, and services’.

In the hands of a four man Steering Committee assisted by eight advisory committees’ the first result was a pilot project. Huntingdale Technical School, opened in 1972, was distinguished by a prototype building plan. Principal, Tony Delves, had been involved in the planning; his staff was selected on their willingness to teach in an open program. Jackson’s admonition to learn from the results of experiments carried on elsewhere was conscientiously carried out. Lawson recalled that Tony Delves regularly visited Danny Costigan at Cobram Technical School, and incorporated Cobram’s self-discipline and self-determination themes in the Huntingdale program.

While Delves aimed to ‘take the community into the school’ in his new facility, Gerry Tickell’s Swinburne Community School, an annexe to the Swinburne Technical School, aimed to re-establish a sense of community by utilising existing community facilities.

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509 Ibid.
510 Ibid.
Students were involved in local projects such as working in kindergartens and meals-on-wheels. Although preference was given to those no longer at school who wished to enrol, previous academic records or behaviour were not held against the hundred students who were enrolled in 1972. These experimental schools were open to parents and visitors, staff ‘were always sensitive to their reactions’, and ‘obeyed the rule of being “accountable”’.  

**Effects of the Jackson Policy on South Tech**

South Tech, in contrast to Delves’ and Tickell’s novel environments, was built in the traditional style and was fully equipped for apprenticeship training. Jock Thomlinson’s aim was to introduce innovative philosophy and curriculum into a traditional technical school. As already demonstrated, a factor in his favour was the adaptability of the staff and students due to their initial experiences in the Showgrounds location. In the first publication of the *Technical Schools Division Handbook* in 1971, South Tech was described as ‘a recently established co-educational school providing a range of secondary technical courses to Leaving Technical Certificate. A range of course streams is offered at Form Four’. It was also predicted that an ‘expansion of courses and classes will take place to meet the needs of the area served for technical education’. Thomlinson and his teaching staff presented students with a curriculum based on theory and practice, believing that both were vital for its success. He won Council support from the outset.

Jock Thomlinson also earned support and respect from Keith Morrison, the Headmaster. Thomlinson recalled that Morrison accepted working hard ‘at all sorts of odd hours’ and doing things that were ‘different’; they were ‘both of one mind’. Morrison did not flag in interest or co-operation, while giving his own slant and introducing his own ideas. In Thomlinson’s opinion, the staff were workers and ‘everybody was interested and involved in teaching because of their experiences in the Showgrounds’. Ray McDonald recalled an evening soon after the school opened at Wilmot Road:

Thomlinson often tells the story that, he’d only been in the school a few weeks, and he went up there one night, late at night to do some back work in his principal’s office and saw lights around in the graphics area. He got out of his door, wondering what it was - thought he had burglars! It was me,

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518 JRT, interview, 2002.
519 Ibid.
preparing my graphic programs for the next day! It was about two o’clock in the morning. He was really ready to ring the police ... They were the things we did: we worked any hours as long as we could develop something of interest for the students’ needs.\textsuperscript{520}

Thomlinson lost no time explaining to Council that money should be spent in purchasing resources for his staff to develop theory and practice projects incorporating the service subjects, thus giving students practical experiences. As Jock recalled:

the dominant factors in education were literacy, numeracy and science. Whereas I realised that English was not a subject in itself, but was just an area where kids learned to communicate in all sorts of various ways. Teachers didn’t realise this, they believed the written word was all important, and they didn’t understand the need for understanding verbal expression, to be able to listen, to be empathic with someone else, and all the things you need in communication.

In the numeracy side, unless you can apply what you use, unless a student in Year 10 knew that if he took out a loan and was paying forty-five per cent interest, how much that actually cost him, the maths weren’t any use.

We understood very clearly that they were service subjects to students to enable them to do something else, that they had to understand the theory before they could apply it in practice, and we were trying to get this balance.\textsuperscript{521}

Attempting to achieve this balance in his school, Thomlinson advised Council to increase school fees to finance the new programs (Victorian state schools charged composite fees to cover items provided for students, such as class sets of reference books). When lack of money halted plans for the construction of the school hall, Thomlinson argued that money should be spent on programs rather than a building. Former councillor Peter Vibert recalled that Council took their executive responsibility very seriously, and thoroughly debated the school hall issue:

There were certain people back in those early days who wanted to build something spectacular, like a school hall, and the balance was always recognised that perhaps it would be better to spend that vast amount of money that you might spend on a school hall on more educational programs that were more beneficial rather than have something big, a big monument that was going to cost money to run ... to try and aim for something that would be more worthwhile from an educational point of view.\textsuperscript{522}

\textsuperscript{520} RMcD, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{521} JRT, interview, 1996.
\textsuperscript{522} PV, interview, 1997.
With sufficient funding only to run the school, there was no remaining finance to purchase equipment for special projects, such as the printing press that Thomlinson wanted for a student newspaper:

I pointed this out at a Council meeting one night, and Kevin Riordan, the President said: ‘We’ll get you the money to have a printing press! We’ll have a Walkathon!’ Which he, with members of staff, organised. We had a Walkathon and bought a press! That was the sort of co-operation that you had.523

Councillor Keith Ward similarly facilitated the co-operation of the Shepparton Rotary Club in linking students with employers to facilitate student ‘industrial experience on a daily basis’.524 With the assistance of a local printing firm, a newspaper rolled off the press in July 1969.525 (The firm subsequently employed students who had discovered an aptitude for printing.)526

The printing press was among the first of a continuing stream of resources acquired to provide students with a range of stimulating experiences. Laurie Frost joined the Humanities Department and Jeff Anselmi joined the Art Department in 1970. Laurie supervised the student newspaper and Jeff’s innovative art and media programs won Statewide recognition in the 1970s and 80s.527

In 1972 the School Council signalled its changing role with the adoption of a new name: Board of Management.528 This body wanted parents to become more involved in the school program.529 Explaining that ‘education has changed so dramatically that parents must get involved to understand’, Chairman of the Board, Keith Ward, cited the example that ‘examinations in most schools have been abolished’, and added that when parents didn’t get ‘a list of subject marks and a report on progress they wonder what is happening’.530 The Chairman also explained the educational logic behind the recently purchased calculators, attempting to still the fears of parents whose own education was very different to that of their children.531

Keith Ward stated that the ‘twelve member Board of Management was consulted in every policy decision taken in the school’, with each member assigned their own

523 JRT, interview, 2002.
524 Council minutes, 20 March 1969.
527 Past Images, p.44.49.
528 PV, interview, 1997; Shepparton News, 7 July 1972, p.5.
529 News, 7 July 1972, p.5.
530 Ibid.
531 Ibid.
Ward claimed that the ‘special equipment purchased was not a greater than normal drain on parents’ pockets’. Money was obtained by fundraising functions and projects. Confronting undercurrents antagonistic to innovative facilities and teaching methods, the Shepparton News became a conduit for educational information and debate from South Tech’s inception.

Similarly, the school newspaper, PRINT, was a conduit for student opinion, including debate on the 1970s’ issues important to students: long hair, school uniform and co-education. Bruce Newham, one of the students, wrote that ‘boys these days like to keep up with the modern trends’:

When a boy goes to school with long hair, members of staff, mainly the Principal and Vice Principal, start thinking of the school’s reputation. Would the standard of work lower? Of course it wouldn’t ... When a pupil leaves school and starts working on machinery, he faces the danger of having his hair torn out. Hairnets are here for this purpose.

South Tech students were perhaps unaware that their principal sympathised with their hairstyle. Thomlinson recalled that:

when I arrived at the school, there was a great cry by the conservative teachers that kids should be sent home to have their hair cut. So I grew mine long! The teachers realised that it would be possible and didn’t alter what I was doing. It became a non-issue.

Gary Godwill said that the school uniform was ‘well up to date’ and ‘should not be changed until a new style in respectable clothing is introduced’. By 1970, South Tech’s proficiency in printing enabled it to assist others, such as the Shepparton Girls High School (thus in one sense, fulfilling DTE Jackson’s aim for co-operation between technical and high schools).

Jock Thomlinson himself made a decision that ‘uniform wasn’t an educational issue’; the focus should be on self-image and self-respect. Council and staff adopted a dress policy giving parents and students personal choice; school uniform would not be mandatory. The ramifications of allowing choice became evident in the mid-1970s, when South Tech had to compete for enrolments with newly constructed high schools in the district. In view of the 1970s social climate, the optional uniform policy wisely avoided unnecessary friction between staff and students.

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532 Ibid; Council minutes, 20 February 1973.
533 PRINT, July 1969.
535 PRINT, July 1969.
Bill Johnson reflected that the early 1970s were ‘a very difficult period for principals’. If principals experienced a challenge to their authority, ‘they could not expect any support from the office of the technical division’; teacher unions were becoming very active, the drug counterculture was in its infancy, women were finding their voice, and demonstrators were protesting vigorously against Australia’s involvement in the Vietnam war. It was during this period that a small group of experienced principals gathered to identify their main problems and recommend solutions. (Their conclusions are discussed in Chapter 4.)

Another problem for innovative school principals was conservative staff reaction to new policies. Thomlinson recalled what happened when he ceased routine school assemblies:

When I arrived at the school, I said: ‘We’re going to cease assemblies.’ Because most schools had four assemblies a day and kids were marched to classes by drums ... It’s too much pressure on staff and students. If you’re going to start at nine o’clock ... you don’t want them listening to a lot of announcements and speeches ... I had great difficulty in getting that point across.

I reached an agreement with the staff, that we would have no assemblies for three months. If that didn’t work, I would reintroduce them. I used to threaten them afterwards, [that] I would reintroduce assemblies ... because as soon as they experienced the lack of pressure ... teachers could see the benefit of it. They were expected to give their all to the kids, not to attend assemblies and march kids off, and do a day’s work before they started.

Thereafter, assemblies were held on a needs basis. While some conservative teachers and parents reacted negatively to a philosophy that promoted choice and dismissed routine procedures, others agreed with the idea that, in former teacher John Kumnick’s words: ‘There’s not a one-size-fits-all education. We’ve got to find some better ways to respond to the needs of the kids we are working with.’ Among the better ways, in the students’ opinion, was the school printing press.

Two ‘kids’ (the less formal name that teachers adopted in favour of ‘students’) Kenneth Faulkner and Ian Mawson, who were the student co-editors of PRINT, were rewarded by their involvement in the newspaper project. They were impressed with the

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540 SSTS Staff Manual, p.3.
541 JK, interview, 1996.
enthusiasm and abilities of their peers in all facets of production and printing; and hoped that all the school’s students would contribute news items and poems, as well as writing letters to the Editor.\textsuperscript{542}

South Tech again broke with custom by eliminating the ‘speaching’ and formalities characteristic of Speech Nights. The Shepparton \textit{News} reported in December 1969 that the skits depicted:

\begin{quote}
the social development of man, from the days of the cave dwellers to the population explosion. In a well timed and flowing sequence, students rose to describe the school’s new offset printing process, the social services scheme, and its adopted student in India.\textsuperscript{543}
\end{quote}

Councillors Riordan and Ward, with guest speaker, Harry Beitzel, noted the boys’ obvious enthusiasm in running the night.\textsuperscript{544} In his Speech Night report, Jock claimed that the ‘unspectacular day-to-day communication between the teachers and students’ was the basis of any school.\textsuperscript{545} He believed that ‘we do this well.’\textsuperscript{546} On that occasion he announced that Form One boys would participate in a general studies program designed to allow them to work at their own pace in the coming year. In fact, general studies did not become fully operational until John Kumnick’s appointment in 1973.

The Jackson 1970 policy announcing the new Form I-III curriculum encouraged diversity and experimentation. With careful planning and evaluation, its guiding principles centred on assisting individual students to develop ‘as a person and a learner ... as an enlightened, productive and responsible citizen’.\textsuperscript{547} Curriculum change should not take place for its own sake; staff should take into account ‘special local community needs and school organisational problems, including staffing and accommodation’.\textsuperscript{548}

The flexibility in this curriculum enabled Thomlinson to work closely with staff, School Council, and interest groups. Before introducing general studies, he consulted widely. Evaluation was continuous: like all school programs, general studies was open to outside scrutiny, which culminated in the 1974 BITS inspection. The students’ educational program was balanced with a mix of creative curriculum and traditional tech subjects, the one influencing the other. Thus core literacy and numeracy areas were incorporated in all

\textsuperscript{542} \textit{PRINT}, 1971.
\textsuperscript{544} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{545} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{546} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{547} Curriculum Information Circular 1970/1 - Technical Schools, Forms I-III Curriculum, C.69/335 (C&R); Jackson, 1970, pp.1,5.
learning areas.$^{549}$

From 1970, Jock Thomlinson himself recruited staff that he believed had the potential to fulfil his students’ needs. He also began to acquire communications resources, including film, radio and television equipment. Early in the year, Jock recalled, ‘a fellow knocked on my door’. This person had completed a film production course and he approached Jock for a teaching position. Jock got him appointed, and one of the first projects undertaken was the production of a fifteen minute 16mm sound film at Knoxfield Primary School. The school was conducting general studies, an area Jock planned to develop at South Tech. If the Knoxfield experiment was successful, film would prove an effective medium in getting the message through to other schools, in addition to being a communications project for the South Tech students.$^{550}$

Arrangements were made to billet South Tech students and teachers with their peers at Knoxfield Primary School; Jock stayed with the school principal. The project brought into play ‘a whole understanding of the communication process’, the practical reasons why humanities subjects were important. As Jock explained it:

We thought that it was infinitely better to do something of a practical nature that used all the skills ... being taught in a humanities area, in an art area, in practical areas ... bring them together in the form of making a film. You had to know how to organise, to write, to use equipment, to edit. It was a whole understanding of the communication process, which seemed to us to be much better than just going into a class and writing in a book. You needed the theory of doing humanities, but you also needed the practice ... to see how you needed it, why, when ... and it enabled you to have a much better understanding of why you were doing humanities in the first place.$^{551}$

Students researched the area of interest, some trained as scriptwriters, others as camera crew. The film showed how the experimental program - ‘reading skills taught at five different levels simultaneously in general studies’ - started and developed, and ‘how all teachers in the school are now taking part’.$^{552}$ The Shepparton News was optimistic that the film would be shown at the 1970 Australian UNESCO film festival.$^{553}$ The project was completed by October and in that month Council ‘adjourned for twenty-five minutes to view the Knoxfield film’.$^{554}$ Form 3A students, Rodney Newham and Ross Hanning, demonstrated their appreciation of the interdisciplinary benefits of combining film and newspaper

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$^{551}$ Ibid.  
$^{553}$ Ibid.  
The school will benefit tremendously by the films and newspaper working together. It will give the school good publicity. The film will most likely be shown on TV. The main advantage of learning film production is that students are studying the most elaborate communication system in the world.\textsuperscript{555}

News of South Tech’s programs was beginning to filter into the wider educational community. The film program drew the attention of a Departmental Standing Committee in Visual Communication in July, when members, together with a curriculum and research officer, visited the school.\textsuperscript{556} Humanities were well-resourced in a library rated ‘among the top five in Victorian secondary schools’; the South Tech librarians received a highly commended certificate, presented under the conditions of the Australia-wide Grolier Award.\textsuperscript{557}

Tom Davie’s amateur radio station attracted over seventy students.\textsuperscript{558} Bruce Lynch explained in \textit{PRINT} why the radio station was introduced:

The purpose of the radio station is to create the interest of the students in radio communications and widen their knowledge of their immediate surroundings and give them an idea of the customs of other people in the world ... the radio station is expected to give much favourable publicity to the school and its progressive educational outlook.\textsuperscript{559}

Jock Thomlinson recalled how he developed communications education:

I found a technician [Wolfgang Kluge] from the local TV station who ... had been an IBM technician working out of Germany, and going right round Europe, who was very capable and willing to become a school teacher. We got him trained as a maths. and science teacher, which he never actually taught. But what he was able to do for us was to build us a radio station. He built and designed it. When we got it, we arranged for an exchange student from America to come across who was qualified in the teaching of radio.\textsuperscript{560} We then decided - I suppose it was me that decided - we would need a TV studio.\textsuperscript{561}

We worked on the theory that it is an artificial thing to write an essay as an answer to a problem. On TV, however, if the kid wrote something, and it was recorded, you could listen to it ... so they learnt that language was an

\textsuperscript{555} \textit{PRINT}, vol.1, no.1, July 1969.
\textsuperscript{557} \textit{Shepparton News}, 10 July 1970, p.3.
\textsuperscript{558} \textit{Past Images}, p.28.
\textsuperscript{559} \textit{PRINT}, vol.1, no.1, July 1969.
\textsuperscript{560} JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{561} Ibid.
important method of communication.\textsuperscript{562}

Thomlinson found a studio in Wagga Wagga, New South Wales, that was transferring from black and white to colour television. He recalls that the school ‘negotiated for all their black and white equipment for $1,000’.\textsuperscript{563} Wolfgang Kluge built the studio in-house for a minimum of cost and to ‘the maximum of advantage to our students’.\textsuperscript{564}

South Tech closed the 1970 school year with a student-run presentation night. On that occasion, Keith Ward claimed that the audience had ‘visual proof of the finest and most dedicated staff in a school anywhere’. He also claimed South Tech had become recognised as ‘a leader in technical education’.\textsuperscript{565} Co-existing with the new courses were the traditional applied science, commerce, art, trade, and work experience programs. Pointing out the need to retain some traditional courses in his 1972 address to the Technical Teachers College staff, Thomlinson said that:

not all teachers are capable of designing and evaluating new programs, and during the transition period between external examinations and doing your own thing, we must take care that our students are not disadvantaged. I mean by that, we have seventy per cent of our teachers who, like the rest of us, are very ordinary mortals. In the other thirty per cent, we haven’t got a great number who are capable of designing their own programs, so that we still need subject standing curriculum committees and the likes.\textsuperscript{566}

News reporter Bill Davies claimed that South Tech was ‘not for academic failures or second rate students’, their results proving that they performed ‘at least as well, if not better, than those in other secondary schools’.\textsuperscript{567} The school was forced to restrict enrolments, and redirect some prospective students to Shepparton Technical College in 1971; the accommodation crisis looming at both technical schools stressed the urgency for another secondary school.\textsuperscript{568}

With a new wing needed to relieve accommodation problems, ‘the Terrapin’, a prefabricated structure measuring seventy-six feet by twenty-four feet, was erected by Willcraft Terrapin at a cost of $40,192 in January 1971.\textsuperscript{569} This building was provided for eighty-six Form One girls, a small, but significant component of the 750 students who

\textsuperscript{562} JRT, interview, 1987.
\textsuperscript{563} JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{564} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{565} Shepparton News, 16 December 1970, p.4.
\textsuperscript{566} Thomlinson, The Role of the Principal, 1972, p.11.
\textsuperscript{568} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{569} Shepparton News, 28 April 1971, p.3.
enrolled in what retiring school president Kevin Riordan described as ‘one of the foremost experimental school in the State’ with opportunities ‘to develop any talent they possess’. 570

Concurrent with South Tech’s development in the 1970s, feminism had ‘a new and unprecedented impact on Australian education’. 571 Feminists differed on the benefits of single sex, as opposed to co-educational schools. Some claimed that girls were being silenced in mixed sex classrooms. 572 Lyn Yates in the *Oxford Australian Feminism. A Companion*, suggested that the 1970s feminists’ agenda that introduced ‘a new yardstick for education (that sex-based inequality should be seen as a problem)’ resulted in changes in educational institutions. 573

The Victorian Education Department made existing technical schools co-educational while preserving the existing girls’ secondary schools. 574 Shepparton residents who preferred single sex education were served by the Shepparton Girls Secondary School, which opened in 1960, and Sacred Heart College, opened in 1902. Although South Tech had been planned as a co-educational school in the 1960s, girls were only enrolled after facilities became available in 1971. In contrast, co-education in some Victorian secondary techs occurred by demand from the late 1970s onwards.

Cate Garner recalled various problems arising in urban schools regarding co-education. From 1970 to 1993, Cate worked as a teacher, a senior teacher, a deputy principal, and a principal in five technical schools: Box Hill (later, Whitehorse), Brandon Park, Mitcham, Diamond Creek, and Baxter (later, Mount Erin), which became a secondary college three years before her retirement in 1993. 575 Cate also worked as Assistant Director of Technical Education (ADTE), Bill Johnson’s professional assistant in 1982, and from that position witnessed the demise of the tech schools.

Changes were imminent in the late 1970s. Earlier in the decade, there was ‘a real push to make a lot of the existing boys schools co-ed’. Technical education was in great demand when Cate moved from Box Hill to Brandon Park. Schools had high enrolments and were very popular with parents, who, in Cate’s opinion, believed that ‘there would be a job for their children, and skilling and trades for the boys’.

570 Ibid.
572 Ibid, p.79.
573 Ibid, p.80.
574 Ibid, p.79.
575 CG, interview, 2000. All comments in this section are from the same interview.
Cate Garner claimed that there was a ‘huge amount of difference from demands of the curriculum’. When Brandon Park introduced co-education in the 1970s, there were ‘sixteen boys in a class and four girls, because the class sizes in those days were twenty in tech schools. High schools were twenty-five’.

We hadn’t really come to terms with the fact that it wasn’t good for the girls. Later on, when we got our equal opportunity policies into play in the late 70s, early 80s, we would put ten girls and ten boys in a class and then that might necessitate having an all boys class because when you looked at the enrolment intakes it wasn’t even. You didn’t get half girls and half boys. You get seventy per cent, eighty per cent boys. Because, mostly, a lot of parents ... didn’t see tech schools as a place for their girls.

Garner reiterated that, in her opinion, parents viewed techs as a place where boys would learn trades and find blue collar jobs, and ‘the girls that did come often did very well in the maths and science areas in the 60s and 70s’.

Garner said that Brandon Park Tech changed policy ‘to make sure that the girls were not getting left out in the classroom because where there were only four girls in a classroom and sixteen boys, the teacher really more or less ignored the girls’. As the girls and the boys were scheduled to take the same subjects, the school had to consider class composition. She continued:

It was the same thing when I went to Baxter Tech in 1983. It just started to take in girls. It had been a boys tech and they became co-ed which is the reason I went, they wanted a senior woman. They weren’t coping well with the integration of girls and the staff. There was a lot of work to be done with teachers to educate them. They had to really attend to the girls in their class: develop curriculum for girls, and you had to behave differently when you had girls, from the way some of them had behaved with the strap and their language and so on.

By the time many other technical schools (including Baxter Park) became co-educational, South Tech had completed its first decade as a co-educational school. However, in spite of vigorous debate, it appears that ‘the achievement of feminist hopes in education seem more complex and less achievable than it did two decades ago’.576 (The effects of co-education at South Tech during the 1970s are evaluated by former student interviewees in Chapter 7.)

While some South Tech boys had mixed feelings about co-education, the school did not appear to experience the problems Cate Garner recalled in the suburban technical schools discussed above. One concern was put forward in the July 1969 PRINT:

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576 Australian Feminism, 1998, p.84.
I do not think there should be girls at this school because it is extra money the school would have to pay for cooking and sewing rooms, girls’ toilets and other rooms. It would take the minds of the students off their work and on the girls. They would not be able to concentrate.\textsuperscript{577}

In contrast, many years later, fashion designer, Dom Bagnato, recalled that the real turning point in his career ‘happened at South Tech, Shepparton’ when the school became co-educational.\textsuperscript{578}

It had been an all boys school when I started, then they admitted girls and introduced a sewing class, so I joined it. Boy, did I get some flack. A wog at a country tech school doing sewing with a bunch of girls!\textsuperscript{579}

The girls’ spokesperson thanked the administration and staff in \textit{PRINT} for helping them ‘feel part of the school’. They voiced a few problems: the ‘lack of suitable shelter for meals’ and the ‘broadcasting of the Clay/Frazier fight’. But they also added: ‘where would we be without something to complain about?’\textsuperscript{580}

Two main factors may have contributed to South Tech girls’ successful integration with the boys; firstly, the appointment of an acting senior mistress, Ruth Evans (McLeod), who joined the staff in 1971. John Kumnick recalled that Evans did the job ‘supremely well’. Additionally, she was:

a very important link person between the more conservative, traditional, ‘tradey’ type tech teachers, and the humanities, and perhaps more progressive elements in the school ... a very good, bridging force, keeping the place together. She was not overwhelmed by Jock. She was certainly anointed by Jock, in the sense that he took her and created that senior mistress role. She had a good, clear independent sort of view of everything, so she was a good counterbalancing force.\textsuperscript{581}

Secondly, the school philosophy promoted responsibility; misdemeanours were treated educationally rather than punitively in a friendly environment. On their annual camp at Harrietville, a group of girls and boys, including former student Suzanne Jeffrey (Parry), ‘decided to ignore curfew’ one night.\textsuperscript{582} Their activities attracted the teachers’ notice and the students were summoned to get dressed at midnight, ordered to pack up, assemble, and wait for the bus ‘to take us home’. After lengthy discussion it was decided the camp would

\textsuperscript{577} \textit{PRINT}, July 1969.
\textsuperscript{579} \textit{Herald Sun}, 1 December 2001, pp.81, 83.
\textsuperscript{580} \textit{Past Images}, p.54.
\textsuperscript{581} JK, interview, 2002.
\textsuperscript{582} \textit{Past Images}, p.44.
continue on the teachers’ terms.

The Moira Park Form One camp the following year ended tragically. Two girls died when ‘inexplicably, the wooden storeroom in which the girls were sleeping exploded into fire after midnight’ in October, 1972’. A motion was passed at the School Council Meeting that ‘the staff be commended on their actions and efforts during and after the recent tragedy’. The Council also recommended that a note of appreciation be sent to Mr Docherty in appreciation of his ‘sympathetic approach’ during his investigations.

News of what was happening at South Tech spread throughout Victoria and interstate. South Tech historian, Bill Brearley, recalled that the school attracted numerous visitors, and students ‘escorted student teachers, social reformers, educational leaders, standing committees and political dignitaries, on tours through the school’. When Brearley was a student teacher at the State College of Victoria, Hawthorn in 1974, he himself participated in a tour of the school. By the end of 1970, twenty-seven schools had visited the school, and formed their own opinions after seeing the staff and students at work. Bill Brearley described Jock Thomlinson’s promotional skills in demonstrating the school’s philosophy in action, a philosophy he needed to demonstrate to the DTE to retain support:

The Director and his wife were photographed by students on their arrival. Cockatoos were posted throughout the school to signal the approach of the official party. As Mr and Mrs Jackson drew near specially rehearsed classroom activities were performed. A beautifully mounted photo of their arrival was presented to the Director and his wife as they left the school.

Thomlinson encouraged visitors partly to give his students opportunities to talk to adults and explain what they did at school, thus enhancing their own understanding of ‘how to use the school’, and to demonstrate technical education’s present and future potential. The school had an open door policy, and visitors - affected by what they observed - seemed challenged to form an opinion either for or against. How those who did not visit the school formed their opinion is, of course, open to debate.

Historically, technical schools primarily catered for working class children and channelled them into industry. From its inception, technical education had been opposed by many educated in the academic system who perhaps made scant effort to understand what

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583 Ibid, p.34.
584 Council minutes, 21 November 1972.
585 Past Images, p.27.
586 Ibid, p.25.
588 Past Images, p.25.
589 JRT, Audiotape, 1972, p.12.
happened in Victorian technical schools in general, and experimental or alternative schools in particular.

South Tech experienced the paradoxical situation that, while a majority of the Shepparton community in the 1960s demanded technical education, by the 1970s, community attitudes seemed to be favouring an education which prepared young people for employment in white collar occupations. When Moorooopna High School opened in 1972 it had no effect on South Tech’s enrolments. However, South Tech’s location near a Housing Commission area fed a bias that it was second rate - ‘the other stream’ for the ‘dummies’. The school was increasingly judged on its role in catering for the ‘rejects’ from other schools, the difficult and rough kids, the slow learners, the Aboriginals and the ‘ethnics’ - Albanians, Italians, and Turks. Yet South Tech’s enrolment included a minority of young people whose parents made an informed choice after shopping around in both the government and private systems.

It was assumed, by those who made no further inquiry, that because a majority of South Tech students chose not to wear the school uniform, the school had no discipline. The experimental curriculum also left some people wondering what was taught. Could one walk around the school in safety? Jock Thomlinson recalled that:

It would be fair to say that we were regarded very differently to any of the other schools in Shepparton. On one famous occasion when I advertised for a new vice principal, the principal from the other tech school came down and wandered around the school and was amazed to see that he could do it in safety! He had expected he would have been beaten up and all sorts of things would’ve happened to him. He was very surprised to find that hadn’t occurred. That was what people thought because we were very different.

Two reporters visited South Tech in the early 1970s. Faye Todd, in her report in the Shepparton News titled ‘South Tech shows [the] way in education’, described the students at work. Bill Ely, ‘a born electrician’ was intent on the wiring in the communications centre; Suzanne Parry was photographed ‘trying her hand at carpentry’; and Joe Tancredi was sifting flour in a cooking class. According to Todd, the evidence that the school was playing an important role in the concept of modern education was ‘all around you’:

the amazing thing is that even when a class is being held and no teacher is in attendance, the pupils are working away just as diligently as if there were supervision. It seems as though, not only a handful, but all of the students are

590 School Registers; Staff and Student oral histories, Melbourne University.
ready, willing and able to learn as much as they can.\textsuperscript{594}

In her report, Todd included Jock’s frequently repeated words that South Tech teachers ‘teach the students and not the subjects’; their progress was measured individually, against his/her own previous performance.\textsuperscript{595} Todd also covered Ted Jackson’s November visit to Shepparton, when he satisfied his curiosity about South Tech’s experimental program and observed students engaged in activities absent from other Victorian technical schools. Jackson predicted a ‘great future in tech education’, with ‘only praise’ for the two Shepparton technical schools.\textsuperscript{596}

Ray Dethridge, in his July 1972 Shepparton \textit{News} article, ‘Maths go electric at South Tech’, claimed that Form One to Form Five students were offered ‘the most advanced junior school education in the State’.\textsuperscript{597} He noted the purchase of student calculators and one programmable calculator to the value of $1,500.\textsuperscript{598} Dethridge visited the Terrapin, where Form One students spent half their time in a forerunner to the 1973 general studies program. There, Dethridge claimed that students developed ‘their own initiatives’ in ways that would have ‘staggered the imagination’ in past decades.\textsuperscript{599} He wrote that, through self-motivation, encouragement, access to a range of stimuli, and learning how to access school and community resources, the student intuitively realised that ‘a grasp of mathematics and language is essential to achievement’.\textsuperscript{600}

With South Tech’s departments physically remote from each other, staff tended to remain within their separate departments; Jock Thomlinson ‘thought it would be a good idea’ to overcome isolating tendencies with an internal telephone system:

\begin{quote}
I went to town to a place called Ericsson’s and explained this to the bosses of the show, who thought it was a good idea, and they supplied us with phones. Some of our parents worked with the PMG on the telephone system and they wired it for us, so that gave us a link with all areas of the school, for teachers, as well as administration.\textsuperscript{601}
\end{quote}

A communications centre incorporating a twenty-five line telephone exchange, a public address system, dictaphone, turntable and tape recorders was installed.\textsuperscript{602} South Tech’s communications education was highlighted by Lindsay Thompson, Minister for Education in

\begin{thebibliography}{999}
\bibitem{594} Shepparton \textit{News}, 11 June 1971, p.2.
\bibitem{595} Ibid.
\bibitem{596} Shepparton \textit{News}, 19 November 1971, p.3.
\bibitem{597} Shepparton \textit{News}, 6 July 1972, p.2.
\bibitem{598} Ibid.
\bibitem{599} Ibid.
\bibitem{600} Ibid.
\bibitem{601} JRT, interview, 2002.
\bibitem{602} \textit{Past Images}, p.28.
\end{thebibliography}
the State Parliament: ‘Shepparton South Technical School, in the Goulburn Valley, one of the finest technical schools to be found anywhere, is experimenting in wireless transmission, film making and many other things entirely new, even to the technical school curriculum’.  

Similarly, following Lee Cronk’s interest in teaching students to play organ music, Jock Thomlinson negotiated the purchase of new instruments. When Lee and her students moved into the new buildings, they had only an old piano and a record ‘from Mobil or Shell Oil Companies, but nothing to play it on’. In 1968 she purchased an organ for herself, and the retailer agreed to her request to lend the school an organ for a short term:

It was at night when we arrived ... we looked like a gang of robbers ... we got the organ into the school and it was played in every session with the kids because at that time, I was taking classes four and a half days a week ... We played this organ and the kids loved the sound. We also had a little concert there ... and it was demonstrated [that] they loved the organ music so much. I had said I’d like one [for] the school.

At the end of 1970, Lee had a conversation with a well-known Shepparton music teacher who had been on exchange in Canada:

at that time, South Tech was looking for somebody ... I had a fair idea, anybody who had the qualifications and experience would get the job ... He came up, and I think that was a bargaining point, he would come if he could get a nice grand piano! There was only one [piano] there at the time, it was fairly old, I admit that.

After the new E Wing was completed, a grand piano was purchased, and Lee Cronk recalled that:

In no time, he [the music teacher] was installed there ... he was very experienced in classroom work. We had a grand opening for the piano. A concert program by the kids, and also supper served and various dignitaries arrived. It was quite good.

This event again aroused media interest; the Shepparton News reported that South Tech was one of the very few Victorian schools to have ‘its own grand piano in a correctly carpeted room’. On Lee’s return from a trip overseas and a music study tour at the end of 1972 there

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605 Ibid.
606 Ibid.
were seven organs in the school. The young people, who paid $5 per half year, came in
droves: ‘six at a time coming in for lessons’.\(^{608}\) The organs were purchased from Yamaha in
Japan by negotiation with a local distributor; Thomlinson’s deal with the distributor resulted
in the school offering several free lessons to an organ purchaser. Thomlinson gave his
account of the deal:

> the cost of those lessons was taken off the cost of the organs. We finished up
> having six or eight organs for practically nothing. It was a great boon because
> there were all sorts of students who had the experience of learning.\(^{609}\)

Staff from the *Educational Magazine* visited the school in 1975. In an article entitled
‘A media conscious school’, they reported that, as many of the students came from
disadvantaged homes, Thomlinson wanted them to hear or play music in such a setting.\(^{610}\)
Lee Cronk maintains the Principal’s influence on the school’s direction was profound;
Thomlinson firmly defended the need for appropriate instruments in her area:

> If we hadn’t had such a very understanding Principal, we wouldn’t have had
> those things. I told Jock that one time and I thanked him! He never once
> refused a request I had to ask of him. He might have said: ‘Well, perhaps you
> didn’t ask the impossible’. I didn’t, but whatever I wanted, he’d go along
> with. He said: ‘Yes, that’s fine’.

*He was important to the school?*

> Very, very important in the school. We wouldn’t have had those organs there
> if it hadn’t been for him. I’m sure of that.\(^{611}\)

Music became increasingly popular. When Lee Cronk’s workload got very heavy
with the organ teaching, Jock arranged for her daughter Joan Campbell, who was also an
accomplished musician, to join the staff. Nevertheless, the two rarely managed to reach the
staff room for their cuppa, as Lee recalled:

> Occasionally, Joan and I would say: ‘we’re going to go this morning. We’re
> going to go across for a cuppa’. We’d be walking fast down the corridor and
> we’d hear a flying leap behind us, somebody would come past us and reverse
> and come back and talk to us. [laughing] It was funny, it was really funny.
> We had to fight to get out! If you didn’t get down to that doorway, outside
> quick smart, you wouldn’t get out at all. It would be time to turn around and
> come back again.\(^{612}\)

Lee also taught classes at the Promotion of Adult Continuing Education (PACE) at

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\(^{608}\) LC, interview, 2000.

\(^{609}\) JRT, interview, 2000.

\(^{610}\) *Educational Magazine*, vol.32, no.3, 1975, p.23.

\(^{611}\) LC, interview, 2000.

\(^{612}\) Ibid.
night, where her lessons were, again, very popular, and ‘the same thing applied: we had half a
dozen at a time’.\textsuperscript{613} A musical sit-in at the school in August 1972 was attended by ninety
people, including organ teachers, pupils and parents.\textsuperscript{614} During an instructional session on the
electronic organs, the music room and facilities were praised by the executive officer of the
Yamaha Foundation of Music, Len Barnard.\textsuperscript{615} Mr Rose of Yamaha Organs introduced the
new Yamaha System of Organ Training when the school acquired seven electronic organs for
classroom use.\textsuperscript{616}

In April 1972 Jock Thomlinson was invited to address the Technical Teachers’
College staff on the role of the principal, his educational philosophy, and his school.\textsuperscript{617} He
claimed to be optimistic about education, because ‘we’re all trying to do something about the
state that education is in’.\textsuperscript{618} Earlier in his career, he had known exactly what he had to do as
principal of Bairnsdale Technical School. Despite never having seen the school or the staff,
he ‘knew what the subjects would be, and how we would teach them’. In contrast, he said,
‘that’s not true today’. The rapidly changing technological changes meant that future career
prospects and social mores were unpredictable.

Early in his address, Thomlinson made it quite clear that he disagreed with a fellow
speaker:

he seems to feel that we should amalgamate and there shouldn’t be two
schools. I feel the opposite. If there were six secondary schools in
Shepparton, which there are, they should all be different and parents should
have a choice of where they want their kid to go. Certainly, it’s very difficult
to cope with the various types of kids we’ve got in a situation like ours now,
and we can’t do the job for all of them. We’ve got to have this constant re-
evaluation of the courses we’re doing, and what we’re going to do about it.
This is the sort of school we hope we’re tending to become.\textsuperscript{619}

Jock reminded his audience of Ted Jackson’s 1970 policy speech, which made it clear that
principals were ‘fully professional’ and, ‘within a certain perimeter’, schools were
autonomous and were expected to identify unique philosophies, objectives, methodologies
and evaluation processes. Jock claimed that ‘education is an aspect of every experience and
every experience contributes to our capacity to make choices’. ‘As we have the kid for three
to five precious years’, he said, their school experience should be ‘top quality’ and ‘relevant’

\begin{footnotes}
\item \textsuperscript{613} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{614} Shepparton News, 8 August 1972, p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{615} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{616} Council minutes, 21 November 1972, p.2.
\item \textsuperscript{617} Thomlinson, The Role of the Principal, 1972.
\item \textsuperscript{618} Ibid.
\item \textsuperscript{619} Ibid.
\end{footnotes}
to the foreseeable future.

Thomlinson explained that these aims were inherent in the South Tech general studies program, where junior students participated in a transition year with two objectives: ‘to understand about themselves and learn how the school can help them’. In Form One, all the young people studied mainstream subjects and ‘by negotiation’ they could choose electives: drama, radio, photography, or communications.

Controversially, given his audience, Thomlinson discussed teacher training. In his experience, newly appointed teachers were ignorant of schools’ organisational structure and function. He said that teachers needed to understand their school’s philosophy and its expression - not only in curriculum, but in using any opportunity, such as yard duty, as a means of communicating with kids. Teachers also needed to understand the interrelated roles and responsibilities of the School Council, the vice principal, the senior mistress, standing committees, the Curriculum and Research Branch, Psychology and Guidance, local libraries, community groups, and openings for student employment on leaving school. Teachers should also understand their responsibility in keeping official records, such as attendance rolls.

Jock Thomlinson was skeptical that ‘a full-time education lecturer’ could adequately train teachers in the 1970s climate of rapid change. He believed that schools could train teachers, and teachers colleges should conduct ‘in-service courses’. Having left classroom teaching, lecturers ‘tend to get away from what’s happening’. Stating his agreement with Alec Clegg’s opinion on the skills of effective teachers, Jock said that, ‘the most important thing about a teacher is their concern for kids. The second is their ability to communicate, the third, their knowledge of the subject, and the fourth, if you want it, is their qualifications’.

For example, an effective drama teacher was a person ‘who had been in the theatre for ten or twenty years’, not a person who had ‘a degree and was a bit interested in amateur theatricals’. Thomlinson believed that ‘schools must represent the community’ and people from the community must be included as educators; rapid societal changes meant children must be flexible enough to adapt to a society different from the one their parents grew up in, and would be different again, ‘to the one their children will grow up in’.

With increased autonomy, and the loss of school inspections by the Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools, Thomlinson explained that principals would become more like the middle managers in industry. He closed his address with a list of subjects and their priorities:

I would put the subjects in this order of priority. Health first, physical and
mental ... We have to turn around and have courses on sex education, religion, politics and I’ve thrown in a couple more, TV appreciation - we’ve got to teach these kids how to look at it, and how to see it - communications and road safety.\footnote{620}

Vice Principal of the Technical Teachers’ College Gordon Bail, focussed his end of year address to the TTC diplomates on South Tech’s philosophy and programs. He advised all diplomates to visit the school to see for themselves technical education’s new directions. In the face of South Tech’s stance, educators and lay people seemed unable to remain neutral: within the decade, the sex education program was to be subjected to greater rumour and innuendo than that provoked by the communication technologies, general studies and mathematics calculators combined.

Local innuendo and rumours were challenged by Jock Thomlinson and School Council president Keith Ward in the Shepparton \textit{News} at the close of 1972. In October, Thomlinson claimed that many Shepparton people believed technical school subjects were restricted to traditional technical courses, however, ‘nothing could be further from the truth’.\footnote{621} He pointed out that the South Tech staff was composed of ‘honours graduates and graduates in humanities and engineering’; the school also employed ‘diplomates, technicians and first class trade instructors’.\footnote{622}

Jock Thomlinson claimed that ninety per cent of the students who left school entered the workforce in their local community. Their entry was facilitated by South Tech’s ‘own certificates for levels of accomplishment in radio, communications, printing, etc’. These were well received by local employers, and many employers who had co-operated in trial employment schemes were aware of the students’ capabilities.\footnote{623}

In a front page \textit{News} story, in December 1972, Thomlinson addressed the local people who wondered if maths or English was taught at the school.\footnote{624} He specifically addressed his remarks to those who criticised his school ‘without knowing the facts’ and advised students against going to South Tech ... ‘particularly teachers’ who ‘haven’t a clue on what is taught here’.\footnote{625} Where children attended school was a ‘prerogative of parents’, but he wanted them to be ‘fully aware’, and to base their decision on knowledge.

Thomlinson pointed out that students were given the opportunity to take ‘academic,
vocational and general courses’ from Form One to Form Five.\textsuperscript{626} He claimed that South Tech was ‘among the top three or four schools of its kind in the State’, a leader in many fields and constantly visited by other Victorian schools.\textsuperscript{627}

The success of the interdisciplinary curriculum is exemplified by one poorly motivated student. Encouraged to find something he was interested in, he came across a full size cannon in the Queen’s Gardens, Shepparton, and asked if he could make a small replica of it. Permission was immediately granted, but then the student had to draw on knowledge and skills from throughout the school: research on the cannon’s origins (history and essay writing), plans of the original cannon (solid geometry), construction of the model (fitting and machining, sheetmetal, woodwork) and research on the composition of gunpowder (science).\textsuperscript{628} After a successful test, the cannon was placed in a prominent position on Jock Thomlinson’s desk: a tiny reminder of what the school could do.

By 1973, the philosophy of the school was beginning to emerge clearly, aided by three key events: the emergence of the principal as an autonomous force, the July 1973 in-service and the 1974 inspection. All three are explored in the next chapter.

\textsuperscript{626} Shepparton News, 20 October 1972, p.3.
\textsuperscript{627} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{628} JRT, interview, 2001.
\textsuperscript{629} Council minutes, 20 February 1973; Shepparton News, 20 October 1972, p.3.
Chapter 4: The School Defines Its Philosophy

With co-education fully instituted, and academic and vocational courses offered at all levels, 639 boys and 234 girls were enrolled in 1973, an increase of approximately sixty students. Staff changes included the loss of a ‘most significant influence’: Keith Morrison was promoted to Principal of Cobden Technical School in 1973. Bruno D’Elia became the school’s new Vice Principal.

South Tech historian, Bill Brearley, recalled a 1972 Wangaratta Principals Conference where Jock Thomlinson ‘exhorted his colleagues to unshackle themselves from their daily student preoccupations and to accept the challenge of becoming educational leaders and entrepreneurs’. His exhortations fell ‘on deaf ears’.

Twelve months later, Jock was invited to join a seminar group of fifteen ‘young but experienced principals’. Their Report was the result of a seminar on ‘The Role of the Principal’ held at Whitehorse Technical College on 19-20 February, and led to the publication of ‘The Reality of Being a Technical School Principal in 1973’. In Brearley's opinion, this ‘encapsulated the thrust’ of Jock’s message to peer principals at Wangaratta. His address to the TTC in 1972, and oral histories from two former South Tech School Council Presidents, suggest Jock’s comments did not always fall on deaf ears; a former School Councillor recalled that Jock established an open door situation with the Director, Ted Jackson. While most principals shuddered at the thought of communicating with the Director, Jock simply walked into his office and held discussions with him.

It was a time in which principals no longer held traditional authority. Traditions were being challenged by changing community attitudes and values. Individuals and minority groups claimed their rights. Having access to reliable contraception, women claimed a permanent place in the work force. In solidarity with the working class, the teacher unions utilised strike action to achieve their aims. Adolescents reacted to tensions within the family, and to the local and global environment. These tensions, including protests against the Vietnam war, intruded into homes daily through a relatively recent invention: television.

Faced with problems which differed significantly from those of their predecessors,
school principals had to depend to a great extent on their educational expertise and personal qualities. Thus the climate of the 1970s and early 1980s was conducive to ‘leaders’. This was in contrast to the late 1980s when, with the devolution of responsibility, the same principals were paradoxically required to relinquish their schools’ individuality to administer an homogeneous government education policy.635

The seminar group which Jock joined in 1973 identified the problems inherent in the new autonomy delivered to them by the Jackson policy of 1970. Their previous experience had given them insights into issues in the wider community, the effective management of individuals and groups rebelling against authority, and the common sense measures necessary to create a workable system. Their Report (of which Jock was a co-author) was circulated to all technical school principals.636

The principals’ new roles had some consistency with those of their predecessors, identified by F.T. Fargher in his history of the association of principals of Victorian technical institutions, 1939-66. Fargher argued that a principal’s duties were ‘very vaguely appreciated by the outside world and even by many within the teaching service itself’.637 A period of ‘rapid and almost uninterrupted expansion’ was signalled on 13 July 1953, when the Education Gazette called for applications for new school administrators.638 While some principals were transferred from existing schools, Fargher pointed out that for the great majority ‘this was a new experience, extremely conducive to the production of ulcers’.639 He observed that principals were presumably selected because of ‘personality and skill in teaching’ and ‘some administrative experience as Heads of Department’, ‘but to an alarming extent the duties of a Principal remained a closed book’. He further claimed that a principal ‘either has what it takes or he has not’; principals could not be trained except in the mechanical aspects of his duty.640

According to Fargher, technical school principals were expected to ‘possess an outstanding personality and be skilled in the craft of teaching’; they should ‘maintain good public relations, particularly with industry’, enlist the ‘co-operation and support of prominent local citizens’ for the School Council; demonstrate considerable business ability and be familiar with the Education Department’s regulations. Fargher pondered how principals in the 1950-60s were selected to administer the new technical schools established in the early

638 Ibid, p.25.
639 Ibid, p.27.
640 Ibid.
years of rapid expansion.\textsuperscript{641} In the 1970s, as well as keeping abreast of local community mores and needs, technological trends, and educational research, principals also needed to earn respect.

The young principals who met in 1973 aimed to identify the problems arising as a result of their autonomy in an anti-authoritarian context. Jock and his fellow principals claimed in their preamble to the 1973 Report that the identification of administration and staff failings was not to be interpreted as an attack, but rather, an attempt to overcome these weaknesses in order to provide an optimum education to technical school students.\textsuperscript{642} The first major finding was that the combined effect of curriculum autonomy and decentralised administration resulted in a ‘significantly’ altered school administrative functioning; curriculum autonomy could result in teachers experiencing anxiety, uncertainty and ‘personal failure’. Open schools were creating increased traffic by ‘bringing parents and members of society into the schools and by taking the students into society’.\textsuperscript{643}

The changed expectations and the principals’ new educational leadership role had been operative in technical schools for ‘no more than five years’; the principal was the ‘pivot of the school ... in the centre of a dynamic process involving pressures for change, and ... a major participant in the decision-making, organizing, planning, communicating, evaluating, and influencing process’.\textsuperscript{644} These changed expectations were a source of potential conflict; at a time when the social distance between themselves and their staff was diminished, status was a hindrance which was better replaced by qualities such as personality and leadership.\textsuperscript{645}

Internally, principals were responsible for staff professional development and in-service education; they needed to be aware of current educational literature and developments; this was accomplished mainly by visiting other institutions.\textsuperscript{646} The principals surveyed the diversity of people to whom they were expected to relate in the course of their administration. In addition to school staff, parents and students, there were regional committees; for example, the Directors Advisory Council, the Regional Council, Principal working committees, Education committees, Moderating committees, and In-service Education groups. There were also Technical Schools and College committees, and the Technical Schools Association of Victoria. Further, there were the professional and service organisations; feeder and other schools; Education Department officials and Service

\textsuperscript{642} The Reality of Being, 1973, p.1.
\textsuperscript{643} Ibid, p.2.
\textsuperscript{644} Ibid, p.3.
\textsuperscript{645} Ibid, pp.2-3.
\textsuperscript{646} Ibid, p.4.
Departments.\textsuperscript{647}

The principals considered the nature of their relationships with staff in a climate where there was an increase in external confrontation between teacher organizations, the government, and the Education Department.\textsuperscript{648} They were responsible for staff morale in a situation where widely divergent background, training, abilities and attitudes were commonplace. Only a minority of principals wished to be innovative. Others were inexperienced and incompetent or had set attitudes, for example, towards class management and corporal punishment.\textsuperscript{649} Under the Jackson policy a majority of junior technical schools elected conservative approaches to school management.

The \textit{Reality...} group of principals identified four further areas claiming attention. Firstly, as the Board of Inspectors of Technical Schools (BITS) no longer assessed teachers, the new referee system meant that the principals were ‘more directly accountable for assessment of their staffs’.\textsuperscript{650} Secondly, the rate of institutional change, together with a lack of standard expectations, resulted in difficulties in predicting student, staff and community expectations. Thirdly, these rapid changes took place at a time of increased student and staff numbers, the delegation of authority, the growth in programs and extra-curricular activities at all levels, a need for increased finance, and the principal’s increased involvement in planning and liaison. Fourthly, all of these changes were taking place with inadequate professional and office support staff.\textsuperscript{651}

Having identified problems within the schools, the seminar group of principals, as ‘integral parts of the dynamic processes associated with educational change’, made a number of recommendations to facilitate solutions. These included the appointment of qualified school executive officers by school councils; at least two vice principals to share the school’s educative role with the principal; the establishment of a task force to advice the DTE on school organisation and buildings; and that the DTE be advised on school administration by a small committee of principals.

Distinctive roles, training and challenges were identified; senior teachers would be required to organise informal in-services, and to supervise and develop the teachers within their departments; principals should have opportunities for further professional training; Education Committees should delineate a code of teacher behaviour; and the DTE should

\textsuperscript{647} Ibid, pp.5,6.  
\textsuperscript{648} Ibid, p.5.  
\textsuperscript{649} Ibid, pp.5-6.  
\textsuperscript{650} Ibid, p.7.  
\textsuperscript{651} Ibid.
establish appropriate training for new teachers.\textsuperscript{652}

Three examples illustrate how South Tech interpreted the seminar’s recommendations.\textsuperscript{653} Firstly, although principals were strong advocates for the students, their role distanced them from the student body.\textsuperscript{654} Bill Brearley recalled Jock’s willingness to recall an incident that illustrated his ‘humility and indomitable sense of humour’.\textsuperscript{655} Jock ticked off a young Year 8 student for using the school’s front door, and the boy ‘indignantly demanded to know who he was and what right he had to tell him off’.\textsuperscript{656}

Secondly, John Kumnick recalled Jock’s influence on the South Tech Council and their subsequent role. Kumnick had lost none of the passion that he exhibited as general studies co-ordinator, and later as curriculum consultant, in his comparison of a traditional school council with that of South Tech. He pointed out that in a traditional school, the council rubberstamped the accounts, aired grievances, and ensured ‘strict adherence to guidelines’.\textsuperscript{657} In his opinion, South Tech Council ‘did none of the above very efficiently’; Councillors participated fully in ‘educational leadership and accountability ... a very, very different approach’.

Kumnick recalled that Jock’s approach was to ‘recruit and nurture and reward’ a coterie of people who understood and shared the school’s values, people who had the energy to go and make ’em happen. And he also had skill in recruiting a council and educating a school council that could make informed decisions because they were an active part of the school. They spoke for the parents. They educated the parents, they led the parents rather than voiced conservative fears and apprehensions of parents who knew no different.

School Council was required to visit the school, required to be informed about what was going on, required to take active interest in every dimension of the school, required to have a one-to-one relationship with each member of staff, with the students and so they led the community rather than responded to the community.

Thirdly, Kumnick pointed out that the Council, the Union and the staff were allies; the Union was ‘not a threat: the Union was an ally in managing the change process’. The Council managed the change process with staff and student support, ‘because the students loved it, because it met their needs. The least of our concerns was the students, because they

\textsuperscript{652} Ibid, pp.7,8.
\textsuperscript{653} Past Images, p.25.
\textsuperscript{654} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{655} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{656} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{657} JK, interview, 1996. All comments in this section are from the same interview.
loved what we were doing for them’. Kumnick recalled that, although Councillors had to deal with tough issues, it was a pleasant experience to go to a Council meeting. In spite of the inevitable high emotions, Councillors could sit and have a drink and celebrate their achievements. They were rewarded by observing that the South Tech kids loved going to school, and ‘were lifted from level A to level 100 ... they knew they were succeeding ... they knew it was right’. In Kumnick’s words, the Council:

was a lovely self-serving thing. Good people, recruited and trained and developed and given the opportunity to do useful stuff and then rewarded by seeing the results. A formidable package. But that took inspired leadership. It didn’t happen by accident.

Kumnick argued South Tech was ‘marketed’. The Principal and School Council promoted, priced and distributed an education system that was ‘radically different’ so they managed it differently. Those who were invited, rather than elected, to serve on Council demonstrated their understanding of, and support for the school’s philosophy. This was in stark contrast to post-1982 Council ‘representative’ membership, when, in Jock’s opinion, ‘a lot of camels got made’.

John Kumnick recalled that:

the principal could have a deputation of teachers, school councillors, civic leaders in the car at one hour’s notice, if he needed to pressure the education system. It was nothing for him to ring up Peter Vibert, Kevin Riordan, Keith [Ward] ... and say ‘I need you in an hour’s time. We are going down, the Minister’s doing silly bugger stuff on X, Y and Z.’ Or ‘We need some money for a new one of these, come down and we’ll take Dick Armitage for lunch’.

A former inspector recalled that principals of technical schools who ‘would do almost anything that was legal for the needs of students’. Thomlinson was particularly noticeable for his persistence and pressure: ‘he wouldn’t give up! If he wanted a member of staff, he got that member of staff ... he had it so clearly thought out, when he presented his case, that, really, you couldn’t say no’. Former School Council President, Peter Vibert, reflected that because of Jock, South Tech projects, which proved to be ‘very advanced for their time’, were financed. The former inspector claimed that:

You could discuss it with him, and if you didn’t agree with him, he would accept that. But he would be back in a week’s time, having thought out the next step, saying: ‘right. You said this. Here’s how I see it now. Thank you for what you’ve said’ ... Now, he did that to everyone. He was greatly admired for his perception and his persistence, and his real deep concern for those for whom he was responsible, including his staff, incidentally.

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658 Senior teacher, interview, 1997.
659 PV, interview, 1997, p.2; Senior teacher, interview, 1997.
As a South Tech Councillor was invited to address a BITS seminar on the role of Tech School councils, their involvement was obviously recognised.\textsuperscript{660}

With the Council on his side, Jock was on the alert to recruit staff to fit his students’ needs. At that time, the Technical Teachers’ College (State College of Victoria, Hawthorn) trained technical school staff. Entry requirements to the College, in addition to formal qualifications, included two years of approved industrial experience (one for women); trade entrants required at least five years appropriate industrial experience.\textsuperscript{661} While Jock recruited new staff within the local area, his established staff included some who had longstanding careers within the TSD.

The technical teacher culture of the late 1950s and 60s is well illustrated by Brian Matthews, the Melbourne academic and writer. Wearing a charcoal grey suit, Matthews started work at the Shepparton Technical School in February 1958.\textsuperscript{662} At the end of his first day he was approached by one of the more senior teachers, and a conversation ensued:

‘Up from Melbourne Uni, are you?’
‘Yes,’ I replied, immediately suspecting trouble. The Techs were not over impressed by arty types, or universities for that matter.
‘BA Dip.Ed?’
I said, ‘Yes,’ in a voice deepened by wariness.
‘Mind if I give you a bit of advice?’ he said.
‘No, go ahead.’
‘Be a cunt till Easter and kill your own snakes.’\textsuperscript{663}

Brian concluded that his new mentor’s advice was useful, as it was ‘more succinct, more accurate and far more tuned in to the truth of the world I had entered’.\textsuperscript{664} The teacher’s ‘amiable and certainly respectful assumption’ about the inadequacy of Brian’s teacher training for the ‘realities of the classroom ... was largely correct’.\textsuperscript{665}

In contrast to the Diploma of Education, which he described as an ‘almost entirely worthless one year, postgraduate course’, Brian found tech teachers were ‘very well versed in their particular disciplines’, and ‘by and large adequately trained for teaching, though there were gaps and exceptions of some significance’:

Wherever inadequate or insufficient pedagogical skill became a problem,

\textsuperscript{660} Council minutes, 17 April 1973; 19 June 1973.
\textsuperscript{662} B. Matthews, A Fine and Private Place, Pan Macmillan, Sydney, 2000.
\textsuperscript{663} Ibid, p.225.
\textsuperscript{664} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{665} Ibid, pp.225,226.
however, they simply became enforcers. Straps and canes were freely used at
the Tech (hence the advice about killing your own snakes - dealing with your
own discipline problems on your own and in your characteristic way), and it
was very difficult for a new, young teacher to resist that culture.\textsuperscript{666}

His colleagues not only showed Brian ‘how to survive at the Tech but also how to thrive
there, how to be a teacher’.\textsuperscript{667} While running with corporal punishment ‘for a while’, Brian
gave it up for more humane methods after witnessing what happened to a Maths teacher ‘who
was regularly slaughtered by every class he confronted’.\textsuperscript{668} Advancing down the aisle, ‘strap
at the ready’:

‘Put your hand out!’ says the teacher.
‘No!’ says the grinning and recalcitrant Pict.
‘Put your hand out!’
‘No!’
‘This is your last chance - put your hand out!’
‘No!’
‘All right - all right -’ a long sinister pause ‘- don’t then!”
Huge uproar, whistles, hoots of triumph, applause and murderously accurate
mimicry (‘Don’t then, Don’t then, Don’t then ... ’)\textsuperscript{669}

Brian Matthews signposts some of the challenges in the 1960s and 1970s and the
fixed attitudes impeding alternative educational philosophies and programs. As corporal
punishment was incompatible with encouraging individual aptitudes and interests, remedial
educators, counsellors and Jock himself assisted when student management methods were
exhausted. Jock recalled that South Tech’s students came from wide range of ‘types and
people’, and that a lot of people in the community were concerned that the school ‘had a lot
of rough necks’.\textsuperscript{670} Consequently, staff themselves needed an effective support system to
cope with these students, in order for effective education to take place.\textsuperscript{671}

Jock was in a prime position to put into practice staff management methods outlined
in the \textit{Realities} report. He negotiated the perils of co-education by appointing acting female
senior mistress, Ruth McLeod, and supporting female staff, such as Lee Cronk. With
babysitting problems hindering her return to work, a home economics teacher was
encouraged to solve her problem and the school’s need for her expertise by incorporating her
infant into the course. A 1973 \textit{Educational Magazine} commented that, among the maze of
modern resources ‘the school’s built-in baby’ deserved special attention. ‘This kind of

\textsuperscript{666} Ibid, pp.223,226.
\textsuperscript{667} Ibid, p.226.
\textsuperscript{668} Ibid. pp.226,227.
\textsuperscript{669} Ibid, pp.226,227.
\textsuperscript{670} JRT, interview, 2001.
\textsuperscript{671} Ibid.
inspired opportunism’ fuelled South Tech’s ‘vanguard quality’. In January 1975, a new domestic science teacher, Joy Redstone, took charge of cooking classes, and instigated the Form Four Catering Group which catered for school and community functions. Thomlinson’s opportunism, his ability to obtain funding and to attract the best teachers from other schools, did not endear him to other principals.

Jock believed that teachers had influence beyond the norm, were important as role models, and should be responsible and enthusiastic. In practice, however, some teachers were carried by their peers; a minority abused their power over young people and others were professionally irresponsible and incompetent. John Kumnick recalled that staff ‘were given the opportunity to be informed or to buy out’. Jock recalled incidents where staff ‘bought out’. With assistance from the Staffing Officer, he arranged transfers for teachers to enable them to make a fresh start in a more traditional school.

Four South Tech teachers recalled in interviews how, while maintaining the traditional subjects - commercial, domestic, humanities, science and trades - Jock Thomlinson supported aesthetic areas and introduced innovative programs. John Kumnick attributed Jock’s success in introducing new programs such as social biology to ‘inspired leadership’, consultation, and a ‘thought through strategy’. Jock himself had some reservations that his preparation for general studies was less than successful; general studies was one of the programs debated by distinguished visitors and staff during the South Tech 1973 in-service.

The 1973 In-service

The School’s 1973 in-service attracted a number of visitors and senior Education Department officers, including DTE, Ted Jackson. While the school held a staff in-service at least once a year in the 1970s and early 1980s, the 1973 in-service was especially significant in evaluating what had been achieved, and redefining the school philosophy and direction.

At the School Council meeting the previous evening, Council President Keith Ward, welcomed visitors, who included Danny Costigan, the Principal of Sunshine Tech School, B.

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673 Past Images, p.49; Council minutes, 17 June 1975.
674 JK, interview, 1996.
676 JK, interview, 1996.
McGregor, the Senior Master of the Numurkah High School Technical Wing and R. Arnott (Keith Ward’s guest and observer). In addition to the visitors present, the Principal’s report that evening also included a list of the school’s most recent visitors: four inspectors from the BITS; the Curriculum and Research mathematics group; a Psychology and Guidance group; visiting African and Canadian education administrators; and two staff members who were directors of the American Field Scholarship Scheme.

Jock reported that South Tech had hosted a meeting of the APVTI executive, who met to discuss curriculum development and proposals by High School Principals for amalgamation. His report also noted a meeting attended by STC and SSTS Presidents and Principals concerning Community College proposals and other plans affecting both schools. Ted Jackson offered his opinion on the High School proposals, and on comprehensive schools, comprehensive education, and the role and function of technical schools and colleges; he also explained his position regarding the Community College proposals. While the Council minutes do not note his actual comments, presumably they were in keeping with the tenor of his 1970 policy.

The Vice Principal’s report included items from the day-to-day running of the school, including student excursions, choir competitions, visits from the Department of Education and Science, and the Aboriginal Students Scheme Officer who interviewed all students of Aboriginal descent. He also outlined some staffing problems ‘due to Teacher Registration Regulations’. The DTE suggested the latter item be submitted to the Board for review.

The DTE then addressed Council on issues affecting technical education including: regionalisation, and the distinction between Education Department and Technical Division regions; the advantages of Technical College regions; and the advances in mid-level Technical College developments. He pledged his support for the development of a mid-level college in the Shepparton area, with the eventual development of a College of Advanced Education (CAE).

On the following day, 18 July 1973, the school paused for self-review and forward planning. Consistent with the policies enunciated in the Reality... publication, Council and staff worked in partnership with their visitors to understand more fully the school’s educational policy and implementation, and to open the way for further change in the

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678 Ibid.
679 Ibid.
680 Ibid.
681 Ibid.
682 L. Preston, Shepparton South TS In-service day, 18 July 1973; and Study of a progressive technical school, November 1973. Both were TTC assignments.
Keith Ward welcomed visitors, including the District Inspector, Ian McDonald, the Education Department psychologist, John McLeod, and Ted Jackson. The speakers who addressed the gathering included John McLeod, Jock Thomlinson, South Tech teachers John Kumnick and Geoff McPherson, Ted Jackson, and Ian McDonald.

McLeod set the tone for the in-service in his opening address ‘Society, Kids and Schools’. He compared the ‘stable’ world of the 1950s to the unstable 1970s, where one parent families, traditionally female, were increasing, and children were becoming isolated from male role models. Perhaps his comments held particular relevance to many technical school students. He claimed that many parents and children were looking to the school for constancy, support, and community, perhaps ‘connectedness’? McLeod pointed out that part of children’s social development is to learn how to play with other children and develop relationships. Schools, or alternatively ‘gangs’, with their inherent anti-social behaviours, provide isolated young people with a sense of belonging.

McLeod claimed that in the 1970s, many children were ‘withdrawn’ and suffered feelings of isolation. He pointed to increasing rates of youth suicide and the fact that males who employed violent methods in taking their own lives were invariably more successful than females. He suggested that a ‘good’ class, a ‘quiet’ class, may lack a workable social structure compared to general studies, which provided direct contacts between peers and adults in classes that may be noisy and apparently aimless. McLeod stressed that it was unrealistic for schools to ‘carry the load’; they needed community support, and families needed school support. He described the family as ‘a set of paraplegics in a fast wheelchair’:

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683 Ibid.
684 Ibid.
685 L. Preston, This cloud ... over their heads. A sex education case study. Unpublished thesis, Victorian University of Technology, 1998, p.45,46: A major national longitudinal study conducted in the 1990s which involved some 90,000 students in Years 7 through 12 attending 145 schools. This study found:

- a feeling of connectedness to school to be consistently associated with better health and healthier behaviours among the students. Measures of classroom size, teacher training, and parent involvement with school appear unrelated to adolescents’ health behaviours and well-being ... what seems to matter most for adolescent health is that schools foster an atmosphere in which students feel fairly treated, close to others, and a part of the school. (Blum, R.W. & Rinehart, P.M. Connections that make a difference in the lives of youth. Youth Studies Australia, vol.16, no.4, 1997, p.46)

It was also claimed that a high level of connectedness to school was associated with a delay in first sexual intercourse. The argument for structuring school environments in such a way that young people feel they “belong” is strengthened by R. Moos’ research: Context and coping; toward a unifying conceptual framework. American Journal of Community Psychology, vol.12, 1984, 5-38).
686 L. Preston, TTC assignments.
an unforgettable metaphor.

The next speaker, Jock Thomlinson, illustrated his address with a series of overhead transparencies, including one depicting an inverted triangle. With a student-centred philosophy informing all educational decisions, Jock recognised that the Director, the BITS, school administrators, staff and Council must work together within a supportive structure. Jock’s diagram placed the DTE in an unusual position at the base of the triangle, with, in ascending order, the main stakeholders, the students, at the top. However, Jock emphasised that the effectiveness of the school’s efforts was limited, as out of school activities also played a major developmental role.687

Jock Thomlinson maintained that the school’s role was to prepare young people ‘to take their place in a changing society’, help them identify their abilities and aptitudes, and find appropriate jobs. The secondary teachers’ dilemma was that increasing numbers of primary school children with limited numeracy and literacy skills had experienced failure; they needed help to achieve positive learning experiences. A team of technical teachers was in a unique position to understand students, and offer programs enriched by their own life and work experiences. In closing, Jock described the benefits of timetable flexibility.688

John Kumnick endorsed Thomlinson’s comments, emphasising the importance of teacher availability to assist students with independent projects. John predicted that this methodology would be applied throughout the educative process, including a sixth year, a prediction which may have been vindicated in the 1980s with the introduction of the technical schools’ Secondary Technical Certificate (STC).689

In his address on ‘developments in technical education’, DTE Ted Jackson made five major points. Firstly, he explained that technical schools were asking for more staff, finance and buildings. Secondly, he said that technical education was on its way to achieving the following ‘fundamentals’: its schools were accountable to the community, were the ‘conscience in education’, and had developed an ‘equal voice with professionalism’. Ted Jackson claimed that the community was the only body that could assess whether the new programs were meeting their needs; he suggested that interaction between school and community should be increased.690

Jackson’s third point was that technical teachers should rise to meet the demands of

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687 Ibid.
688 Ibid.
689 Ibid.
690 Ibid.
the decision-making authority and associated responsibility with which they had been entrusted. Fourthly, he suggested that as the educational culture encouraged experimentation, with the increased pressures staff must work together at ‘150 per cent efficiency’ to achieve positive outcomes. Fifthly, concerning education, vocation, industry and commerce, Jackson claimed that, with the policy of involvement, industrial representatives were writing courses, and a number of trained teachers were making observations in industrial environments. He emphasised the need for accountability, involvement and working within an experimental environment. 691

Ted Jackson’s one criticism was that teachers did not ‘meet students as equals’; he suggested that students should have a seat on school education committees. He was not in favour of teachers taking a place on school councils. One of the Technical School Council’s main functions was to represent the community; they acted as the school’s ‘conscience’ and ‘protector’ with responsibility for the expenditure of public funds. Technical School Councils held complete professional and financial responsibility, a situation that Jackson believed could successfully cultivate effective education. 692

Facilitating the 1973 in-service aims to ‘promote a fuller understanding of the school’s total educational policy and its implementation’, and to ‘open the way for any further necessary change in the school’s curriculum, organisation or structure’, the audience was divided into groups. They were to discuss, firstly, the implications of change; secondly, three topics: (i) the school film, (ii) traditional versus non-traditional teaching methods and implications for timetabling, and (iii) improving existing programs and ‘new developments’. The third topic was to suggest developments not already brought forward. 693

Following a break in proceedings for lunch, South Tech teacher, Geoff McPherson, presented the results of the collated group reports. Firstly, discussion of the school film found that it lacked some important elements. These included the school personnel, their enthusiasm and interaction with the students, the remedial education program, and the diversity and range of the school’s resources. Staff members believed that a better representation of the school had been accomplished in a previous film made by the students themselves. 694

Concerning the second discussion topic, traditional versus non-traditional teaching, issues such as lack of communication with parents arose. It was perceived by those who

691 Ibid.
692 Ibid.
693 Ibid.
694 Ibid.
worked with the students that, in a political structure that made schooling compulsory, approximately seventy per cent were reasonably happy to attend. The in-service participants assumed that the 1972 Federal Australian Labor Party’s election slogan ‘it’s time for change’, augured well for the school to include parent support within their aims.\textsuperscript{695}

The third task, seeking to evaluate and suggest how programs could be improved, identified three main concerns. Firstly, with respect to school organisation, staff development, and community interaction, there was a lack of co-ordination and contact between staff that could be overcome with the formation of a staff association. Staff indicated that they would like to visit other schools before making major structural or program changes; there should be an increase in ‘real life’ situations, and extension into the community would yield greater involvement with the community. It was suggested that school facilities should be utilised in the evening.

The second concern centred on increasing student numbers and their educational needs. Staff were under stress catering for the diverse ability and behaviour of increasing numbers of students; limiting enrolments or restructuring the school had become a possibility. As exit primary students exhibited poor English skills, every teacher should be responsible for teaching English; as moderated courses would be hindered by a lack of staff, specialist teachers could train their peers in teaching basic literacy and numeracy skills. The time devoted to survival or core subjects was seen to be insufficient.

The third concern was that improved relationships between teachers and students could ameliorate a lack of common courtesy between students, their peers and teachers. There was also a need for an extension of pastoral work. In the general studies program, the need for compatibility between staff was great. All groups said they had benefited from the input of visitors to the in-service.

Thomlinson’s participation in the \textit{Realities} project, as well as the 1973 in-service, created the framework wherein staff and the local community were challenged and supported to develop programs in which every child could demonstrate their abilities and skills.

\textbf{The 1974 Inspection}

In February 1974, the Principal reported to Council that the BITS had been invited to give a one week, full school inspection the following month.\textsuperscript{696} With an enrolment of 886

\textsuperscript{695} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{696} Council minutes, February 1974.
students, the seventy-five staff members were fully involved in designing their own programs, as there were no external examinations anticipated in 1975.697 While technical schools continued to attract large numbers, it was pointed out in a special feature in the January Shepparton News, that one of the greatest handicaps suffered by techs was their name - ‘technical’.698

The feature article drew on interviews with Ted Jackson and Jock Thomlinson. Titled Names can be confusing, the News claimed that the word ‘technical’ immediately conjured up ‘in the minds of those who have no first-hand knowledge of a modern Technical School ... the image that technical schools were for boys who were good with their hands’ - in other words, second rate.699 In contrast, Ted Jackson highlighted the fact that the modern secondary technical school curriculum was concerned with ‘two attractive options ... one leading to further education - the other leading directly to job opportunity’ 700

In the same News feature, Jock Thomlinson outlined the courses available at South Tech, with their underlying philosophy that ‘students should be able to see clearly why they need particular skills’.701 He challenged the readers to answer why ‘girls shouldn’t have some working knowledge of electricity in this age of gadgets’. Jock added that technical school students had a unique opportunity to benefit from the varied background of their teachers; some graduates and diplomates had strong academic backgrounds, others had industrial experience. Technical schools also differed from high schools in possessing fully equipped industrial workshops; South Tech in particular had a unique range of academic, artistic, musical and communications equipment. ‘Where does it all lead?’ asked the News. ‘At South Tech it is seen as the purpose of a technical school [to] help students discover their latent talents, and make a decision about the future based on actual experiences.’

I argue that South Tech’s purpose in helping individual students identify their aptitudes and abilities, and making life decisions based on actual experiences, is more educationally viable than the 1980s Labor Government discrimination policy and bias towards university education. In Chapter 7, I cite comments from an interview conducted with a former South Tech student, who claimed that ‘pushing a child into anything is not something that should be done ... it’s getting out of it what you want rather than streamlining children into academia, which I think is a really dangerous thing.’702

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697 Ibid.
699 Ibid.
700 Ibid.
701 Ibid.
In early 1974, the BITS arrived to carry out a full (final) inspection. The BITS role was changing due to social unrest, teacher union pressure and ‘pressures on the administration to liberalise some procedures’. Teacher assessment was carried out by request after 1974, school inspections were to be carried out biennially, and full inspections and reports alternated with advisory visits.

In David Holloway’s account of the Victorian state schools’ Inspectorate, Assistant Director of Technical Education (A/DTE), Noel Watkins, recalled ‘cordial relations’ between the union and the TSD. According to Watkins, ‘technical inspectors were never held with the awe that primary teachers used to hold the D.I.s’ [district inspectors]; he did not recall teachers walking out in the 1970s, as there was ‘no rancour as in the high schools’. Noel Watkins said that ‘the TSD administration was always close to teachers’, and that their common industrial background contributed to a mutual understanding.

Noel Watkins’ reflections are substantiated by former technical school principal, Betty Lawson. Lawson recalled that the Department ‘leaned over backwards to be helpful’ when the TTAV was inaugurated in 1967, and that ‘a lot of the inspectors joined the TTAV’. The TSD hierarchy was a ‘very intimate group of people’ that worked very well together. Lawson recalled that each school had a liaison inspector, who, on the principal’s invitation, would ‘come out and visit them and bolster up the school ... I suppose you would call it a “buddy” system’. This system had evolved, however, because ‘in the old days, they were pretty tough!’

They’d come around more or less trying to catch you out, but then they became far more user friendly. [laughs] Again there was a ... bit of ambivalence in the tech division because we rather liked our inspectors, most of us. Some didn’t, but most of the inspectors were there more to be helpful than to cut you down.

Lawson, who was also a former primary school teacher, compared the BITS with primary school district inspectors; in her opinion, a lot of primary inspectors ‘were funny old fuddy duddies who wanted to see if you had dusted the top of the cupboard or some other rubbish’.

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705 Ibid.
706 Ibid.
707 Ibid.
710 Ibid.
711 Ibid.
712 Ibid.
713 Ibid.
By contrast with the TTAV, according to Lawson, the VSTA (Victorian Secondary Teachers Association), ‘were against inspections and they would stage walk outs if the Board turned up in their schools’.\(^{714}\) Tech staff ‘didn’t like them very much’, but ‘didn’t want to do much about it’; [laughs] Lawson thought that ‘it was ambivalent, the whole thing’.\(^{715}\)

On 29 April 1974, seventeen inspectors arrived at South Tech on their annual pilgrimage to assess the school’s performance.\(^{716}\) The BIT’s thirty-one page report contained general comments, followed by detailed observations on every school department. The report delivered a bird’s eye view of day-to-day problems, and their management by school staff; it revealed evidence of entrenched attitudes that hindered - but did not arrest - program development.

Three decades later, John Kumnick recalled the anticipatory fears this inspection aroused - staff ‘sweated blood’ to find out if they would be allowed to go on. They wondered how the Inspectors would assess what the school was trying to achieve. ‘As it worked out, [BITS] found that all the academic stuff was being addressed very well, and we were way ahead of everyone in terms of non-academic stuff’.\(^{717}\) John described how educational rationales had been prepared to protect students from ‘idiosyncratic feel good stuff’; he maintained that school programs were principled, based on the best available information, and ‘where we couldn’t get information, we created it!’ John reflected on the seventeen inspectors who had come to ‘pick us apart’; to him the 1974 BITS Report and its contents remained, ‘as you can imagine, treasures’.\(^{718}\)

Inspector in Charge Bill Moore wrote a preamble, as well as comments on the school’s educational policy and an overall appraisal of the BITS findings in a general report preceding the individual school departmental reports. He commented that schools normally played a ‘considerable part in the evaluation and reporting for the inspection by performing their own evaluation and reporting some weeks prior to the visit of the Board’. However, Jock had requested that this procedure be varied, as the school ‘constantly and continuously evaluates its own performance’.\(^{719}\)

Bill Moore noted that, in lieu of this prior report, considerable printed material was provided, indicating that much thought had been given to ‘the preparation of the aims and objectives of the school as a whole and for each department in particular’. However, in this

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\(^{714}\) Ibid.

\(^{715}\) Ibid.

\(^{716}\) Council minutes, 19 February 1974.

\(^{717}\) JK, interview, 2002.

\(^{718}\) Ibid; 1974 BITS Report.

\(^{719}\) Ibid.
material, staff had not assessed or appraised their success in achieving their aims and objectives; while quantitative techniques were available, qualitative techniques to measure the success of intangible objectives were in their infancy. Therefore Moore said that ‘a part of the benefit to be gained from a full inspection was lost’. He indicated that evaluation needed to continue, with expert personnel ‘drawn from any of the many formal and informal areas of the education community’.

The BITS carried out their evaluation in terms of how South Tech defined its task in the Technical Schools Division 1974 Handbook: an ‘experimental co-educational school providing a range of secondary technical courses to Leaving Technical Certificate level’. A range of Form Four and Five course streams were offered, and the courses were ‘rapidly expanding to meet the needs for technical education in the area served’. Moore observed that the school administration was supported by an ‘effective and enthusiastic’ Council, who took part in overall operations, and that the staff were ‘well qualified and enthusiastic’. The visit was an an experience he found ‘fascinating’:

after close contact and observation of the students and staff of the school, these statements [on educational policy] took on a reality and meaningfulness that surely must indicate the school is in some degree achieving these objectives and that both staff and students are aware of this achievement.

Moore claimed that the school’s objective in giving teachers the ‘freedom and responsibility to develop professionally’ may well be the catalyst in the ‘successful implementation of the whole programme’.

Conversely, in the newer areas, such as the E Wing, evidence of vandalism was ‘surprising’ and ‘disappointing’. In the early 1970s, E Wing housed Home Economics, a Department which, Moore observed, lacked ‘senior and experienced staff’. As a result, he found that there was a ‘haphazard use of specialist rooms for other teaching areas’. At this time, a lack of experienced staff was noted in the Department’s own Annual Reports, as technical schools failed to attract senior female teachers.

Bill Moore’s observations on vandalism provide an opportunity to focus on how the

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720 Ibid.
721 Ibid.
722 Ibid.
724 Ibid.
726 Ibid, p.3.
727 Ibid, p.27.
staff dealt with some of the students’ more extreme antisocial activities. In the *Realities* project, technical school principals realised that a large percentage of their student population was composed of young people with special needs.\textsuperscript{729} The TTAV Field Officer, Don McKenzie, reported that both the Shepparton Technical College and South Tech needed ‘assistance from Psych Guidance to cope with the special needs of students’.\textsuperscript{730}

Jock reflected that South Tech’s students included ‘rough necks’; his supportive framework helped teachers cope with student behavioural problems, so they in turn could help those same students.\textsuperscript{731} Jock described the scene in his office when a ‘Turkish lady’ was ‘waving her arms and yelling out “kill the Aussie bastards”’. Her son ‘couldn’t keep his nose out of everybody else’s business. He wasn’t a bad kid, but he was always in trouble, because he would stick his nose into other peoples’ business and then they would tackle him’.

The school community experienced racial problems from time to time. Jock recalled that, periodically, ‘the Turks were fighting the Italians or the Greeks were fighting the Turks’, and their relatives would come to the school to ‘tackle those students who they felt had done them wrong’. Ron Dell’oro’s personal background qualified him to deal with such problems, so he was put in charge of the Student Information Centre. When other teachers and heads of departments failed to settle serious problems, students and/or their parents/relations were referred to him. According to Thomlinson, Dell’oro often had ‘his finger on the pulse’, and tried to defuse problems before they got out of hand.

Jock Thomlinson, like Emilio Fiorenza, recalled the nights held for ethnic parents. As ‘a card player of some note’, he jokingly suggested that the men play Besta in his office, and leave the women to discuss their children’s education. To his alarm, the suggestion was taken seriously.

As Jock explained, he stopped teachers using the strap, ‘because South Tech wasn’t a penal institution, it was a learning institution.’ He ‘modestly’ admitted that ‘when it got too much for everybody, I felt quite confident of being able to deal with the situation’. He cited two examples:

A boy who’d committed some sort of crime and everybody was after his blood, was sent to me. I sat down with him and told him that, within an organisation like the school, he couldn’t do what he did, because we couldn’t work. But the teachers were after my blood unless I dealt with him, and how we were going to do it? We worked out a method which was much more

\textsuperscript{730} JRT, interview, 2001. All quotes from Thomlinson in this section are from the 2001 interview.
onerous, or difficult than I would’ve given the boy, but he learnt something from it and we were all happy!

The second example, when Jock himself failed, amused the staff:

I got off my seat and went out [the young lady in question was in the front of the school] all steamed up to give her a learning experience that’d change her life. And all that happened was that she told me to perform functions that I was too old for, and certainly she wasn’t going to take any notice of me! It didn’t work, but we didn’t give up!

In 1974, the Ministry of Aboriginal Affairs, through the Technical Schools Association of Victoria Circular, was keen ‘to promote employment for Aboriginal people’ within Victorian Technical Schools. Funds ‘immediately available’ would enable a one hundred per cent subsidy of wages for employment opportunities in ‘any job which meets the needs of School Councils and Principals while fully satisfying qualification requirements’. Jock immediately employed six Kooris, together with resources for their training; the new employees assisted both Koori students and staff in solving problems, as he explained, ‘in a way that we couldn’t’.

In hindsight, in the 1970s the Federal Labor Government’s Secondary Grants Scheme to Kooris failed to address their human needs, perhaps retarding rather than promoting reconciliation. Funding sometimes fuelled, rather than ameliorated, antipathies within the community. This phenomenon was illustrated in a letter to the DTE from the principal of Watsonia Technical School who, following his visit to Gippsland, noted a ‘disturbing feature’ - ‘the strong antagonism from “poor whites” in area “b” to the Secondary Grants Scheme which can only be applied to Aboriginal students and is worth $400 - $600 a year’.

Despite these difficulties, the school’s philosophy in validating personal worth was demonstrated; a reversal in educational thinking as profound as, in Alec Clegg’s words, ‘when we ceased to laugh at lunatics or when we came to believe a hundred years ago that the labouring poor might after all be taught’. Jock recalled:

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732 VPRS 9516/P1, Unit 67, Type A1, Special File 279, Technical Education for Aboriginals; The Technical Schools’ Association of Victoria, Circular to Technical Schools’ Councils, 1974/No.5/August. C.H. Beanland, Hon Secretary.
733 VPRS 9516/P1.
735 VPRS 9516/P1; Correspondence to E.T. Jackson, Director General of Technical Education, Education Department, 480 Collins Street, Melbourne - from R.H. Keller, Principal, Watsonia Technical School, Nell Street, Watsonia, 3087; 8 April 1974.
We had a boy in Year 10, who probably could be declared illiterate. We gave him some film and an 8mm camera. He made a film based on the Beatle song called ‘Piggies’. It was so successful, and he was admired by his peers and the teachers, and lauded for the job he had done. He realised he had to make an enormous effort so that he could make use of this gift of visual perception beyond the norm, and he did achieve remarkably well. By the end of Year 11, he was a very literate person.  

We had an Aboriginal boy, who made some animated film on the life cycle of a moth. He made this really lovely piece of animated film, but he got bogged down with just saying “he et and he et and he et” because the moth was eating the leaf, and didn’t know what to say. But still it was just a lovely piece of work, and everybody admired it. It gave him confidence to go on and do other things. This was part of the school ethos.

An incident concerning a ‘little bloke who was a nuisance’ also illustrates the school’s philosophy in action. The boy’s class teacher called in sick. John Kumnick anticipated finding this unsupervised class in uproar:

This little bloke could never be at the right place at the right time and in a more rigid school, you’d have got cross with him, because: ‘Why aren’t you in class? Why aren’t you doing this?’

I went up and down that cookery wing - domestic science - and couldn’t find these kids! I started to get a bit worried; no noise! There should have been riots and banging, or whatever. I stuck my head in to what was the music room, and there was a film running. I pricked my head up: ‘I wonder if that’s the class?’ Yes, they were all sitting there watching a movie! I took one of the kids outside, and went outside the door, and said: ‘Where’s your teacher?’ He said: ‘We haven’t got one, JK.’

The illiterate boy who ‘always used to hang around the TV studio’, had observed how to thread up a 16mm projector. He had taken his mates into a room, threaded up a movie, and the class was quietly watching the film. John explained that, subsequently, ‘we took him off all other activities, put in him in the TV studio, and he went on to get a job at Channel 6 in Shepparton. And that was the magic of what we were doing’.

The BITS Report found ‘ample evidence of the school’s success in achieving its objectives’, which was ‘especially noticeable in the behaviour and attitudes of the older students in the school’. However, it was the opinion of the Board that objectives were not

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737 JRT, interview, 1996.
738 Ibid.
739 JK, interview, 2002.
740 Ibid.
741 BITS Report, 1974, p.3.
being achieved through the educational program.\textsuperscript{742} The scheme appeared ‘highly formalised’ and ‘alien to the spirit and atmosphere of informality and individuality which pervades the school’.\textsuperscript{743}

Bill Moore drew attention to matters of staff communication, school organisation and the timetable.\textsuperscript{744} Staffing in areas other than home economics was not a problem, although there was a need for more staff in all departments. An overview of humanities suggested there may be a ‘basic conflict between the intrinsic aims and activities of the school and the actual organization and timetabling’.\textsuperscript{745}

Achieving timetable flexibility was indeed a complex problem, as reducing previously established subjects’ time allocations also reduced their importance. For example, sex education was introduced initially within general studies, then tried out in physical education before Les Pomeroy claimed it belonged philosophically in humanities. Jock Thomlinson explained:

within the school you had entrenched subjects. If the students were at school for forty sessions, we’d receive teachers to take those forty sessions. To introduce a new subject, you had to take some time from entrenched subjects ... the more conservative [staff members were] allowed to adjust to the new programs.\textsuperscript{746}

Jock understood that conservative staff must be given time to adjust because:

within the framework of techs at that time, the principal could assume a great deal of power. But in saying that, unless it was acceptable, and people wanted to do it and work with it, it was going to be a failure. You can’t make people do something that is contrary to what they want to do, if you are going to be successful and educate kids.\textsuperscript{747}

Bill Moore completed his appraisal with some general comments justifying the school’s high reputation:

This school had earned a high reputation amongst its own community and amongst the education community in this State and beyond. Justifiably so, because of the emphasis it places on the development of each individual, often through real life situations; because of the importance it attaches to the involvement of parents and the wider community; and because of the

\textsuperscript{742} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{743} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{744} Ibid, pp.3,4.
\textsuperscript{745} Ibid, p.8.
\textsuperscript{746} JRT, interview, 1996.
\textsuperscript{747} Ibid.
development of courses in the newer technologies, e.g. printing, radio and television.\textsuperscript{748}

Some BITS members also visited local community groups such as Rotary.\textsuperscript{749} In an interview, a former inspector recalled:

the Inspectors always, or some of us did, talked with the community while we were there. I used to get out to a Rotary meeting and talk with a few people:

‘What do you do?’
‘I’ve just been up visiting Shepparton South’.
‘Oh, great school!’
And it was a great school!\textsuperscript{750}

The individual department reports contain specific comments on matters such as departmental functioning, accommodation, equipment, student safety and subject matter taught (both traditional and innovative). There were also suggestions for accessing further information (Curriculum and Guidance, other schools, subject standing committees, etc.), the nature of HOD leadership, staff attitudes and needs, suggestions for departments to work together to link educational experiences, and student attitude and competence.\textsuperscript{751}

The BITS report crystallised a number of tensions the school experienced because of conflicting staff attitudes, student diversity, and the pressures of introducing a student-focussed philosophy and curriculum and novel resources into a traditional technical school. South Tech’s geographical location, student composition, and perhaps also its optional school uniform, attracted strong proponents, and equally strong opponents. The BITS report implies that a majority of the departments worked within a relatively rigid timetable, and that change, while too slow for the innovators, was too fast for some.

In July 1974, the staff bulletin signalled a movement among the staff to take renewed responsibility in ‘decision-making and action’.\textsuperscript{752} It appears that twelve months following the 1973 in-service, the staff realised they had the ability and support to develop creative programs. In the bulletin, staff listed their reasons for the changes they planned to introduce: ‘(a) to meet changing conditions, (b) to make better use of the school’s resources, and (c) to give teachers experience in wider areas of responsibility’.\textsuperscript{753} The entire staff was encouraged to be involved in a ‘more specific program in language development’. It was hoped that resource utilisation would improve. Display boards were to be erected to facilitate staff

\textsuperscript{748} BITS Report, 1974, p.4.
\textsuperscript{749} Former BITS member, interview, 1997.
\textsuperscript{750} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{751} BITS Report, 1974, pp.5-31.
\textsuperscript{752} Recent changes, SSTS Staff bulletin, July 1974.
\textsuperscript{753} Ibid.
communication. Teacher aides were to be employed and trained. ‘Form level meetings were to discuss individual students, subjects and courses and problems’.  

New areas of responsibility were created. In response to the large number of school visitors, Jeff Anselmi was to organise and co-ordinate visits; the care of rooms and furniture came under the supervision of Graeme Campbell; Ray McDonald took the position of in-service co-ordinator; Kevin Lucas became HOD of Graphic Communications; a curriculum co-ordinator position was filled by former HOD Geoff McPherson. Laurie Frost was promoted to HOD Humanities; a student care committee was convened by the acting Vice Principal, Ruth Evans, and Brian Hardy became the Form One administrator. John Kumnick was appointed curriculum consultant.  

Kumnick recalled the emergence of his role as curriculum consultant:  

it was a huge gamble in my mind to step out of mainstream secondary schools to go to the techs. It was the most wonderful decision I ever made. I hadn’t made a lot of career decisions, and that was a conscious career decision. It was the making of me, because it addressed all the stuff I’d been fighting in the high schools to be allowed to do. It just smoothed the pathway to go and be amongst people who wanted to be doing the same sort of thing.  

Now: the role of curriculum consultant. What happened was that, the first two years, I was leader of a team of about eight or ten teachers who designed the curriculum as we went. We started on that principle of: ‘where are the kids? What are their needs? How do we organise our resources to address those?’  

We had that degree of flexibility and freedom, and I had such an advocacy role. It would seem that a lot of the work then became liaison with other staff, project management, to get the funding and submissions, writing up and documenting what we were doing and putting systems in place, negotiating with other parts of the school, and other staff, and keeping close liaison with Jock.  

Which meant that, after two years of really intense sort of work, he said: ‘I want you half time out of the classroom to help me with these sorts of things and, in those days, there was no way we could describe what that was, and we invented the title ‘curriculum consultant’. There was no such thing in the vernacular of the system.  

It was a way of really justifying and taking me out of the classroom, giving me some school time to do the work that just had to be squeezed in around classes, before. It was in that role that I got to work with Geoff McPherson, and with other people, to broaden the perspective, and look at it in a school-wide sort of attitude, rather than just Form One and Form Two.
That was the history of how I got to be curriculum consultant. It was so wonderfully flexible. There were no job descriptions, there were no constraints. It was just how much more can we do in the time available? [laughs] That was fine, because I loved it! I think the people there loved it, too. I think we were a bit of a threat to them, but they tolerated it.\textsuperscript{756}

As the curriculum consultant, John had a unique overview of what was happening in the school at that time:

there were strong streams. There was, naturally, the humanities group and the trade group, there was the traditional division, and mathematics. But what started to happen was fabulous communication between people. Because Jock, again, was an inspiration but each department serviced the school, and serviced the kids, so we didn’t just have a ‘Woodwork Department’.

The Woodwork Department made things that helped the school function, Woodwork Department made things that kids can use, Woodwork Department had to liaise with the Graphic Communication Department so that kids learnt how to draw things that they could make, but also understand in the process of drawing things there was an artistic component which meant they had to talk to the Art Department.\textsuperscript{757}

John reflected on how departments were stimulated in the effort to make education relevant:

colour, and shape, and relationship, and stuff became as important as the mechanical drawing. The English Department got involved and said: ‘Graphic communications really is about using symbols and non-verbal stuff to communicate with people.’ And so those barriers and boundaries started to get broken down.

A plumbing teacher became the Graphic Communication teacher, who became part of the General Studies group, who then had to look at how Maths impacted on Graphic Communication, and how it could be written into the Plumbing program. So whether you were taking Photography classes, or Home Economics classes, or \textit{any} class, you were looking at the total experience of kids ....

That necessitated lots of meetings, and communication, and debate, and frustration, and creating resources where no other resources existed. Having to go and network, and link outside the school, to look at where the best practice was, and what the front edge was thinking and doing. All of that sort of stuff because there really weren’t any hard trails: we had to create them as you were doing your job.\textsuperscript{758}

\textsuperscript{756} JK, interview, 2002.
\textsuperscript{757} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{758} Ibid.
A fresh trail was created in student welfare in 1974, when the Student Information Centre opened under the care of Ron Dell’Oro in November. The prominent philosophical and geographical position of South Tech’s Student Information Centre, staffed by rostered middle level students for students, registered absences, provided necessary follow up, handled all enquiries, and disseminated information. John Kumnick described the mindset in practice that elevated student welfare above ‘preordained’ external objectives:

We had a Student Office that was about ‘come to us anywhere, any time in the day when you’ve got a need that’s not being met through other means.’

They had a flow chart that showed you could go to your classroom teacher, your subject co-ordinator, a Vice Principal, a counsellor, the social biology teacher, the Resource Centre. Showed the kids all sorts of places they could go according to need, according to the availability, their compatibility with the person concerned. That’s what you do if you have a student-focussed, learning to live program as opposed to ‘you’ve got English at nine o’clock on Monday. Be there, or I’ll kill ya!’

But that requires a whole mindset that is different to: ‘Gosh, I’ve got to develop a university entrance program’ and that doesn’t allow for any deviation from a pathway that is preordained by people in another city, a lifetime away from Shepparton.

With enrolments continuing to rise, and the prospect of full autonomy in program design the following year, there was little awareness of threats to the existence of technical schools. At the conclusion of the 1974 school year, South Tech’s fortunes seemed to be on an upward curve. Although the General Studies program was to close by 1976, the influence of its philosophy on the school remained strong, in the links established between departments and in new programs, such as in the Year 12 program and social biology.

With the relocation of junior forms into the main school, the Terrapin became the graphic communication area in 1976. How John Kumnick’s general studies program operated before his appointment as curriculum consultant, as well as the background to the School’s Commission submission, and the development of graphic communications, will all be discussed in the next chapter.

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759 Council minutes, 19 November 1974.
761 JK, interview, 1996.
762 Past Images, pp.28,44.
Chapter 5: Innovational Curriculum

*Past Images* revealed that ‘the infamous Form One General Studies program was established in the Terrapin’ following the commencement of co-education at South Tech in 1971. During the school’s twenty-fifth anniversary, two former students commented on the program. Suzanne Jeffrey (Parry) recalled that:

> an interesting aspect of 1971 was the alternative style of education that we were involved in. This programme was called General Studies and we worked as a large group in the Terrapin Building. I did not like this open classroom style of learning but in retrospect I can see the need for trials on different teaching/learning settings.

John Kumnick reflected on a conversation with a young teacher, a former student: ‘Oh God, I’ve become a teacher, and I understand now what you guys were doing. It seems you were right!’

General studies was one focus of Jock Thomlinson’s 1972 address to the Technical Teachers College staff. Implementation of this program was to be thwarted by the ambivalence of ‘non-believers’, following the loss of his main ally, John Kumnick. The School Council minutes noted that John Kumnick visited South Tech in November 1972, and was appointed to co-ordinate general studies the following year. John recalled that students spent half their week engaged in self-directed assignment work in an open classroom environment.

In *Resourcing Australian Primary Schools*, Angus and Olney point out that since ‘early days’, state education department officials have had an ‘ambivalent attitude towards innovation and experimentation’. They recognised the need for ‘progressive pedagogies’ and alternative school organisation; however, ‘in the interests of efficiency and fairness they have felt obliged to treat schools uniformly’.

Angus and Olney claim that a window of opportunity for open plan schools occurred in Australian primary schools during the 1970s, after the 1967 British Plowden Report.

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763 Ibid, p.44.
766 Past Images, p.28.
768 Ibid, p.44.
legitimated child-centred pedagogies.\textsuperscript{769} Darvill noted that Alec Clegg’s submission to the Plowden Committee pointed out the importance of selecting ‘the right people to teach’ and their subsequent training for the teaching profession.\textsuperscript{770} Richard Titmuss’ work on the Welfare State, according to Darvill, resonated in education; if teachers perceived their role ‘solely in terms of \textit{subjects}, not \textit{youngsters} they, like doctors, ran the serious risk that many abilities were neither recognised nor developed’.\textsuperscript{771}

Australian education authorities recognised that many teachers would be either unwilling or unable to adopt informal teaching approaches, therefore they kept their options open utilising moveable partitions rather than open plan buildings.\textsuperscript{772} Their designs included facilities that provided for specialization, for example, practical areas and quiet rooms.\textsuperscript{773}

Angus and Olney listed reasons why open plan schools did not lead to additional resources. Firstly, design teams believed that eliminating fixed walls did not necessarily increase flexibility. Secondly, there were insufficient staff committed to the pedagogy, thus the emphasis on architectural flexibility rather than pedagogy failed both the educational conservatives and the progressives. Thus, in spite of official support, an opportunity for open plan schools to demonstrate a better quality primary education was lost.\textsuperscript{774} An early example, Brighton-le-Sands, which was under the patronage of NSW Director of Education Peter Board, attempted a different model in 1917. However, in the absence of Board’s personal interest the school languished, class sizes increased, and staff demanded recompense for extra effort.\textsuperscript{775} On Board’s resignation, his successor withdrew support and the experimental program in the school folded.\textsuperscript{776}

In many ways, the open plan attempt to break the mould [in the 1970s] went the way of Brighton-le-Sands. Setting aside the availability for central funding, the commitments of state departments and teacher unions to principles of uniformity and equity required them to resource primary schools according to enrolments and not design.\textsuperscript{777}

In the 1970s, secondary technical schools were not alone in attempting to teach in different ways. In Victoria, for example, La Trobe University joined forces with Collingwood High School to find ‘a suitable educational environment for working class migrant and native

\textsuperscript{769} Ibid, p.46.
\textsuperscript{771} Ibid, p.179.
\textsuperscript{772} Angus et al., \textit{Resourcing Australian Primary Schools}, 2002, p.47.
\textsuperscript{773} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{774} Ibid, p.48.
\textsuperscript{775} Ibid, pp.44-45.
\textsuperscript{776} Ibid, p.45.
\textsuperscript{777} Ibid, p.48.
Australian students’. From this partnership the Collingwood Community School emerged in the early 1970s. In her thesis on the Community School, Mary Kennedy argued that:

while some students benefited from a therapeutic, social curriculum, the school was prone to chaotic, ad hoc practices largely due to poorly thought out and conflicting philosophical positions of staff members, insufficient resources (including teachers) and the adoption of a liberal curriculum for working class students who were generally unacquainted with liberal theory.

I argue that, unlike Collingwood, technical schools - South Tech in particular - were well-resourced and well-staffed. South Tech’s programs were not chaotic, ad hoc or poorly thought out; staff’s conflicting philosophical positions were used to advantage, as teachers were challenged to defend their programs at meetings with each other, with School Council, with community groups, and in submissions to obtain funding for special projects such as media and music. Staff communication and unity was facilitated by the inter-school telephone system, the staff support structure, and - in common with other technical schools - a high commitment to student pastoral care.

South Tech Council minutes for 17 October 1972 record Jock Thomlinson’s general impressions of visits to Huntingdale Technical School, and Thomastown, Maryvale and Mooroolbark High Schools, all Victorian Education Department schools which were introducing open classrooms. He found the building trend was towards more open classroom facilities. Jock also observed that ‘staff must work harder in open classrooms and general studies than in [the] traditional set-up or [the] system breaks down’.

John Kumnick recalled in ‘graphic detail’ meeting Jock Thomlinson at the 1972 North Central Teachers’ Association Seminar in Bendigo. Jock claimed that ‘for a high school teacher’, John looked ‘like a tech school teacher’. John, a teacher at Eaglehawk High School, was using audiovisual equipment; he was ‘thinking about kids’ and ‘how to match teaching and kids and parents into something that was useful’. He commented that this was ‘fairly radical stuff at that time’.

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779 Ibid.
780 Ibid, p.5.
782 Council minutes, 17 October 1972.
783 JK, interview, 1996.
784 Ibid.
showed fifty or one hundred slides the kids had put together explaining the Humanities program that we were doing at Eaglehawk High School. There was this funny man in the front row, scribbling on the back of a very tiny piece of paper, which turned out to be a bookies’ ticket, and that was Jock Thomlinson, I found out afterwards. He stood up after me and described what he was doing in tech education. Over coffee, he came up to me afterwards and said: ‘you should be working in tech schools, not high schools. Come to Shepparton and work for me and I’ll get you a job’. He said: ‘If you come, I’ll give you promotion, I’ll give you first pick of the staff, I’ll give you dedicated rooms, I’ll give you a budget. Anything else you want. Come to Shepparton’.  

John did not take the offer seriously, because: ‘in those days it was a tight arsed system and there was no way in the world that anyone could do all this wonderful, mysterious stuff’. Jock rang some time later and said ‘you haven’t been over to see me yet! What’s the matter with you?’ John said: ‘Were you serious?’ In November 1972, John visited the school to discuss his appointment, and was indeed recruited to the school, even though he ‘didn’t believe that anyone could do what he said he was going to do. He [Jock] delivered on everything, chapter and verse’. Recalling Brian Matthews promotion into the secondary division, it is not difficult to understand John’s feelings on leaving the secondary division to teach in a tech:

I had to consciously take a deep breath when I took the leap of faith into the Tech Division, because, yes, there was a perception that that was the other stream for the dummies. ‘If you couldn’t do it with your head, you did it with your hands’, all that sort of stuff. Yes, that was the arrogance of the high school system, and, of course, an uninformed arrogance.

In February 1973, South Tech School Council approved spending approximately $10,000 around E Wing and the Terrapin, concurrent with John Kumnick taking up his appointment. John planned a general studies program which aimed ‘to provide a student-focussed development program rather than a straightjacket curriculum that was designed by somebody else in another place for other sorts of people’. John and his team negotiated Form One students’ individual programs: each program consisted of timetabled activities in regular classes and non-timetabled activities, where students could work in ‘library, maths lab, remedial work ... drama workshop ... radio, photography, communications’. Feeder schools were asked to furnish information about children’s literacy and numeracy skills so that, in Jock’s opinion:

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785 Ibid.
786 Ibid.
789 Council minutes, 21 November 1972; JK, interview, 1996.
790 JRT, Audiotape, 1972.
instead of asking them to do something that [the children] are incapable of, teachers find out what their level is and start helping them ... we show the kids early on what the school is capable of. We try and give them as much experience as possible and then, they can go about making choices and keep changing right up, as far as they can go.\textsuperscript{791}

Jock and John were in agreement that the problems and mental health of students were a primary concern; general studies provided a relaxed environment where staff communicated informally with their students. This accorded with Jock’s belief that:

the greatest single job a teacher has to do is to talk to kids when kids need to talk to teachers. And that’s what I mean about mental health; if they’ve got problems, they’ve got to have access to adults.\textsuperscript{792}

John’s Year 7 program was integrated and developmental, and based on practical rather than theoretical studies.\textsuperscript{793} The program started with: ‘who am I? Where am I going? What is my life about?’ Thus social biology developed as a natural consequence.

In general studies classes, young people mostly addressed teachers by first names or initials; John Kumnick was ‘JK’ - ‘they didn’t call me “Sir”’.\textsuperscript{794} This informal address code was also adopted by some staff in departments other than general studies. As John indicated, informality was an essential ingredient to encourage the children to focus on themselves and their own development - ‘my body, my family, my life, my future’.\textsuperscript{795}

Encouraging youngsters to focus on themselves and their immediate circle demands that general studies teachers differ from their more traditional peers. They themselves need to undergo a profound change in their relationship with youngsters and their fellow teachers. Traditional learning areas are structured in accordance with the hypothesis that all youngsters want to learn, and all teachers want to teach. The general studies environment tests this hypothesis, leaving the youngsters and the teacher facing each other as people: all learners in a continually changing context.

At South Tech general studies teachers graded their students alphabetically; however, their reports also included descriptive notes focussing on effort and success. This influenced other departments to include descriptive reports. Student files included notes on progress, future plans, program adjustment, ‘their social needs rather than their educational needs’, and

\textsuperscript{791} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{792} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{793} JK, interview, 1996.
\textsuperscript{794} JK, interview, 2002.
\textsuperscript{795} JK, interview, 1996.
health problems. Evaluations were detailed and qualitative, as John Kumnick recalled:

we had several ways [of evaluating the program and student progress]. First of all, there was the anecdotal stuff. Just heartfelt thanks from parents. The kids’ gratitude, the sense of job satisfaction that the teachers gained. The awe in which we were held by people who came in bus loads to see what we were doing and try and understand.

Then, you had some tangible, symptomatic stuff, which was like the level of grants and funding and support that we were given, from teacher organisations, from the Schools Commission, from government, from Sony. All sorts of people wanted to support in very tangible ways what we were doing.

There were teachers applying to come there, there was demand to be at our school, whereas the country was not a popular destination for anyone. There were teachers coming to visit to find out, asking for documents, and asking how they could get to South Tech - tangible evidence!

Then we actually used to have very careful tracking mechanisms to monitor each kid in their progress. They used to have - still probably have got - files of kids, where we’d sit and we’d talk about their progress, we’d talk about their needs, we’d talk about where their next steps were, how we could adjust programs, whether they needed to spend time with you [Lesley Preston] to look at their social needs rather than their educational needs, or whether they had health needs.

We actually had records, and they were individual records. They weren’t ‘seven out of ten’, it was ‘Jennifer is doing extremely well in the mathematics, is coping with these concepts, but needs more work in these areas’. That then was the trigger for - imagine if we had a computer, now - in those days, that could have been distributed easily and quickly - we had to do it by paper systems, but they were flexible paper systems that were kid-focussed and teacher-centric rather than bureaucratic and numeric.

Then you’ve got the kids who did successful things, who went on to higher education, who went on to jobs, who went on to live in their communities: productive and effective citizens.

You’ve got teachers who still celebrate the joy of working under those circumstances. Whenever we get together, we have profound memories. We have affectionate memories. That’s the thing, it was affectionate, we loved the kids, we loved working there, and yes, there were irritations!796

John also described some of the difficulties:

It was not bloody ‘over the rainbow’ stuff. It was hard work! There were strong disagreements about direction and policy, and whether you should discipline kids, and how to discipline kids. The demands - yes, we put in lots

796 JK, interview, 2002.
of extra hours, but at the end of the day, I don’t think too many people would say it was not a good place, or a waste of time and effort. Anything but.

In spite of the ‘strong disagreements’, general studies had an osmotic effect; its philosophy influenced attitudes and practices in other school departments. For example, Lee Cronk described what happened in music:

it gave the children something as a recreational thing. They weren’t compelled to come and learn the instruments. The ones who did were very enthusiastic. The written part - you really had to have a certain amount of competition or aim for them to do anything at all. Amongst other things, I used to try to organise a sense of achievement when they would have a word-building competition out of the letters of the lines and spaces.

*It was linked in with other areas, like literacy?*

I suppose it did. Then they had that time of general studies. I don’t know what the main things would have been. I suppose materials used in building instruments.

*What did they do in that Unit?*

That was the case of linking one certain thing to almost every subject that they were learning. I think, as far as I was concerned in Music, it was finding out what was needed to make, say, a piano. You needed wood and you needed steel and you needed wire, you needed felt. All sorts of things.

I used to be up all hours of the night doing books. They used to be marked according to their effort in my class and I had a lot of A’s. They’d come and thank me for giving them an A. Well, it was from the effort they put into their work. Not that they were marvellous musicians, it wasn’t that at all, because they had done the work I’d asked them to do.

According to those involved, the school philosophy didn’t aim for the kids to be ‘marvellous musicians’; South Tech’s aim was to give young people positive learning experiences to enhance their self-worth and self-respect, and identify their aptitudes and abilities.

Nevertheless, participants attending a combined Staff-Council meeting held in February 1976 identified undercurrents suggesting that some of the visible symbols of South Tech’s open classroom were impacting negatively on Form One enrolments. At Summerhill, student-teacher informality and the lack of a visible classroom structure were interpreted as a lack of discipline, respect and standards. During 1973-75, at the expense of the general studies program, Thomlinson elicited John Kumnick’s involvement in the media project, and created the position of curriculum consultant within the school. Rather than limiting John to

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797 Ibid.
the junior curriculum, Jock placed John in a position where he could influence the entire school curriculum. The general studies approach is evident in programs including social biology and South Tech’s student-teacher negotiated Year 12 Secondary Technical Certificate in the 1980s. However, the 1974 school staff duties’ reallocations resulted in Kumnick’s transfer from general studies to the new position of school curriculum consultant. By 1976 the general studies program was terminated, and students were relocated into mainstream activities; thus the open classroom met the same fate as its ancestor, Brighton-le-Sands.

The Victorian State Liberal Government’s support for research into alternative learning styles received an added impetus when Labor won the 1972 Federal election. Prime Minister Gough Whitlam appointed Peter Karmel to chair an Interim Committee for the Australian Schools Commission. The eleven member committee included the Victorian Director of Technical Education, Ted Jackson, and Jean Blackburn, who later chaired the 1985 Ministerial Review of Postcompulsory Schooling. The Committee’s terms of reference required them to examine the position of Australian government and non-government primary and secondary schools. They were authorised to make recommendations on the schools’ immediate financial needs and the priorities within those needs, with respect to diversity of curricula to meet differing students aptitudes and interests, and to determine appropriate measures of assistance. In their May 1973 Report, the Karmel Committee claimed that they had taken into account the Australian Government’s existing assistance programs.

The Karmel Committee presented their interim report under three main headings: Background, Programs and Administration. They claimed that devolution of responsibility, equality, diversity, and community involvement informed the values and perspectives inherent in their report and its subsequent funding recommendations. In the 1980s, the Victorian State Labor government laid claim to similar values. I suggest that their interpretation of these values, reflected in the Blackburn Committee’s (unfunded) recommendations, ignored progress achieved, restricted diversity by eliminating the dual system in favour of one homogenised system of education, disadvantaged academic underachievers, and overemphasised the role schools play as agents of equality.

In contrast, the Karmel Committee recognised that, while they were able to influence

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798 Council minutes, 3, 5 May 1988.
801 Schools in Australia, 1973, p.3.
the quality of the ‘sometimes overestimated’ effects of school educational experiences through recommendations for financial assistance, they could not change the wider societal influences on children.\textsuperscript{802} They pointed out that the quality of the pupil-teacher relationship may have more lasting significance than skill acquisition.\textsuperscript{803} The Committee expressed the opinion that the most important values generated by schools could not be ‘purchased with money’: school democracy required ‘an acceptance of rational authority’, and a ‘consideration of alternatives, a willingness to participate, and an ability to transcend personal interest for the common good’.\textsuperscript{804}

Nevertheless the Karmel Committee argued that the limited role played by schools did not imply that efforts to make schools more effective were futile, nor were limited ‘quantifiable cognitive gains’ a cause for concern in the short term.\textsuperscript{805} The Karmel Committee claimed that funding would be justified if children’s school experience was ‘lived in pleasant surroundings in a satisfying community’ and in program activities meaningful in themselves, if not relevant to later work or education.\textsuperscript{806}

The Karmel Committee adopted two fundamental emphases: ‘quality and equality’; and their concern for quality was the prime justification for the proposed special projects program.\textsuperscript{807} It was pointed out that ‘physically and psychologically impoverished conditions’ caused the abandonment of promising teaching and learning prototypes.\textsuperscript{808} Therefore, funding was proposed to support ‘school level projects of an innovatory kind or with implications for change’.\textsuperscript{809} The Committee claimed that it would be both ‘unfair and unrealistic to expect immediate pay-offs from all projects’, and highlighted the distorting effects of premature evaluation.\textsuperscript{810}

Nevertheless, continued appraisal and progress reports were expected; the main outcomes anticipated were improved staff stability, heightened teacher morale, improved bonding between schools and their communities, and liaison between the government and non-government schooling sectors.\textsuperscript{811} The Committee endorsed the emergence of ‘unconventional progressive schools’ that gave the promise of ‘educational freedom’.\textsuperscript{812}

\textsuperscript{802} Ibid, p.48.  
\textsuperscript{803} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{804} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{805} Ibid, p.94.  
\textsuperscript{806} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{807} Ibid, p.126.  
\textsuperscript{808} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{809} Ibid, p.128.  
\textsuperscript{810} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{811} Ibid.  
\textsuperscript{812} Ibid.
In addition to the existing Commonwealth funding commitments, the Karmel Committee recommended the establishment of a $6,000,000 Special Projects Fund to be administered by the Schools Commission, on the advice of a Special Projects Committee, during 1974-75. This fund aimed to support projects promoting change at school, systemic and national levels.\textsuperscript{813} Chaired by a full-time member of the Commission, it was proposed that the Special Projects Committee be assisted by ‘consultants located strategically across the country’. Apparently on the basis of the South Tech submission, Jock Thomlinson was subsequently appointed a consultant in the GNER.

South Tech was one of the first Victorian schools to be awarded financial assistance from the Special Projects Fund, which was won on the basis that the school had demonstrated they were ‘improving the quality of existing school provision’ and promoting ‘increased and equal opportunities’.\textsuperscript{814} Their entry in the 1975 Innovations Program Directory indicated that their project proposed to:

greatly extend the use of television in the school, so that teachers can concentrate on diagnosing students’ problems, providing personal contact, counselling, working with small groups and individualising instruction. Once extended, the television project would make its resources available to the community. Within the school, production of materials is carried out by students; regional teachers are trained to use the resources of their own schools to the fullest advantage; and through these activities a basis may be laid for television education throughout the State.\textsuperscript{815}

South Tech’s successful submission was to bring the school into direct conflict with the Regional and District Offices who, in the later 1970s, claimed a role as teacher training centres.

John Kumnick recalled that South Tech’s submission included the purchase of ‘a mobile unit and all the things schools couldn’t afford to buy to go with that’.\textsuperscript{816} The submission also outlined a six phase program to extend their established programs, which culminated in the media complex mentioned above to serve the region.\textsuperscript{817} John recalled:

It was outrageous in the sense that other people were applying for three thousand, five thousand, and we went for the top shelf. We said: ‘hey, give us

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a decent amount of money and we could do something really significant with it’. And we did!  

The submission pointed out that the first three phases had been accomplished, that is, the ‘pioneering work with media in education’ in 1969 to 1971: short wave radio, A.M. radio transmission, printing, film, animated film, cassette tape recording, language laboratories and photography. The second phase, in 1972-73, included the beginning of educational television, with a video camera, a videotape recorder, closed circuit TV to classrooms, off-air recording and simple video production, all of which had been funded by the Mothers Club. Phase three, in 1973-74, enabled the students to work on technically sophisticated productions, and had been facilitated by School Council funding at a cost of $10,000. Phase four, in 1974-75, requested $28,557 from the Special Projects Fund to further develop an ‘internal expansion program allied with the initial phase of regional service’. This program would: expand internal video production to involve all students; increase community access for regional teachers; develop media in-service training courses, and provide a limited TV service facility for all schools in the region.  

The guidelines for the submission called for the school to link their philosophy and objectives, and explain how the students would benefit from the media complex. John Kumnick recalled their development with evident passion:  

we created an alternative pathway that still provided access to university education. That same school that I’m describing, that started with student-focused growing up philosophy of education produced the first Aboriginal female lawyer in Australia … Now, how laterally different to a standard one-size-fits-all education could it be? … We had Aboriginal kids, we had kids with disabilities, with learning difficulties, we had misfits, we had kids from every non-conforming part of the community given a second chance in a school that said: ‘every kid could be good at something. Find out what it is and build on it’.  

That was the school philosophy. Which is very different from: ‘you need Maths I, Maths II, Physics, Chemistry, English, and a language to go to Melbourne University. Now, get ready for it kid, because that’s what we’re going to do for the next six years!’  

South Tech’s philosophy and objectives were first fully formulated in 1974 to satisfy the submission guidelines, and are reproduced in the appendix.

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819 Submission to the School’s Commission; Educational Magazine, 1975, pp.21-23.
821 JK, interview, 1996.
Later that year, the school received $30,500 from the Schools Commission. Following Jock Thomlinson’s appointment as a consultant for the Schools Commission’s Special Projects Committee, John Kumnick became his assistant:

Jock became a consultant with the Schools Commission where he had to receive and assess submissions for funding from other schools, and I went along as his bag man, his pencil man. I had to write up all the reports. Jock did the work, I was the chauffeur and the pencil!

We went and had a look at other schools to assist them. Either rewriting or reshaping, or smoothing the way for their submissions to be funded, or, in some cases, to pull the plug, because they were just totally beyond belief!

In his own school, Jock augmented the Schools Commission funding by approaching individuals and firms, many of whom ‘backed him’ - including the Australian Manager of Sony. John Kumnick recalled how it happened:

The school made those commitments but that was a fraction of the time that was required. So the school was generous. It made allowance for us to do those things, but we had meetings at nights, we had meetings at weekends, we had meetings before school, we had meetings after school. We were given no allowances, we were given no extra pay. There was no industrial issue. It was about: ‘let’s do the best that we’re able to do, within the resources. And if we don’t have the resources we’ll go and find the resources’.

I got to school one morning and Jock said:
‘You need to be in Sydney tomorrow, don’t you?’
‘What?’
‘You need to be in Sydney tomorrow’.
‘Oh. Do I?’
‘Yes! You need to be talking to the Australian Manager of Sony’.
‘Oh, yes! Of course! And what am I going to be talking about?’
‘Well, have a look at these photographs that the photographic department and the kids have taken’.
And it showed a whole bunch of kids using Sony equipment. He said: ‘wouldn’t you think that they’d be interested in seeing that?’

I flew to Sydney the next day. The General Manager of Sony said: ‘what do you want?’
‘My Principal said you’d be interested to have a look at this’.
He had a look at the photographs and he said:
‘They’re all using Sony equipment’.

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824 JK, interview, 2002.
‘That’s what I noticed, too’.
‘What can I do for you?’
‘We’re about to build a TV studio’.
‘Good! I want the first television equipment every one of those kids handles to be Sony equipment. You tell me what your specifications are’.

Now, that’s not sitting back and waiting for a government handout! That’s not one-size-fits-all! That is saying, ‘we have a vision. We have a mission. We’ll go and get the resources we need to make that vision a reality!’

Jock Thomlinson advised the School Council in July 1976 that Sony had provided a portable recorder and colour camera. By the end of August, the school would have a fully equipped colour television studio. In the 1970s, the school made extensive use of its video facilities, and played a role in regional and state wide communications. Indeed, audiovisual communication became one of South Tech’s cornerstones, employed in day-to-day activities and special events. For example, on 8 July 1976, students and staff videotaped an interview with Deputy Director-General of Education, Dr Tom Moore, for use in schools throughout the GNER. The Regional Director of Education, Jeff Dunstan, pointed out the impossibility of Tom Moore being able to visit many of the Region’s hundred schools. However, South Tech’s tape was ‘an ideal way to spread the benefits of such a visit to a region’.

In an executive memorandum, Chief Manager M.K. Collins claimed that Minister Kirner’s 1989 videotaped speech to post-primary principals at Brunswick Technical School was the ‘first time a Minister had used the video medium to communicate directly with schools’. While Collins is possibly technically correct, South Tech’s development of audiovisual techniques as a means of communication was brought to parliamentarians’ notice by Education Minister Thompson almost two decades earlier.

Collins’ claim illustrates some recurring themes emerging from these reflections on Victorian technical education, and South Tech in particular. Firstly, the Chief Manager’s unawareness or dismissal of the Education Department’s media communications heritage prior to Minister Kirner’s 1989 debut supports the Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) premise that the Blackburn Report had ‘unwisely ignored’ Victorian schools’ progress and achievements. Secondly, Minister Kirner herself belatedly verified that media education was ‘the way of the future’, certainly as a political tool, if not as a State and

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825 JRT, interview, 2000; JK, interview, 1996.
826 Council minutes, 20 July 1976.
827 Shepparton News, 9 July 1976, p.3.
828 Ibid.
830 Ibid.; L.Thompson, Victorian Legislative Assembly, April 1972, p.5616.
National educational facility as supported by the State Liberal and Labor Federal
governments in the 1970s.

As VCOSS suggested, it appears that some Victorian schools’ achievements were
ignored. Secondary technical schools had evolved with a firm theory and practice basis, but
models had to work. Unlike the Collingwood Community School, South Tech was
administered by a strong leader with clearly thought out practices; his philosophical position
was embraced by sufficient staff who worked with what one commentator described as the
‘stunning range of technical equipment and subject options’.  

Jock Thomlinson was accountable to, and his programs monitored by, students,
parents, staff, the School Council, the union, the TSD, and the community. The school’s
philosophy did not arise from an external imperative, such as finding a ‘suitable educational
environment’ for working class migrant and native Australians. Some staff, including those
of ethnic and Koori origin, were themselves working class, and affirmed working class
values. Within a relatively inflexible timetable, practices were not ad hoc; traditional subjects
were linked with new programs such as media education.

Nevertheless, introducing media, linking traditionally separated areas and formulating
an integrated curriculum was achieved at a cost. John Kumnick’s curriculum consultancy role
left the general studies program bereft of a co-ordinator dedicated to open classroom ideals.
Councillor Lorraine Sinclair revealed the problems in a report to Council in October 1975.
Jock Thomlinson, unable to find a co-ordinator dedicated to general studies, relinquished this
program. He indicated at this Council meeting that, with the relocation of Forms One and
Two within the main body of the school, the Terrapin was to be redeployed as a graphics
area.

Jock’s rationale for introducing graphic communication, quoted verbatim from his
2000 interview, illustrates his philosophic approach to curriculum development in three
ways. Firstly, in the transformation of a traditional subject into an innovative program;
secondly, in his enthusiastic support and promotion of innovations suggested by junior staff
without significantly upsetting those in more senior positions; and thirdly, in his networking
with specialists, Jock explained how the solid geometry subject, unique to technical schools,
which encouraged students to understand and draw plans such as the design of their own
homes, became graphic communication. In his opinion, graphic communication was
essential, as he explained:

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832 Council minutes, 21 October 1975.
The way we ran the school, and graphics is an excellent example of this, the head of the woodwork department who was also our sportsmaster, was the brightest of the trade teachers, and I needed him to do the graphics - so he became conscripted!

He didn’t see at this stage that it was vitally important. And he was doing an excellent job as head of the woodwork, and as sportsmaster. By putting him into the graphics and providing him with assistance, i.e. we would arrange meetings with the art department and the graphics, to talk about where you could go and what you could do. We brought up the experts in Victoria, from the Victorian schools, to talk to our graphics people.

By and large, we had to develop the talents that they had, to work out their courses. And they could only do what they knew and understood. By providing all the sort of background that we did, it enabled them to work on a level that previously they wouldn’t have been able to work at.

We did that throughout the school. We replaced the teacher doing solid geometry, and we called it graphics. Because it was much wider and broader than the old subject, which was one of the ways that we had to go with another head of the woodwork department.

As time went on, that head of the woodwork department was a senior teacher. We had, in the woodwork department, a very vigorous, far-sighted member of that department, who was chaffing under the bit because the head of department didn’t understand the development that could take place.

We promoted the head of the department sideways, and made the person there that had the ideas head of department, so that that department could develop in the same way. We did that in the business studies, the senior teacher there wasn’t head of department but worked in the department and we tried as far as possible to get those people with ideas and ability to run the works while at the same time ensuring that those people that had been moved were moved in such a way that they were still positive and prepared to work within the framework of the school.833

Ray McDonald, a foundation member of the original Showgrounds school staff, recalled his experience from the early 1970s until the late 1980s. In the mid-1960s, Ray was the ‘woodwork teacher and sportsmaster and solid geometry teacher combined’, who had no materials and who approached Shepparton Preserving Company (SPC) ‘about wood to use for our woodwork’.834

Ray claimed that, in the early 1970s, Jock Thomlinson became very interested in graphic communication. Ray became involved in its development with Peter Hogg from Footscray, who Ray described as both a ‘genius before his time’ and ‘educationally well

834 RMcD, interview, 2000. All quotes in this section are from the same interview.
ahead of his time’. In Ray’s opinion, Peter Hogg believed that the graphic programs could be ‘geared into all subject areas. He wanted to use the graphic skills, and the symbols and so on, in a lot of the language programs’.

Following the establishment of South Tech’s television studio, ‘we [Ray and Peter Hogg] started making television programs at the school about graphics’. Ray also conducted night classes for local teachers: ‘I developed training courses for all the local teachers because graphic communication was a new skill, following on from the old technical education, with tech drawing’. Ray trained about sixty teachers at South Tech:

people drove from Wangaratta, Benalla, Seymour, Euroa, Kyabram, Numurkah -where else? Even from Bendigo! We even had nuns who came from the convents, because they wanted to introduce the graphic programs we were working into their schools. And they became common in the Catholic schools as well as in the tech schools.

During the 1970s, graphic communication became an important subject - until, in the late 70s, its importance diminished: ‘it began to slowly fade away again, much the same as the technical drawing courses had earlier’. Perhaps this was a symptom of the pressures that were diverting teachers’ attention in the years after 1973.

After participating in an exchange program in Zimbabwe at the end of 1980, Ray continued the teacher training graphic programs developed by Peter Hogg and himself. He reflected that:

It was interesting to see that most of the teachers would come to see the way that we were doing it. They were trying to teach Graphics in a formal way, the way that technical drawing had been taught, whereas we were introducing it in more of a communication mode, where the students were developing ideas, and we were playing on their ideas, to take them as far as they could possibly go.

Some of the students’ skills developed so quickly, that some of them even became almost commercial artists in the time that they were in junior school! It was wonderful to see how they could apply those skills in everyday situations. And we were doing planning for woodwork models, for the woodwork department, planning for the turning and fitting shop, any projects that they wanted. We would develop in the graphic programs, before they went across to the other trade areas, completely. It was amazing, the number of people who did come in through the Victorian systems just to see South Technical School education system being operated.

The new learning areas - general studies, graphic communication and media - were catalysed by the 1973 in-service, and staff were encouraged by the BITS inspection; grass-roots discussions linked programs which employed the ‘service subjects’ as a means to a practical
The school council minutes reveal that staff, councillors and other significant people became heavily involved in meetings during 1975. The scheduled meetings operating in the school were listed in a report to the March 1975 School Council: the Executive Committee met weekly to oversee school programs; regular departmental meetings monitored the day-to-day activities and in-service; form level teachers met to plan programs; form level coordinators met to monitor student progress and liaise with the vice-principal; the television studio staff conducted staff in-service courses several times throughout the year, in addition to their regular student classes; new staff met fortnightly to learn about the school’s philosophy and its application through the use of resources. Heads of departments met as required to monitor the day-to-day operation of their departments; information was disseminated, and special school-wide events were discussed at weekly staff meetings.\textsuperscript{835}

Local people with specialised skills were seconded to work with staff; for example, a paediatrician was involved in discussions on learning difficulties.\textsuperscript{836} A fortnightly learning difficulties In-service aimed to help staff understand how the school’s resources such as the television studio could be used to kindle young people’s desire to learn. The studio also attracted visitors such as Alan Watt from Preston Technical College and Dr Helen Ferguson from Shepparton.\textsuperscript{837}

In his report to Council in June 1975, Jock brought to their notice the success of his three recent visits, to the BITS, the TTAV, and the Curriculum and Research Branch ‘to show and discuss “The Challenge of Television” videotape’.\textsuperscript{838} The school’s television crew had been commissioned to make a videotape of Laverton North Primary School’s language program for visiting American lecturer, Dr Daniels; this tape was to be augmented by a series of tapes on Daniels’ subsequent lectures.\textsuperscript{839}

At the Council meeting detailed discussion concerning the function of SSTV followed Jock’s explanation of the school’s philosophy and objectives, the role of the school in society and ‘The Challenge of Television’.\textsuperscript{840} Jock commented on the already ‘tremendous’ impact of television in the school as a facility to promote learning. However, he argued that ‘the full potential of the TV facility at SSTS depended on the involvement and co-operation of the

\textsuperscript{835} Council minutes, 18 March 1975.
\textsuperscript{836} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{837} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{838} Council minutes, 17 June 1975.
\textsuperscript{839} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{840} Ibid.
whole Education Department’ - important factors outside his sphere of influence.\textsuperscript{841}

While it is unclear if Jock realised it at the time, with the benefit of hindsight it is clear that wider involvement and co-operation was not forthcoming; factors such as the effects of regionalisation, DTE Ted Jackson’s illness and subsequent death in July 1975, and the administrative problems concerning the Technical and Further Education (TAFE) component had an influence on the school.\textsuperscript{842} The previously united and supportive TSD was thus stressed and splintering. However, at the June Council meeting, before the Executive Officer’s report, Jock explained changes in the school’s administration, such as the formation of the Executive Committee, and it was agreed that Council should meet with this Committee to further Council/School relations.\textsuperscript{843}

The teachers’ Executive Committee officer gave an optimistic report to the report to Council, indicating that the school’s operation was ‘very good’, the staff communication was ‘good’, the ‘revised method of administration was excellent’, and there was a ‘growing awareness of student needs among teachers’. A new program to cater for ‘students with special needs, including exceptionally bright or talented students’ was in place.\textsuperscript{844} John Kumnick recalled that the:

exceptional students program was for anyone who for any reason deviates from the norm - is an exceptional student. We didn’t define it as being better or worse or good or bad. It was just simply if you had a criminal record, remediation issues, particular interests and aptitudes, language issues, racial issues, any sort of physical disability - you were an exceptional student. You broke out of the norm ... They each had a mentor - a staff mentor for each exceptional student. They had to track and monitor and work with and respond to exceptional needs that the exceptional student represented. They used to get together and talk about what it meant to be exceptional. They used to set themselves exceptional programs that responded to exceptional needs.\textsuperscript{845}

District Inspector Berry attended the July Council meeting as an observer. Following G. McPherson’s outline of the Executive Committee’s functions, and Peter Vibert’s explanation of the role of the School Council, the main curriculum areas were presented for discussion. John Kumnick outlined four options for developing the school’s television facility: to continue giving students a media experience within the school; to move into commercial production; for regional use; and for the production of ‘instructional tapes for use in the classroom at South Tech and for wider distribution’. This latter area he described as

\textsuperscript{841} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{842} Johnson, \textit{The Final Twenty Years}, 1993, pp.39-41.
\textsuperscript{843} Council minutes, 17 June 1975.
\textsuperscript{844} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{845} JK, interview, 1996.
'basically untouched’, although social biology tapes were produced for distribution throughout Victoria by the early 1980s.\textsuperscript{846}

The options were discussed in terms of the need for a ‘greater commitment of finance and staffing from [the] Education Department’.\textsuperscript{847} Council agreed that the facility should not be limited to South Tech; at least regional use was proposed. It was pointed out that, should the current trained staff leave the school, back-up staff should be available.\textsuperscript{848} Councillors decided to develop the area with ‘caution’. John’s four options emphasised that the main purpose of the television facility was to ultimately benefit South Tech students, both through the programs that they produced and their actual experience with the medium.\textsuperscript{849}

A report was presented on the school’s developments in working with the literacy problems experienced by a majority of students. Many Form One students were ‘up to four years below their reading age’, which was consistent with other technical and high schools, in the DI’s opinion. He also suggested that there was ‘a need to develop a continuing approach with students moving from Primary to Secondary School’, and ‘greater liaison and communication between the two levels’.\textsuperscript{850} Several councillors expressed the employers’ view that, on entering the workforce, many young people were unable to ‘express themselves in a clear and acceptable manner’.\textsuperscript{851}

The School Council decided to survey former students to discover their fate on leaving school. This survey would serve two main purposes: firstly, it would suggest initiatives that could be employed with present students and thus guide program development; secondly, it would stimulate discussion on a new spectrum of practical experiences, to develop students’ self-confidence and language skills. Council observed that it was ‘being more clearly seen just how valuable the practical areas can be in developing language skills, particularly orally’.\textsuperscript{852}

The Shepparton \textit{News} reported the school’s new organisation.\textsuperscript{853} Jock was reported as saying that the school was ‘running a more democratic system and involving a lot more people’; he cited the teachers’ Executive Committee, which assisted him in running the school.\textsuperscript{854} This Committee served several purposes, including a representative function, as

\textsuperscript{846} Council minutes, 15 July 1975.
\textsuperscript{847} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{848} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{849} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{850} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{851} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{852} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{853} Shepparton \textit{News}, 21 July 1975, p.2.
\textsuperscript{854} Ibid.
members were chosen as representatives from different groups within the school. For example, first year teachers had ‘different problems to people who had been teaching for twenty years’. Through the Executive, their concerns, which were usually not taken into account because of their lack of seniority, were heard. The Executive considered how decisions taken on a school-wide basis would affect each different area. Thomlinson recalled how the mix of this Executive group overcame the traditional attitudinal differences and enmities between academic and trade teachers:

The difference in teaching trade work and humanities ... was that the humanities people could solve anything with an essay! ... With trade teachers, you had to have an end, practical result ... This produced some conflict so that ... what we did ... was to combine those two elements of the school and get them working together for a common purpose ... We had regular meetings [of the Executive Committee] where it was emphasised that we were all working for the benefit of the student.

At the September Council meeting, Jock requested that further reviews be carried out by Councillors. These were to include social biology; Form Four and Five subject selection; courses; the appropriateness of session time allowance; Form Five enrolments in 1976; the establishment of priorities and guidelines for television production; the aims and effectiveness of the Teacher Centre and the Student Information Centre; and prospective programs for Form One in 1976.

Requesting the reviews in September, Jock also took the opportunity to more fully integrate his Councillors with the staff and their developing programs; he advised them to consider how Council could best help staff reach each area’s full potential; with this information, Council would be prepared to meet with the school Executive in October and ‘come to effective conclusions’. The rationale of the combined October School Council/Executive Committee meeting was that, as Council was responsible for the school’s financial operation, they should be ‘conversant with the school program’. In addition to bringing an outside perspective to the school, in Jock’s opinion,

all these people must go through school and see what’s happening and give teachers an ear that they can cry into or howl about or do something - other than the school Administration. They must have this contact and they can be very valuable people.

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855 Ibid.
857 Ibid.
858 Council minutes, 16 September 1975: Letter to Councillors, 19 September 1975.
859 Ibid.
860 Ibid.
861 JRT, Audiotape, 1972.
The Combined School Council/Executive Committee meeting took place on 21 October 1975. Attending this meeting were ten councillors, eleven Executive Committee members (including the principal), and two teachers representing the most controversial programs operating at the time (myself, Lesley Preston, Social Biology, and Peter Thomas, Form One Program Co-ordinator). The agenda items included five reports from Councillors who had held meetings with staff over the preceding weeks, followed by two group discussions. One required members of the Executive to make recommendations for their most urgent needs in 1976; the other was a discussion on more adequate pastoral care programs.\textsuperscript{862}

In the first report on the television facility, councillor Keith Ward concluded that the future emphasis should lay with ‘serving the needs of South Tech students more directly’. In 1976, the new colour equipment and the seconded staff with no teaching duties could oversee both school and regional television production. Councillor Ward reported that a five year Media Education course was to be introduced in 1976; with aims to ‘educate students to be better able to cope in a media-based society, and to learn through actual practical use of the media’; this course would co-ordinate the media resources already at the school. At that stage, Councillor Ward noted that two thirds of the $30,500 Commonwealth Innovations Grant had already been spent.

The second report, concerning the Student Information Centre, was presented by Councillor Ian Hall, who concluded that the Centre was effectively monitoring student attendance and exerting a major influence on it.\textsuperscript{863} The Centre staff had identified a possible attitudinal problem in the junior forms concerning taking days off; however, the statistics in preparation suggested that the absentee rate was not rising.

Councillor Peter Vibert presented the third report, on Form Four and Five courses. Staff had voiced their concerns to him about a ‘babysitting’ problem; they had noticed that some students remained in school, not to further their education, but rather to avoid the stress of unemployment. He reported that ‘accurate statistics on this issue were either non-existent, or at least based on very subjective judgement’.\textsuperscript{864} Individuals within the Executive differed on the ‘extent of the school’s obligation to continue to try to teach “non-triers”’; however, it was claimed that there were ‘very few for whom the school could not cater, and that it was basically a matter of adapting the school program’.\textsuperscript{865} Vibert found that the classes for students wishing to further their education were adequate. He suggested that Councillors could help all students by giving talks from an employer’s point of view, including the

\textsuperscript{862} Council minutes, 21 October 1975.
\textsuperscript{863} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{864} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{865} Ibid.
importance of ‘communication, grooming, courtesy’. The suggestion that Councillors put employer requirements on a videotape was acted upon: two staff members roleplayed the differences in interview skills and presentation, with Peter, himself, conducting the interview. Vibert recalled:

I got involved in ... the pre-job interview work, and every girl that I interviewed wanted to be a hairdresser! [laughs] I can’t remember what the boys wanted to be. [laughs] There was quite a lot of work done in that field, trying to help students to [understand the] expectations of employers as they went out into the job market.

*You were involved at that sort of level? You interviewed the children yourself?*

In that situation? Yes. In fact, I think that you might have done it with me. I think from time to time you would get in touch with me and say ‘We have eight people or fourteen people who ... would you put them through job interviews?’ Which is what I did.

*You also did a tape?*

Yes, I do remember that. I remember one Councillor who, in his interview was heard to say: ‘Education. Yes, that’s too important to leave to the experts!’ [academics]^{866}

The fourth and fifth reports, concerning social biology and the Form One program, were presented by Councillor Lorraine Sinclair; the social biology report is discussed in Chapter 6. In her review of the Form One program, Lorraine claimed that general studies deficiencies were due to: the Terrapin’s isolated geographical position in the school; ‘inexperienced teachers in the ‘open learning situation’; lack of staff teaching ‘solely in the Form One area’; and inappropriate timetable allocations.^{867} To rectify the situation, Lorraine said that the program needed ‘a dedicated Head of Department for the whole program’, ‘more experienced teachers involved and available in a supportive role’, and ‘better communication with the rest of the school’.

Responding to Lorraine’s report, Jock claimed that 1976 staffing ‘would not permit the provision of a permanent team for the Form One program’.^{868} While there is no elaboration of his reasons for this claim in the minutes, his decision to terminate general studies may have been based on expediency; Jock’s research on open classrooms indicated that staff must work harder than in traditional classrooms or the system failed. Possibly South Tech’s general studies program had deteriorated, due to factors such as John Kumnick’s

^{866} PV, interview, 1997.
^{867} Council minutes, 16 September 1975; Council minutes, 21 October 1975.
^{868} Ibid.
relocation to school curriculum consultant, probable changes in the general studies staff team, with levels of enthusiasm differing from those which existed in John’s team. In addition, enrolments were perceived by the staff to be falling due to negative community attitudes towards the school. Jock Thomlinson indicated that there was ‘serious planning ... to adjust session length throughout the school to one hour’. There was also a feasibility study carried out to assess the possibility of setting up the Terrapin Building as a graphics area; Form One was to be relocated into mainstream school programs.  

With Council and staff fully focussed on their own school, there was no alarm raised by the effect on South Tech’s enrolments of the opening of Mooroopna High School in 1972. Similarly, in 1975, Shepparton Girls High School staff and students transferred to new buildings, with a new name: Wanganui Park High School. It was a ‘brand new school with a new addition: fifty-one Form One boys’. 870 South Tech experienced a decline in enrolments in 1976, with the probability of a further decline in 1977. 871 This decline was addressed at a special South Tech School Council-Staff meeting in February 1976. The purpose was to conduct an internal review ‘to evaluate and make recommendations on aspects of the schools operations that project the educational climate and general image of the school’. 872 The review aimed to identify, explain and justify an educational philosophy that was alien to many within the community. Six groups consisting of councillors and staff members discussed the profile of their students, the role of parents, their own role as educators, the school philosophy, objectives and the effects of innovative programs.

The February 1976 Council minutes reveal the detailed discussion reports, and the issues that emerged from six Council-staff groups. As to whether South Tech teachers would enrol their children at the school, Group One observed that children could suffer ‘undue stress and pressure’ because of a parent’s role on the staff (a view conflicting with a former student’s reflections in Chapter 7). In the Group’s opinion, South Tech ‘appeared to recruit more than its share of students with learning difficulties and/or social problems’; therefore, ‘parents of better type children are loathe to place these children in a school with an apparently excessive number of problem students’.

Group One observed that the community’s poor perception of South Tech was partly based on students wandering ‘around the school and streets during class time’. The ‘gutter-type vocabulary’ of students, and their ‘unkempt appearance’ was mirrored by the school buildings and gardens. Group One noted that a ‘great improvement’ was due to the

869 Ibid.
870 Image, Wanganui Park High School, 1975, p.3.
871 Council minutes, 17 February 1976.
872 Ibid.
employment of a gardener, and the cleaning staff’s efforts in dealing with the ‘litter, broken glass in windows and general acts of vandalism’.

Concluding their report, Group One asked if South Tech should set ‘an optimum enrolment number of students at 700, 800 ... or more?’ They identified the need for ‘an extensive P.R.-type of recruiting program which shows the benefits to be obtained’ as a South Tech student. These benefits included an emphasis on the ‘dedicated teaching staff who are interested in each student as an individual’, the qualified specialist teachers, including those with industrial experience, the school’s wide range of facilities, and the availability of ‘academic and practical courses leading to prerequisites for entry to tertiary institutions and vocational colleges.’ Group One suggested that the public relations program must reach parents and primary school teachers, especially those with children in Grade Six, employers, including Chambers of Commerce, Employer Organisations, the Chamber of Manufacturers, and ‘as many members of the community as possible’.

The remaining five discussion groups corroborated Group One’s findings and recommendations. Group Two focussed their discussion on the reasons for and against sending students to South Tech. They observed that reasons for sending children to the school included opportunities to experience a range of subjects leading to wide career options, the staff-student personal contact, and the opportunity for personal decision-making leading to an emphasis on individual development. Reasons against sending children were that allegedly the school didn’t prepare students for professions such as medicine, dentistry and veterinary science. Group Two said that there had been a ‘distinct lack of discipline within the school’ in the past, and parents didn’t ‘wish their children to interact socially with some of our students who are underprivileged’.

Group Three recommended that there should be a learning program for parents ‘to show what Technical Schools in general and this school in particular are really offering and are capable of’. They recommended that ‘all teachers should teach as wide a range of form levels as possible so that students get the benefit of experienced teachers and the fresh ideas of younger teachers’. Group Three expected that the school’s image would improve with the introduction of a structured course for first year students; they also underscored their opinion that ‘a modern type school uniform be introduced in order to improve the appearance of some students and create a distinctive image of South Tech’.

Group Four focussed on the school’s expectations of staff, parents’ expectations of the staff and school, and how the teachers could make the school a more attractive place. They discussed standards and their variability. When comparing the different subject matter of departments such as Art and Mathematics, for example, they found that measurable
standards varied widely. They determined that the school’s high expectations were ‘not necessarily relating to a high academic level’, and that the high emphasis on assisting the low achievers was to the detriment of other groups within the school. They cautioned that there was ‘a need to remember those with good academic and social achievements’.

Group Four observed that some parents and teachers did not share the school’s changed attitude to discipline, as some parents believed that corporal punishment should be retained. To some parents, experimental approaches were questionable, and the apparently lax discipline conflicted with standards imposed at home. In general, cultural minorities with highly academic expectations of education viewed freedom of subject choice negatively; however, they also claimed that teachers were the experts and they themselves had no right to criticise. Group Four claimed that there was a problem in communication between staff and parents, staff and staff, and staff and students; this problem was exacerbated by the large size of the school. In common with the other groups, Group Four recommended that steps be taken to improve the school’s image and communication, such as mounting a public relations campaign.

Group Five agreed that the school’s objectives and courses were sound, ‘though some improvements could be made’. A fall-off in publicity over the previous two or three years had exacerbated a lingering image of the school’s experimental programs, and there had been a lack of emphasis on basic skills and academic achievement. Group Five said that ‘we live in a conservative community, in times of great change, when people tend to become more reactionary in their opinions, and thus shun a school which is different from the other schools’. They suggested a three part campaign, focussing on firstly, primary school students, teachers and parents, and secondly, on South Tech parents. Thirdly, they recommended that the Public Relations Officer’s role should be extended to more effectively utilise the media: the Shepparton News, television channel GMV6 and radio station 3SR.

Group Six participants maintained that the school’s aims and philosophy ‘were very similar to other schools, however they were expressed in quite a different manner’. In their opinion, the ‘objectives were generally believed in by the group and it was thought that they were there more to keep people on the tracks than something to aim for’. They discussed the school’s philosophy in terms of striving to find a better way of improving their image in the eyes of the public.

The February 1976 South Tech Council-Staff meeting identified the most significant factors in the falling enrolments: experimental programs, the type of student attending the school, and the appearance of both the students and the school. In an interview, a former council president reflected that:
South Tech was subject to this attitude that you sent your kids there if they were not bright enough to go to a high school. On top of that, I don’t know if it was because of the location of the school in the south end of Shepparton, in a Housing Commission area, the socio-economic cross-section of the students was a little bit different ...

Because of the ability of the school to cope with all sorts of students and at all levels, and once again because of Jock Thomlinson’s ability to seek assistance when he was having difficulty with certain things, South Tech ended up with a very disproportionate number of people who might be classified as slow learners or whatever ...

The more we ended up with these people in the school, which in the eyes of the public tended to unbalance the school. As Jock said once: ‘If we can look after these kids, these fifty difficult kids, very, very well - they’ll give us another fifty!’

All these things caused the school to be viewed by people in a [certain] way. Now people who thought and recognised the programs that were going on, the film-making and the television and the organs if you like, and the other programs, the John Kumnick programs - the people who looked at that intelligently could see that the standard of the students that were coming out of there was very, very high indeed.873

An exhaustive review of the GMV6 and 3SR interviews is unavailable, but examples of Shepparton News articles during 1976-80 illustrate how South Tech put their plans into action.874 A special duties allowance to do publicity was given to Emilio Fiorenza, one of the teachers. He recalled the ‘effort of the entire school community’ and a time when ‘the media were there [at the school] on a daily basis!’

Not just because of my effort, but the effort of the entire school community who were prepared to give me material to take to the local Shepparton News and it was there sitting in their Art department if they wanted to use it. There was material from all over the school! There would be photographs there, ready with stories - artwork - events that were coming up. There was a diary of events given to them every week. Because I had contacts with the local radio station, almost every Tuesday, I would go in for a fifteen minute talk on education with the host of the program.875

Under the heading ‘Plan to Replace Exams’, a moderating system - an alternative to examinations that ‘could become a reality in the region’ - was reported by journalist Bill Ayres. Ayres based the article on an interview with South Tech Vice Principal Roly Stanes, who had a long involvement on the Gippsland Moderating Committee prior to arrival at

873 PV, interview, 1997.
Ayres also reported Stanes’ hope for South Tech’s ‘true image to go out’ following ‘two complete staff reviews involving the administration and the school council’.

A front page headline in the April 1976 News highlighted Emilio Fiorenza’s jewellery making course. He and student Wendy Cordy were photographed melting silver to cast a small pendant, using a technique that was ‘one of the oldest used by gold and silversmiths’. Emilio also developed a high profile in the school and the local community as a result of his role with ethnic communities. In another April 1976 article headed ‘Parents invited to visit school’, an open invitation was issued to parents to witness the experiences offered by the ‘dedicated enthusiastic teaching staff’. Reported as asking parents if they had been to the school, to meet the staff and find out what the school offered, Stanes hoped that what people knew about the school ‘wasn’t simply from someone else who didn’t really know what was taking place in the classrooms’. Dr Tom Moore, the Deputy Director of Education, visited the Benalla Education region in July 1976. South Tech’s role in disseminating his videotaped message was reported in July under the heading, ‘School Chief On Film’.

A December 1976 front page headline and photograph of Sammy Patane playing Joseph announced the school’s production of Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat, which brought the eventful year to a close. In an interview in 2000, music teacher Lee Cronk commented with some frustration on the current community’s lack awareness of South Tech’s musical achievements:

When I hear people talk about school productions being the first in this, that and the other: it wasn’t! The first one was the one John put on was Joseph and His Amazing Technicolour Dreamcoat ... It was a beautiful thing! ... It was special in this way: it was a brand new production ... I don’t know how he got the rights to it. It hadn’t even been shown in Melbourne at that stage ... It was years after that it was making a big name in the papers through the commercial productions ...

Joseph’s coat was a beautiful cloak of velvet with all those colours ... The black on the outside and all the colours on the inside. Beautiful! And the singing! I thought the kids did a wonderful job there - and we didn’t even have a singing teacher!

In February 1977, below a headline announcing a ‘Careers Teacher For South Tech’,

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879 Shepparton News, 9 July 1976, p.3.
a smaller headline ‘What is a Teachers’ Centre?’ explained the role and operation of the Shepparton Teachers’ Centre - a role that was to undermine South Tech’s aim to service the region as indicated in the Innovations Program Directory of Victorian Projects.\(^{882}\) The District Office claimed that this Centre was ‘to assist teachers in their continuing personal and professional development’.\(^{883}\) Jock Thomlinson commented:

> We didn’t use it. And when the director of that establishment complained bitterly about the fact that other schools were using it and we wouldn’t, I pointed out to him that ... we didn’t have any need for it. That would apply to most tech schools ... because [of] Executive Councils funded through, or by, the Education Department to schools, with lump sum funds. Those funds, apart from payment of wages and what have you, were decided - the use was decided - by Council, within the school.\(^{884}\)

Kerrie Mortison’s first prize in the Open Section of a Victoria-wide art competition was reported in March 1977; the \textit{News} recalled Kerrie’s cover designs for their 1976 Shepparton Show Supplement, and their 1976 Christmas Greeting.\(^{885}\) Ironically, following a headline ‘High Praise For Young Writers’ in March 1977, reporting that Shepparton South Technical School had ‘again been commended for the literary talents of its students’, there was a less obvious headline ‘Clearing the Confusion’, which attempted to describe the role of the different types of Victorian ‘Teachers Centre[s], and the role of the Shepparton Centre in particular.’\(^{886}\)

South Tech students were among five schools (including three other technical schools) who won a nation-wide competition in March 1977; the students were commended for a ‘collection of creative writing’.\(^{887}\) In the October 1978 Shepparton \textit{News}, it was announced that students would be spending a full week in creative writing; it was also recalled that:

> the standard of literary achievement within the school is evidenced by the fact that in 1977 Shepparton South Technical School won the Shell Award for a Collection of Creative Writing in a national competition run by the Fellowship of Australian Writers.\(^{888}\)

Creative writing was valued highly in technical schools; their competence in this area was recalled by university lecturer John McLaren. McLaren reflected on his membership on the Technical English Committee as being one of the most stimulating experiences in his

\(^{884}\) JRT, interview, 2000.
\(^{887}\) Ibid.
career. In his opinion, the Committee included ‘remarkable English teachers and educational thinkers - all from the Technical Division’. Their methodology was to:

let them [the students] read where they are, but you don’t censor their reading. But you provide the highest reading. The assumption behind it is that any student can flower and develop into a creative, socially competent, civically and socially minded member of society. That is the role of education.

John McLaren also recalled being Chair of the Secondary English Committee. Its role was:

... to set up an equivalent in the high schools but it didn’t get off the ground. Partly because there wasn’t this tradition of autonomy for subject organisations and subject committees in the high schools, and partly because it was unconnected with any formal examinations. Whereas the tech schools’ authority came from the fact that it controlled the course for their formal accreditation.

The secondary schools’ one remained a very waffley one and I think our reports - I hope they’ve been buried in the dust of history!

A report in an April 1977 News described an exchange program between Footscray and Shepparton South Technical Schools. Under a heading ‘Social Biology a Wide Field’ the News also announced the formation of the Shepparton Social Biology Group and anticipated seminars and discussion groups to be conducted under the auspices of Wanganui Park High School and South Tech.

Student organists Stephen Westwood, Robert Tenney and Heather Taylor’s placings in the Ballarat Royal South Street competition were reported in September 1977. In October, Tenney won the Under 16 section of the Geelong Eisteddfod, and with classmate Westwood ‘collected six placings between them in recent competitions at Shepparton, Ballarat, Geelong and Wangaratta’.

South Tech also wrote and staged its own musical. Music is the End was the story of what happens when a wandering singer enters a country ruled by a king who is completely tone deaf, so he bans all music. Lee Cronk recalled this musical was largely the work of a music teacher who:

890 Ibid.
891 Ibid.
893 Ibid.
894 Shepparton News, 16 September, p.25.
wrote all the music and they [Year 11 Professional Humanities students] helped with the lyrics. It was his own show, called *Music Is The End*. It brought in a lot of youngsters. They had various costumes and they made swords and daggers and shields and they had a wonderful time.  

The cast and band spent two full days on rehearsals at the Caniambo Camp (a school campsite for extracurricular activities), before the musical’s presentation in the Technical College Hall. The *Shepparton News* also reported Janice O’Brien’s success in winning a statewide photographic competition in September; in October they reported that she had also won an Australia-wide cartoon drawing competition.

Two 1980 newspaper reports complete the review illustrating how South Tech was projected in the local press. The July *News* reported Carolyn Mason’s success in winning the ‘Cheque Photographic Competition’ organised by the Education Department’s Computer Policy Committee, and sponsored by the State Bank of Victoria. Carolyn’s photograph of South Tech students operating camera equipment in the television studio was reproduced on Education Department cheques. A mini-computer valued at $2,400 was awarded to the school by Minister of Education, Alan Hunt, at a special ceremony in Melbourne. This may have been an added impetus for Jock Thomlinson to install computers in his school. The December 1978 *News* claimed South Tech’s Business Studies Department was ‘one of the best equipped in Victoria’. Jock recalled:

We were the first. We had three computer centres within the school. The first one was in business studies, and we initiated the fact that every student in the school had to learn to type. It was obvious then that if you were going to use a computer, typing was an essential skill, if you were going to use it, in an optimum way.

We put them in business studies, then we had a group in the maths/science. Then we put a roomful of them in the humanities and we organised parents to come in and we would get students to write their stories or essays or whatever they were doing and have it typed up for them and printed out so that they could see what they were doing. It was a great innovation because they could change on the screen what they wanted to do and it enabled them to understand communication skills much better.

The *News* announced the introduction of a compulsory school uniform in February 1980. The February 1980 Council minutes record that the enrolment figure of 655 was

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899 Ibid; 24 October 1977, p.2.
‘much more than expected’.

The social biology room was the venue for the Year 7 teachers, who - before the term commenced - visited the school to meet Year 7 parents over a cup of coffee. (This venue served a dual purpose: firstly, a friendly environment for the parent-teacher meeting; secondly, the room’s displays illustrated the nature and content of social biology). The minutes revealed that this meeting was to help the teachers ‘find out about the students and gave parents a chance to meet their child’s teachers’.

As teachers were focussed on redressing the problems in their own school, the following items in the principal’s report to Council were possibly not noted with the concern that they merited:

Changes in Education Teaching
TAFE vs. Secondary
Teachers vs. Establishment
Clear expectation of parent and community involvement
Council and Parent Groups

[the principal] also stated that this school should be deciding if we want a Year 12 or if we want to separate from TAFE and be a secondary school in its own right, i.e. if we believe in trade subject teachers we could influence decisions to be made about our future.

Similarly, the furore that was to erupt concerning school sex education was unforeseen. How this program developed, and the publicity it aroused following the attention of the ABC’s Nationwide, is the subject of Chapter 6.

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904 Council minutes, 26 February 1980.
905 Ibid.
906 Ibid.
Chapter 6: Social Biology

I was one of the many who, as James Docherty reflected, could not ‘with any confidence give an account of the upheaval even though it was happening around them’ (Victorian Education Department restructure: 1971-89).907 My journey through the upheaval began as social biology struggled to gain acceptance in the 1970s, became a focus for a public controversy in 1980, and developed into a model promoted by the Education Department during 1983-86. Yet both support and funding were withdrawn in 1986.

In view of the new principal’s priorities, it is not surprising that sex education features regularly in the South Tech Council minutes. In October 1970, the Council ‘adjourned for twenty-five minutes to view the Knoxfield film’. This film concerned Delys Sargeant’s pioneering sex education classes at Knoxfield Primary School.908 Founding Director of the Social Biology Resource Centre at the University of Melbourne, Delys pioneered training courses in client-centred, interdisciplinary, multi-professional Health and Human Relationships education.909

Prior to, and during the 1970s, sex education was highly controversial and seldom implemented, except for ‘outsiders’ delivering ‘family life talks’.910 While centrally imposed curriculum had become the norm in schools, as early as 1913 the principal of the Teachers’ College, Dr John Smyth, indirectly suggested that teachers should be involved in curriculum development. It was not until fifty-three years later that the Curriculum Advisory Board was established in 1966.911

In 1971, a number of authorities encouraged school based human relations education, claiming that exploratory programs had merit. Don Chipp, the Federal Minister for Customs and Excise, called for ‘health matters involving drugs, sex education, the road toll, VD and alcoholism to be an examinable subject’, the Victorian Government considered introducing a ‘social health course - including education on drugs, sex, road accidents, venereal disease, and alcoholism’.912 Lindsay Thompson, the Victorian Minister for Education, announced that the Commonwealth had made an amount available for the course under discussion, which he envisaged would be taught from Form Three onwards. He believed that such a course was ‘as

911 Report to Minister of Public Instruction, Victorian Government, 1912-13, p.94.
important as studies of bygone life - like history’.\textsuperscript{913} Basil Moss, president of the High School Principals’ Association, also supported such a course, ‘if the teaching was done by the right people’.\textsuperscript{914} The Victorian Secondary Teachers Association president indicated that his union would be ‘interested in joining the discussions’.\textsuperscript{915}

Two years later, in November 1973, Lawrie Shears, Director-General of Education, announced a Curriculum Services Enquiry, with seven terms of reference. One focus was to be on multidisciplinary, innovative curriculum - including pre-driver education, international education, community education, work experience, health education and human problems:

> The Education Department still supports a program of Health Education. The major requirements to implement such a program include teacher education, co-ordinated activity with the Health Department, establishment of multi-disciplinary resource centres, the creation of needs oriented teams of teachers within the schools and the formation of a health advisory council in each State.\textsuperscript{916}

The 1977 Draft Report of the Enquiry strongly emphasised the importance of school designed curriculum: ‘a programme ... must take into account the present and future roles of the student as an autonomous individual, as a member of a family, and of the community, a person who has vocational and leisure needs and aspirations’.\textsuperscript{917}

My introduction to sex education began in 1973, the same year that the long-running Curriculum Services Enquiry was announced. Reg Lipson, my tutor at the Technical Teachers College, announced that Delys Sargeant was to deliver a lecture at Corio Technical School, Geelong, on 20 June. Delys was Director of the unique Health Education Resource Centre (Department of Social Studies) at the University of Melbourne. The HERC, renamed the Social Biology Resource Centre (SBRC) by 1974, was funded by the Victorian Health Commission community health program, and commenced in 1971, ‘in direct response to requests from professional personnel for specialised courses in aspects of human sexuality’, including other aspects of health and relationships education, such as nutrition and moral education.\textsuperscript{918}

Attracted to Delys Sargeant’s lecture because of my previous experience dealing with
students’ extracurricular problems, I sought permission from Shepparton Technical College to be excused from my classes to attend the lecture. During the evening, Delys screened the Canadian film ‘Sexuality and Communication’, and responded to audience questions.

Like many people of my generation, I was ill-informed about sexuality. My ‘qualifications’ were restricted to attendance at school and church ‘family life talks’, three public lectures on ‘Sexual Morality in a Changing World’ at Monash University in 1963, and borrowing The Kinsey Report in my boss’s name from the Monash medical library. Qualifications at that time were largely subjective; Delys Sargeant suggested qualifications should include ‘empathy, knowledge and ability to communicate’, and ‘particular personal qualities’ of value to the learner.

Concurrently, but unknown to me at that time, South Tech was involved in innovative education. In July 1972 in an address at the TTC Hawthorn, Jock Thomlinson talked about preparing children ‘to take their place in a society that is very different from the one their parents grew up in, and one that will be different to the one their children will grow up in’. He included the need for sex education in this address, and in a later interview, applied technical education’s theory and practice philosophy to explain that some adolescents were engaging in sexual activity in ignorance of the potential consequences:

The concern about sex education was that if you are going to get this balance of theory and practice, there was a fair bit of ill-informed practice going on, and no theory. We needed to point out to students all the things that helped develop them into decent human beings. That’s why we started sex education.

Jock Thomlinson’s aims for sex education were intangible but practical:

students can’t learn if they’ve got a problem. They’ve got to solve the problem before they can learn. If the aim of the school was to do as much for the kids as possible in terms of development, then it [sex education] was a basic, essential ingredient.

‘Family Life’ talks were the norm for most young people prior to the 1970s. Such a talk was offered to Form Five South Tech students in February 1973. One-off sessions in

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922 JRT, interview, 1996.
923 Ibid.
924 Council minutes, 20 February 1973.
inappropriate environments usually induced embarrassment, were not subject to rigorous evaluation, and did not offer follow up sessions to cater for differing rates of development. Using school religious education as an analogy, Jock said:

What we did realise early on, we used religion as the basis, if you have a religious education conscript coming to talk to kids once a week, using a science room, and that person is not available every week - it just doesn’t work! We had to have an area that said, using non-verbal language: ‘This is important!’

An appropriate environment seemed to emerge in the early 1970s when it became obvious to John Kumnick that sex education was a natural extension of the general studies program:

What’s most central to the kids when they are, you know, twelve, thirteen years of age? It’s coming to terms with all the monstrous changes that are happening in their lives and a lot of that stems from what’s happening in their bodies.

In John’s opinion, a sex educator needed a willingness to ‘subscribe to a philosophy, a philosophy of helping a kid grow up.’ He said that the focus wasn’t on ‘boomsa-daisy’, it was on ‘how does this help the kid cope with life’? ‘Mechanics’, or facts, while important, were not a major focus. However, it was critical that the educator had ‘a capacity to be non-threatening to parents, teachers and students, in something that might otherwise be alarmist, because this was radical revolutionary stuff’. John explained that the school was to project social biology as ordinary:

and it required someone who could deal with that - deal with it as normal as bread and butter, rather than making it clever, exciting or whatever - that required a special thing, and somebody who could liaise and relate and marshal resources, rather than having to be all things to all people.

Having attended South Tech’s July 1973 In-service as a visitor, my introduction to South Tech staff occurred later in the same year, when Jock called a meeting of heads of departments and interested staff. The majority of those present were hesitant, ambivalent and wary of controversy. One exception was the co-ordinator of the general studies program, John Kumnick, who recalled:

Jock was the person who took the initiative in that area, because he

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923 JRT, interview, 1996.
924 JK, interview, 1996.
927 Ibid.
928 Ibid.
929 Ibid.
introduced me to you, he introduced me to a group of people that were called
together to explore this as an opportunity to take this thing that we really
didn’t have a label for, but the label that was given to us was ‘social biology’. And we had to find out what ‘social biology’ meant - and it really was exactly what we needed. There was a missing part in what we were doing with the kids which was something which wasn’t just physiological in terms of: ‘Oh, gosh, I’m having periods!’ but rather ‘It’s a transition in my life, that I need to understand’.

Having redefined social biology to suit their context, John listed those who were tentative members of a social biology resource team, and established the tenor of future meetings:

the curriculum consultant, the vice-principal, the specialist teacher, the head of humanities, the head of the union, two religious representatives (one Catholic, one Protestant), a doctor, a nurse, several parent representatives, members of the school council - to get a full spectrum of interested parties.

Jock, who was supported by John Kumnick and the School Council, decided that I was an appropriate person to fit the needs outlined above. My subsequent training at the TTC became centred on health education. TTC Health Education lecturer, Dr Dilyis Sawyer, supervised plans for the South Tech course. Delys Sargeant held three places for myself and ‘other suitable applicants’ in the 1974 Health Education Resources Centre course, rather than admit me, alone, into Course 1.SE (1973), Education in Human Sexuality. Her opinion on the need for ‘colleague support’ was endorsed by Nettie Jenkins of the Psychology and Guidance Branch. In spite of my inability to find ‘other suitable applicants’ to commute to Melbourne from Shepparton, Delys accepted me into the 1974 program. I grew to appreciate Delys’ concern for colleague support; colleagues were sparse in the early years; however, their number was to exceed all expectations in the coming decade.

I was assigned to South Tech’s Science Department in 1974, and during that year I taught Form Five chemistry, Form Three and Four science and general studies. School councillor, Lorraine Sinclair, who held responsibility for general studies, was appointed to work with me and report developments to the Council. Lorraine arranged for parents ‘to come to school to hear about [the] General Studies program, etc’.

Social biology was especially in need of Council understanding and support because of its potential to evoke controversy.

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930 Ibid.
931 Ibid.
934 Council minutes, 30 April 1974.
Council agreed to release me from classes to participate in the HERC/SBRC in-service courses: Aspects of Health and Relationships in 1974, and the Advanced Professional Course in Aspects of Health Education in 1975.\textsuperscript{935} The courses did not offer a qualification; the ‘qualification’ required at that time was the ability to win the trust, respect and support of the students, their parents, the school administration, staff and community. Membership of the SBRC enabled past participants to maintain contact and keep up to date. Regular seminars preceded by a shared evening meal focussed on particular topics; for example moral education in September 1974, and venereal disease in April 1975. Two Education Department staff seconded to the SBRC in 1974 provided colleague support, in-service and feedback.\textsuperscript{936}

For several months, this novice sex educator and her students grappled with topics formerly taboo in an environment foreign to both: the unstructured general studies program. Students were not required to attend social biology; parents could withdraw their child, or a student could withdraw from the course at any time. I writhed with feelings of humiliation and failure when the principal observed a lad climbing out the window of my class in an atmosphere of complete and utter chaos. It was mutually decided I was unsuited to the unstructured program. I was philosophically ill at ease as a teacher, nor was that the reason for my appointment to the school. As all classrooms were unavailable for a homeroom dedicated to one learning area, I eventually found A7, a small, disused classroom, formerly designated for female staff.\textsuperscript{937} I asked for exclusive use of this room, and the opportunity to create an environment suited to the new socially sensitive learning area, which thus inadvertently created a nightmare for the timetablers. A7 very quickly became affectionately known as the ‘social bilge’ homeroom.

In 1974, sex education and human relations teaching materials were scarce, almost nonexistent. Stan Copley, a TTC student teacher whose area of expertise was visual resource production, befriended the beleagued sex educator.\textsuperscript{938} Working together, and with help from my science students, Copley produced the program’s first sex education resources.

Blending the science curriculum demanded in the senior levels with sexuality classes in 1975, the young people and I balanced the external syllabus with learning to create our own. My young people were interested in, for example, the anatomy of the earth worm; however, they chose to discuss what to them was ‘really relevant’ - human anatomy and

\textsuperscript{935} University of Melbourne, Health Education Resource Centre, 1974; Office of Continuing Education, PA (1) Advanced Professional Course in Aspects of Health Education.\textsuperscript{†}

\textsuperscript{936} Mulholland & St. Leger, \textit{A Report}, 1978.

\textsuperscript{937} PROV, 9512/P1, Unit 19, Capital Expenditure Works Files Technical Schools, 1951-1977.

\textsuperscript{938} Council minutes, 30 April 1974.
relationships. While there is a place for both, and the best science teachers were teaching according to the enquiry method informing the curriculum, in practice they still needed to prepare students for examinations. There were many unforgettable incidents as a result of my subject combination. In one Form Three science class, there was a heading on the blackboard: ‘Living Organisms’. ‘My God!’ said a startled girl, ‘I thought it was Living Orgasms!’ This same young student’s management of male harassment lent support to my assumption that co-education could be a useful and natural learning experience for both sexes. On being ‘cheeked’ by a male class member, who had prominent front teeth, she advised him to desist immediately, or she would ‘straighten those teeth for you, Bugs!’

Like my young student, I tolerated neither harassment nor disdain from men or women, though perhaps I employed more earthy techniques than those listed in Wendy McCarthy’s *Teaching About Sex: The Australian Experience*. But some of what I encountered was the stigma, double standards, ambivalence, professional and personal loneliness, the inability to ‘talk about what [I was doing] in a casual way’, the negative prejudice, the studied avoidance. This avoidance was evidenced by Les Pomeroy’s observation that, even after seven years, many staff remained unaware of social biology’s content and methodology. As I was to find out, my low profile became a blessing, as students, parents and staff grew to trust me as a confidante and counsellor. An indispensable qualification to be added to the those listed by John Kumnick was a sense of humour.

Sex education was ‘too little too late’ for the young people, and ‘too much too soon’ for adults. Jock Thomlinson claimed that, with only one teacher initially given responsibility for sex education - but requiring ‘the support of everybody else’ - time was needed for that teacher to gain experience, respect and acceptance. In his opinion:

> unless it was acceptable, and people wanted to do it and work with it, it was going to be a failure. You can’t make people do something that is contrary to what they want to do, if you are going to be successful and educate kids.

The school administrators, including the timetablers, required a sense of humour to negotiate the difficulties which I presented: my philosophical opposition to school protocols, my lack of experience, my need for a flexible schedule, a unique environment with comfortable chairs rather than desks, a private counselling area, non-competitive and non-

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940 JRT, interview, 1996; Similar frustrations occurred at Melbourne Church of England Girls Grammar School (MCEGGS) nearly two decades earlier; when ‘the more educationally radical teachers on the staff fretted at their principal’s conservatism, while those who espoused traditional educational practice were wary of some of the “advanced ideas”’. B. Falk, *D.J.: Dorothy Jean Ross 1891-1982*, Melbourne University Press, Melbourne, 2000, p.23.
reported student self-evaluation. All were responses to the needs that the young people verbalised as I attempted to gain their trust and respect. For example, Jock described what happened when some girls asked, through me, for segregated classes:

In the beginning we had a great deal of difficulty with the subject, as did the teacher ... who ... wanted to separate the girls and the boys, and to run the area as though it was the most important area of the school. We agreed, but it had to fit within the framework of the school so it could be timetabled.\textsuperscript{941}

Jock Thomlinson reflected on the negotiation process. A serious problem was that teachers who taught ‘entrenched subjects’ raised objections when new subjects were timetabled. He pointed out that:

it meant that the physical education people had to lose two sessions, or the maths and science, humanities. These people had to reduce their importance in the school because of something more important. That was a very, very difficult thing to do.\textsuperscript{942}

We [timetabled the subject] by getting them firstly to agree to the importance of what we were doing, and to support it or contain it within one area or another.\textsuperscript{943}

Because of the difficulties that I and my learning area presented, social biology was relocated from science/general studies to physical education in 1975,\textsuperscript{944} and finally found a philosophical and practical home four years later in the Humanities Department’s social studies program. Jock recalled:

At various times we took time from physical education, science, humanities, in exploring where best it should come. We could only do that within the framework of the school. If you’ve got one teacher teaching thirty sessions, that’s thirty classes that can have one session a week. If you had five teachers, you could have a hundred and fifty sessions.\textsuperscript{945}

Embracing the South Tech and the SBRC multidisciplinary approach, and in great personal need for colleague support, in 1974 I scoured the community to find suitable people to form the beginnings of a school-community support network. The search was not easy. I needed volunteers committed to spending time listening and responding to young people in a relaxed environment; however, my vision did not lend itself to easy explanations. General practitioner and member of the Family Medicine Program, Graeme Jones, and Deacon Roger

\textsuperscript{941} JRT, interview, 1996.
\textsuperscript{942} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{943} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{944} Council minutes, 19 October 1976; Council minutes, 15 March 1977.
\textsuperscript{945} JRT, interview, 1996.
Kelly, Melbourne Diocese, on loan to Augustine’s Church of England, committed at least one session per week to attend social biology classes. Roger Kelly was invited onto School Council following Lorraine Sinclair’s resignation in 1977. Graeme, Roger, and representatives seconded from the community, worked with school staff to produce a series of social biology videotapes based on our classroom experiences.

The aims of Social Biology in 1975 included making ‘relationships and sexuality comprehensible at levels appropriate to students’, ‘learning to communicate effectively in these areas’ and an awareness of different terminology. I taught Form Five biology with students who also verbalised what they wanted to discuss in health and human relationships.

While the vast majority of young people and their parents opted for the non-compulsory subject, some parents, staff, and councillors voiced reservations. An open invitation was extended to councillors and parents to ‘visit the school to see what is being done in this area’. Parents wishing to find out about the course were invited to meet the teacher - myself - and attend classes if they wished. Parents could also talk through their concerns with School Councillors - many of whom themselves were parents and had shared the same concerns. John Kumnick recalled that the Council educated other parents: ‘they led the parents rather than voiced conservative fears and apprehensions of parents who knew no different ...’

Parents, staff and councillors represented a full range of views and they themselves reflected a diversity of marital and other relationships, guardianships, family groupings, cultures and religions. Key school personality and senior teacher, Ron Dell’oro, lent his support by undertaking an SBRC course in 1975. Lorraine Sinclair, in her report on social biology to the School Council in October 1975, drew attention to two problems I wanted redressed: firstly, the inadequate conditions under which the subject was conducted; and secondly, the need for a male member of staff to ‘facilitate appropriateness of the course for boys’.

Emilio Fiorenza joined the South Tech Art Department staff in 1976. By this time, Jock’s enthusiasm to produce social biology tapes was becoming a reality. In May the same year, SBRC consultants, Anne Mulholland and Lawrence St. Leger requested permission to visit the school, to observe some classes in action. They offered to discuss the ‘scope of your programme, any particular difficulties or successes you have experienced and, possibly,
provide suggestions which may be of help to you’.  

On the morning of their visit, Anne and Lawrie, one lost student teacher, an erroneously timetabled class, and my own class, arrived simultaneously at the door of the still disreputable A7 for a double class. Having gained some experience and assertiveness since the Form One boy climbed out of the window in General Studies, I ordered all present into the room, and my ‘class in action’ commenced. Setting a precedent which was to continue, I divided the two classes into four groups, with one adult to each group. The students’ first task was to chat with their adult leader and find out why they were in the class; their second task was to answer the adults’ questions about the course. Before lunch, Roger Kelly and Graeme Jones arrived to find that their usual group had doubled in size and, as usual, an air of informality and spontaneity characterised the sessions. Thus began a warm relationship with the SBRC consultants.

In response to their day at South Tech, Lawrie commented on the school’s involvement in ‘making your own resources’; Anne commented on the ‘warm and responsive’ team. Anne also sought help for a Wodonga High School teacher who was reasonably close in terms of country miles; this teacher had been given approval to explore health education by ‘a willing, but somewhat apprehensive Principal’. Thus began my unofficial consultancy, which culminated in the 1983-86 official appointment as regional health and human relationships consultant in the GNER.  

In a report to Council in June 1977, Roger Kelly wrote that the social biology team included three PE staff, with interdepartmental links progressing well. Regular visitors included Graeme Jones, Roger Kelly, social worker Kerrie Cross and nursing sister Jenni Tom, with members of welfare and other helping professions assisting when necessary.  

Towards the end of 1976, the Executive Officer of the Benalla Regional Directorate, sought South Tech’s support for Wanganui Park High School’s application for funding from the BRISWEC (Benalla Regional In-Service Education Committee) and the Office of Continuing Education. Funding was required to pay for SBRC consultants to run four sessions between July and September 1977 in Shepparton. To facilitate the in-service and develop human relations education in the local area, South Tech and Wanganui Park established a Goulburn Valley Social Biology Group, (GVSBG). This group was composed of educators, parents, and health and welfare professionals, who held ‘regular meetings for

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952 A. Mulholland & L. St. Leger, 3 February 1976.†
954 Council minutes, 21 June 1977.
955 Ibid.
the continuing education of its members’. The very active GVSBG became defunct in the mid-1980s, probably due to the incoming Frameworks and Victorian Certificate of Education.

The in-service, one of two models of regional in-service conducted by the SBRC, was announced in the News in May 1977. It was sponsored by BRISEC and the local GVSBG. Totally focussed on social biology, I was ignorant of the composition and role of BRISEC, and the implications of regionalisation with respect to technical education as politicians restructured the Victorian education system. I was aware of the 1977 Report of the Council of the Curriculum Development Centre, which described Australian Health Education programs as inadequate, and made recommendations concerning policy, implementations, teacher education, teaching resources, evaluation and research, and public relations.

While these events were taking place in the wider community, South Tech’s resource team was growing, with groups such as Alcoholics Anonymous, Al Anon, Childbirth Education, Compassionate Friends, Nursing Mothers, police officers, and counsellors from the Valley Alcohol Drug Counselling, Referral and Education (VADCARE) regularly participating in social biology sessions. John Kumnick recalled:

I can remember sessions run by the priest, the sessions run by the doctor. There were sessions run by the English co-ordinator, there were sessions run by parents.

Non-teachers?

Yes, bringing in normal people who had normal sex, or people even who had divergent sexual views, but were able to explain that in a comfortable and safe environment, rather than sort of promoting and advocating, but simply describing as normal, a range of human experiences. That’s fairly special, and nothing to do with qualifications. It’s got to do with attitude, philosophy and relationship.

Emilio Fiorenza attended classes in A7 in his own preparation sessions. Emilio was released from classes to attend the Shepparton GVSBG in-service. He recalled several features of the South Tech social biology program which had escaped the notice of the sex educator during her struggles to survive. Emilio commented that teachers are familiar with their classroom environment and their tools. As an art teacher, he would say: ‘sit down kids, today we are going to be doing a painting, we’re going to be doing a lino printing’, or

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960 JK, interview, 1996.
However, as an artist and designer, Emilio noticed the impact of the environment in A7, in which everyone, including the teacher, would sit in a circle. As an art teacher this was a ‘very, very important’ observation to him because of way the relaxed environment brought out a ‘lot of issues’.\(^6\)

When I was looking at this particular book, and there was this particular scene I remember. It was of a choir boy being asked to leave, because his voice broke. There was a fellow next to me, that I had in the session before, and I said: ‘Gee, Josh, your voice is a bit deep these days. Maybe you should leave the choir.’ And of course he broke up! He laughed! ... One time we talked about something to do with [masturbation]. We said: ‘What does this mean?’ One kid put up his hand and said: ‘Oh, that’s when you tie your wife to the bed, and you flog her’ [masochism].\(^7\)

Emilio said that because social biology had a room with a particular environment, and was ‘an identifiable area of the school that looked at a subject as any other subject was looked at in the school’ it had an equal status, an equal value. He claimed that this was very important.\(^8\)

Because of his shared experience with the students in social biology, Emilio recalled an impact on his teaching. He found that his students sought him out to discuss their personal problems with him:

When they came to me in the art room, they seemed to relate to me a lot better. Often they would say: ‘gee, you know, we can talk to you about all sorts of things’. Even some of the girls in the class, they would come to me to talk about very personal issues. At times I would say: ‘Why don’t you go and see Miss Preston’. They would say: ‘Oh, no. We prefer to talk to you’ ... I was able to communicate with my students in a much more relaxed and more familiar way.\(^9\)

Like Emilio, some parents also found their confidence in handling young people’s problems improved as a result of the classes; as their number increased, so too did the network of people available to students.

Emilio’s understanding of social biology was especially significant. In his role as Vice President of the Ethnic Communities Council at that time, he liaised with the Italian

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\(^6\) EF, interview, 1996.
\(^7\) Ibid.
\(^8\) Ibid.
\(^9\) Ibid.
community (and other ethnic communities), organised visits, and acted as interpreter on occasions when they came to the school:

I talked to them [at one of their meetings] and a number of people from the various ethnic communities came in. Specifically the Italian community. I remember speaking to them about it in Italian. We organised the Turkish community, the Greek community to come in. We had interpreters to explain to them. There was quite a number of ethnic or non-English speaking background community people involved. I remember four of five school councillors that came in at one particular time, there were ministers of religion, doctors, the police came in, a couple of times, there were other welfare groups and community groups that came in, so I would say there were quite a number. At least between fifteen and twenty groups were involved.  

Emilio reflected that the programs developed at South Tech resulted in the local community’s submission that ‘actually introduced ethnic teacher aides in Victoria’.  

He explained that the Italian culture was sensitive to Anglo-Saxon attitudes in relation to menstruation, sport and sex education:

I remember encountering people from the Italian community not wanting their girls to participate, or even do sport education at the time. Because they felt that, especially the girls - they were starting to have periods - and they didn’t want them to be exposed to the other children, especially from an Anglo-Saxon background. The Italians have a particular view about their females at that particular time. I can remember bringing in some parents where I - obviously - I had to speak to them in Italian, to explain that sport and sex education was an integral part of their learning. And it was very, very difficult.  

In Emilio’s opinion, South Tech’s course developed a high profile, and (like its predecessor, general studies) it had an osmotic effect throughout the school:

In the last four years [1993-96], I cannot remember a case where I have seen a bulletin notice, or a poster or something actually happening in schools that advises students about STDs or anything. Now, admittedly, I have been involved basically in the art and the technology areas. And I’ve been involved in some schools that are fairly large, and at times you can’t have your finger on the pulse of everything. But I cannot say consciously that there is a visible program or there are visible ways of getting this information to students, as happened at South Tech where health and human relations and the things that we used to talk about were really talked about almost in every class.  

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966 Ibid.  
967 EF, interview, 2000.  
968 EF, interview, 1996.  
969 Ibid.
At the close of 1977, Roger Kelly resigned from Council in November 1977, and subsequently was appointed priest at St James the Great, East St. Kilda, and chaplain at Wadhurst, Melbourne Church of England Grammar School.\textsuperscript{970} Robert Cornwell, on exchange for twelve months from Sacramento, California, joined the school staff in February 1978.\textsuperscript{971} Cornwell, a counsellor, joined me in drawing attention to boys’ physical, emotional and social problems.\textsuperscript{972} A highly regarded counsellor, he was farewelled at a social biology student party in December 1978.\textsuperscript{973} A South Tech parent, Lindy Cartledge attended Council as an observer in February 1979, and subsequently took responsibility for social biology.\textsuperscript{974}

In January 1979, senior teacher Leslie Pomeroy joined the humanities department and assumed responsibility for the humanities’ social studies program. Les claimed that social biology was philosophically attuned with social studies. He offered a restructured social studies timetable encompassing segregated Years 7 to 9 classes, as requested by the students. Thus social biology left the physical education department to come under the umbrella of social studies/humanities.

Les organised the redecoration of A7. Staff and students painted the walls and ceiling fans, cupboards were installed, parents laid new carpet, beanbags were purchased, posters were donated. Display boxes held the three dimensional developmental stages of a fetus, a large board facing the door boldly listed examples of issues open for discussion: anatomy, sexuality, death, dying and grief. An atmosphere was created to indicate it was okay to talk about these or other matters.

To create this environment, it was necessary to dispense with aspects of a traditional classroom. Therefore, the existing facilities - a sink, taps and cupboards - were pressed into use and a Tea Club was formed: over tea, coffee or Milo, discussions became increasingly informal.\textsuperscript{975} Skin care and make-up, manicure and pedicure products from my elective girls grooming classes were displayed. Instruction in deportment, self-confidence, presentation and etiquette was requested, especially by Year 9 and 10 boys and girls.\textsuperscript{976} A large display board facing the door listed possible learning areas. Visitors from local business houses, including Gwen Thompson and Lena Villani, were popular guests.\textsuperscript{977}

By its fifth year, social biology had gained the respect and acceptability so elusive in

\textsuperscript{970} Council minutes, 15 November 1977.
\textsuperscript{971} Past Images, p.49.
\textsuperscript{973} Shepparton News, 4 December 1978, p.3.
\textsuperscript{974} Council minutes, 21 February 1979.
\textsuperscript{975} JH, interview, 1997.
\textsuperscript{976} Shepparton News, 11 April 1979, p.5.
\textsuperscript{977} Ibid.
the early years. With its increasing popularity, seemingly impossible aims came to fruition; for example, co-educational classes and team teaching with staff colleagues. A number of teachers no longer shunned the subject, and wanted to participate. Social studies teacher Terry Tremellen, explained that, initially, the social studies teacher would hold a class for the boys when the girls attended social biology. Instead Terry asked: ‘why don’t they all do it together? And that was the case, so we’d take the little Year 7 boys and girls into Lesley’s health and human relations classes’.  

Terry described how the lessons were conducted, with a ‘few formalities’, when orders for coffee, tea, Milo or water were taken, the drinks were served, and ‘the lesson would begin.’ He recalled that, ‘sometimes or almost all the time, there were visitors. These visitors could include doctors, nurses, ministers of religion. A sheep farmer was there several times’. (It was later discovered that the sheep farmer was also the Benalla Regional Directorate’s Executive Officer.) Terry claimed that the kids reacted ‘perfectly naturally’. They were ‘a total delight’, who loved the social atmosphere and being treated with respect. The regular resource team, including young mothers with their babies, service providers and ‘curious visitors from other places’, all participated in the session. Some students were a ‘bit hesitant’ at first:  

after all this was going to be all about sex and obviously they had a few bad vibes about sex and sex education ... but after a few lessons, when they realised there was no threat to them if they chose not to answer a question, they can say pass and that question would no longer be directed at them. They were all expected to contribute, so if they passed on that question at some future time they were expected to make a contribution.  

There were very few areas that were out of bounds. Intrusive, personal questions into anyone else’s life were not permitted. In-depth self-disclosure was not encouraged. Community resource people brought an air of life’s realities. Terry recalled one of the ‘blighters’ who was always late to lessons: ‘Graeme Jones was one of those villains who would charge in there saying: “Sorry kids, but I just had to deliver Mrs Smith’s tenth baby. Sorry about that”’.  

South Tech’s human relations education was defined, implemented and evaluated within the school’s philosophy. However, South Tech itself had been nurtured and promoted within the Technical Schools Division. In their 1978 Report on the Special Developments Undertaken by the Education Department Staff at the Social Biology Resources Centre,
1974-1977, SBRC consultants, Anne Mulholland and Lawrence St. Leger found, in general, that technical school teachers:

apparently found it easier to be released for lengthy courses of in-service study away from school as well as devoting sections of in-service days to small or total group education about Health and Human Relationships. Many technical schools had a well-developed pastoral care program, and Health and Human Relationships was conceptualised on a much broader framework and implemented successfully by cross-faculty teams than other post-primary schools.\textsuperscript{982}

Mulholland and St. Leger also thought there was ‘more concentration on the needs of the child, rather than with concern in teaching a subject’, an approach they found was ‘less common in the secondary and independent system’.\textsuperscript{983} Other secondary teachers ‘viewed Health and Human Relationships within the confines of the academic subjects, and worked at developing the concept from this basis’.\textsuperscript{984} In defence of their conclusions, they observed that ‘most of the secondary teachers who sought guidance had qualifications in those disciplines which were traditionally associated with qualifying a teacher to be involved in such teaching’ (i.e. physical education and biology).\textsuperscript{985} Conversely, technical teachers seeking assistance came from within a wide range of learning areas, including ‘trade, science, humanities, art; and demonstrated a more integrative perspective towards a Health and Human Relationships programme’.\textsuperscript{986} Technical schools used a ‘broader concept of Health and Human Relationships than other school types’, Mulholland and St. Leger claimed. Therefore, it was ‘not surprising that teachers in technical schools requested more consultation services than teachers from other types of schools’.\textsuperscript{987} In an analysis of the number of secondary, technical, primary, special and independent schools involved in SBRC in-service courses in 1976-77, the SBRC consultants claimed that techs represented a seventy-one per cent higher involvement compared to secondary schools.\textsuperscript{988}

Unique to South Tech was its television facility, which was utilised in a cross-faculty project to produce social biology resource materials. Drawing on their experience from class discussions in 1974-78, the South Tech staff and community resource team answered students’ most common questions; a writer translated the material into scripts; artists illustrated the scripts with drawings and animated sequences; technicians transformed the results into videotapes. Anne Mulholland and school staff compiled teacher notes to

\textsuperscript{982} Mulholland & St. Leger, \textit{A Report}, 1978, p.51. \textsuperscript{983} Ibid. \textsuperscript{984} Ibid. \textsuperscript{985} Ibid, pp.53,54. \textsuperscript{986} Ibid, p.54. \textsuperscript{987} Ibid, pp.51,52. \textsuperscript{988} Ibid, pp.51,53.
accompany the social biology videotapes. By 1979, approximately six eight minute tapes had been produced.

The Victorian Association of Secondary School Teachers (VASST) handled videotape sales. John Grivas of Monash High School reviewed the tapes. He claimed that they offered ‘a workable framework around which a Social Biology Course for Junior Secondary School students (Year 7-9) could be developed’. Cost was ‘excellent value’ at $45 for VASST members, and $48 for non-members. With the ‘excellent’ Teachers Guide, the tapes were ‘one of the best resources available’. Requests for advice came from as far afield as Melbourne. In June 1980, the Hawthorn Teachers Centre requested ‘details of the school’s Health Education course for the Secondary Health Education Committee’.

1980 began with an improvement in the school’s overall image, and the enrolment of 655 was better than expected. South Tech’s social biology was thriving. In January, Year 7 teachers welcomed incoming Year 7 parents in A7 for introductory chats; students served coffee, tea and biscuits to promote a friendly environment. Yet the course was to be tested over the coming months when Australian Health and Human Relations (H&HR) education was subjected to an intense and sustained attack. Informed debate on the State Government’s and Opposition’s ‘ politicisation’ of education, was obscured in the sensationalised media mix of ‘sex, religion and politics’. H&HR opponents blended two strands in support of their arguments: firstly, they claimed that education was becoming politicised; secondly, they attacked the policy, principles, organisation, content and influence of H&HR programs. In her 1983 article, ‘Getting sex, sex education and the opposition into perspective’, West Australian educational sociologist and social worker, Thea Mendelsohn, observed some of the tactics and claims of an extreme opposition. Firstly, she distinguished between parents’ genuine concerns and a ‘vociferous and ugly minority’, deprecating the latter’s argument that ‘professionals ... working in these fields [sexual health services for adolescents] ... are part of a team of conspirators whose purpose is to undermine the morality of the Western world’. Secondly, Mendelsohn argued that the best defence against such attacks was to run programs based on ‘sound educational principles’ which could stand up to rigorous evaluation. In her opinion,
‘very few state education systems could confidently claim to be able to present that
defence’. 997

In 1980, Sonia McCracken described the wider context of the Victorian controversy.
In her article, ‘Anatomy of a Scare Campaign’, McCracken claimed that, in 1979, after the
defeat of a campaign against sex education in Queensland, the ‘big guns’ were directed at the
Victorian Education Department and, specifically, at Melbourne’s SBRC, and Director,
Delys Sargeant. 998 McCracken pointed out that the Victorian Education Department had been
engaged in the production of a ‘formal policy on sex education’.

In September 1979, in response to Queensland MP Mike Ahern’s claim that H&HR
courses were conducted free of controversy in Australian states other than Queensland, Mrs
J.B. Wallis of Kaniva, western Victoria, in a letter to the Cairns Post, claimed that such was
not the case in Victoria. McCracken observed that Wallis signed her letter as the co-ordinator
of Kaniva’s ‘Committee to Raise Educational Standards’. A group by the same name
surfaced, wanting to remove a human development course at Yarram High School. 999

The politicisation of education and a decline in basic skills were the subject of a
meeting hosted by the National Civic Council at a specially convened support evening in
Wangaratta on 20 November 1979. 1000 Together with their objections to sex education, some
groups also opposed abortion. Siedlecky and Wyndham pointed out that with the introduction
of Medibank in 1975, ‘family planning activities became subject to changes in government
policy and funding decisions’. 1001 In Shepparton, prior to the State election in 1982, an
undated Right to Life letter drop, with illustrations featuring a dismembered baby in utero,
urged voters to ‘stop this violent killing’; two raised baby hands suggested to voters that ‘you
can help me on April 3’ – ‘vote for life, vote (Bill) Hunter’. Hunter had allegedly given
‘strong pro-life commitments to vote for legislation giving legal protection to the unborn
child from fertilization and to stop the use of health care money to pay for abortions’. The
pamphlet claimed that Peter Ross-Edwards, MLA for Shepparton, had not given such a
commitment. 1002 The activities of right wing groups opposing State and Federal government
policy and funding occurred concurrently with the introduction of the Victorian Education
Department’s H&HR program.

997 Ibid.
1000 Invitation on behalf of the National Civic Council, to attend a specially convened support evening
1001 S. Siedlecky & D. Wyndham, Populate and Perish, Australian Women’s Fight for Birth Control,
1002 Pamphlet in possession of the author.
Norman Lacy, the Minister of Educational Services (whose background is covered in more detail in Chapter 8), oversaw the publication of *Health and Human Relations Education*, 1982. This introduced the Education Department’s H&HR principles, policy and guidelines, and included a curriculum statement ‘to provide guidance in the form of outcomes for the development of school-based Health and Human Relations programs’, and for their evaluation based on the outcomes.\(^{1003}\) On 15 October 1979, Cabinet approved the Victorian Education Department’s H&HR principles and policy, announced the members of the Consultative Council for H&HR appointed by Lacy on 22 December 1980, listed the H&HR guidelines, approved by Cabinet on 8 December 1981, and outlined curriculum, Years 1 to 12.\(^{1004}\)

These principles endorsed schools’ responsibility to promote appropriate H&HR, while upholding the values and beliefs of local communities.\(^{1005}\) The policy firstly acknowledged that teachers should collaborate with their local community in formulating their own approach, and that parents would have the right to exclude their children from ‘topics to which they have moral or religious objections’.\(^{1006}\) Secondly, the Education Department encouraged teacher H&HR pre-service education, intending to seek recognition for this teaching method from the Teachers Tribunal and the Committee of Classifiers.\(^{1007}\) A H&HR Unit was established within the Education Department’s Special Services Division to take responsibility for the implementation of Government policy and guidelines, and to advise members of the school community, tertiary institutions and other interested parties.\(^{1008}\)

Lacy pointed out that ‘there was no standard content for subjects which were not formally examinable’.\(^{1009}\) Therefore, it was impossible to define the subject other than that at the level at which it was taught.\(^{1010}\) Furthermore, the H&HR guidelines did not apply to Victorian Institute of Secondary Education (VISE) accredited courses.\(^{1011}\)

The government, through its consultative processes, captured the paradoxical nature of this learning area in trusting that educators, in collaboration with their community, could achieve positive outcomes in H&HR education. They suggested that teachers selected to work in H&HR meet certain criteria, including a minimum of three years’ experience in full-


\(^{1004}\) Ibid, pp.7,4,5,9,10,13-47.

\(^{1005}\) Ibid, p.7.

\(^{1006}\) Ibid.

\(^{1007}\) Ibid.

\(^{1008}\) Ibid, p.3.

\(^{1009}\) Ibid, p.2.

\(^{1010}\) Ibid.

\(^{1011}\) Ibid, p.9.
time teaching, appropriate, approved in-service training, and the ‘confidence of the Principal and School Council’. The criteria did not specify academic qualifications.\textsuperscript{1012} They also noted that teachers were characterised by their ready accessibility to the ‘parents of students participating in a Health and Human Relations program’.\textsuperscript{1013}

In \textit{Anatomy of a Scare Campaign}, McCracken highlighted the number and diversity of community groups consulted in the development of this policy, including the established links with the SBRC.\textsuperscript{1014} Norman Lacy’s eleven member Advisory Committee established in January 1980 included Dame Patricia Mackinnon, Delys Sargeant, and other ‘specialist’ educators.\textsuperscript{1015} In May, Lacy issued a public invitation for submissions to the Victorian Advisory Committee. In McCracken’s opinion, this invitation was the trigger that alarmed some communities, specifically, Kaniva and Geelong.\textsuperscript{1016} On 28 October 1980, South Tech’s inwards correspondence noted that Dame Patricia had invited Jock to meet with members of the Committee to discuss elements of the H&HR draft guidelines.\textsuperscript{1017}

McCracken described aspects of the campaign opposing H&HR conducted in the \textit{Geelong Advertiser} in 1980. On 1 May, an editorial questioned the efficacy of drug education, comparing ‘courses on drugs or sex to the mass fluoridation of the water supply’.\textsuperscript{1018} A letter from the Rev John Cromarty of the Free Presbyterian Church was printed in the \textit{Advertiser} on 5 May. McCracken noted that Cromarty had failed to mention that he was ‘a member of the Geelong High School council and president of the school’s Parent Teacher Association’. In his letter, Cromarty claimed that parents would be ‘shocked’ if they checked what was happening in local high school H&HR courses.\textsuperscript{1019} At that time, Belmont High School in West Geelong had a sex education program, but Geelong High School did not.\textsuperscript{1020}

Assistant editor of the \textit{Geelong Advertiser}, Paul MacLeod, was also the parent of a child who attended Belmont High School. MacLeod withdrew his daughter from the human relations class. He also wrote four major articles between 18-21 June in the \textit{Advertiser}. McCracken claimed that their impact was ‘enormous’.\textsuperscript{1021}

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item[1012] Ibid, pp.10-11.
\item[1013] Ibid, p.11.
\item[1016] Ibid.
\item[1017] Council minutes, 28 October 1980.
\item[1018] \textit{Geelong Advertiser}, 1 May 1980, p.4.
\item[1020] Ibid, p.26.
\item[1021] Ibid.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
In his first article titled ‘Sex education: What’s going on?’, MacLeod reproduced the H&HR principles and policy statements, claiming that, in response to Norman Lacy’s invitation to make submissions to the Advisory Committee, the Geelong High School Council intended ‘unanimously to protest’. Quoting an American report which denounced the benefits of sex education, MacLeod gave his account of the H&HR content, questioned the qualifications and selection of sex educators, and highlighted the courses conducted by - and the links between - the Geelong Health Resource Centre and the SBRC.

On 19 June 1980, the Geelong Advertiser’s front page headline proclaimed that school courses were ‘An invitation to permissiveness. Sex education blast’. The article claimed that Geelong High School Council’s submission to the Ministerial Advisory Council on H&HR claimed that the ‘principles he [Lacy] has given Parliament for the type of instruction envisaged in schools compromises the “secular spirit of our education system” and puts, in place of that tradition, judgement by teachers of ethical, moral and spiritual matters’. It was further claimed that Geelong High believed that such courses ‘will promote sexual experimentation, propagate permissiveness and contribute much to the moral breakdown of our society’. It was also claimed that one member of the Advisory Committee ‘has her name on the editorial board of the magazine Forum (The Australian Journal of Interpersonal Relations) which, in the opinion of this council, is pornographic’.

On the fourth page of the same newspaper on 19 June, under the headline, The sex education promoters, MacLeod focussed on Delys Sargeant and the SBRC, claiming that five of the eleven members of the Government-appointed committee on health and human relations education were associated with the SBRC - the SBRC Director, the two Education Department consultants, and two members of the board of management. He reported comments from a telephone conversation between Delys Sargeant and himself, in which Delys enumerated aspects of the SBRC philosophy and practices. MacLeod pointed out that a sex education course could not be judged by ‘what appears on paper as its curriculum’.

Continuing his attack on 20 June, in his third article titled ‘The harvest of sex education’, Paul MacLeod, quoting research from Sweden, America and England, linked sex

1022 Geelong Advertiser, 18 June 1980, p.4.
1023 Ibid.
1024 Ibid.
1025 Ibid.
1026 Ibid.
1027 Ibid.
1028 Ibid.
education with increases in venereal disease, child abuse, homosexuality, illegitimacy, child pornography, juvenile delinquency and changes in the ‘type of offender’. He claimed that those who held views opposing the ‘promoters of the “new” sex education’ were ‘dismissed’ as “narrow” or “puritan”, “right-wingers”, “religious fanatics” or simply “fuddy-duddies”.

In his fourth article, ‘The tactics of sex education’, published on 21 June, Paul MacLeod quoted ‘the words of a leading American advocate of explicit sex education’. He alleged that Dr Lester Kirkendall, addressing a United States Sex Information and Education Council (SIECUS) on how to deal with sex education opponents, advised his audience to ‘just sneak it in as an experimental course’. MacLeod described another common strategy as forming ‘a committee of civic leaders including doctors, clergymen and businessmen to endorse the introduction of the programme into the local school’. He alleged that such a committee would not be aware of ‘what they are endorsing’, and ‘pride and ego require them to defend their stand as the educationists turn a presumed course in physiology into out-and-out indoctrination for premarital sex and amorality’. MacLeod alleged that the educationists wanted ‘complete freedom and autonomy’, and opponents’ complaints were met with ‘educationese and mumbo jumbo’.

Claiming that ‘some’ saw ‘the real object of these programmes in political terms’, Paul MacLeod pointed to ‘links between the American sex education promoters and the Communist Party’. He claimed that this objective was ‘spelled out in a Communist document, “Rules for Revolution” as “Corrupt the young, get them away from religion, get them interested in sex”’. MacLeod alleged that Hayden Birrell, MLA for West Geelong, Aurel Smith, MLA for South Barwon, and Glyn Jenkins, MLC for South Western Province and secretary to State Cabinet, held reservations concerning aspects of ‘the teaching of explicit sex education in schools’.

Following Paul MacLeod’s four articles, the front page Geelong Advertiser headline on 24 June stated: ‘Lacy [acting Minister of Education] prepared to meet Geelong High School council. Sex - open meeting’. Under a smaller headline of ‘Going OK’, also on the front page, a report claimed that ‘many schools in the Geelong area include basic sex education in the curriculum’, and a number of principals claimed that the courses, or

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1029 Geelong Advertiser, 20 June 1980, p.4.
1030 Ibid.
1032 Ibid.
1033 Ibid.
1034 Ibid.
inclusions in courses, worked well from the parents point of view.\textsuperscript{1035}

On 1 July, under a sub-headline on the \textit{Geelong Advertiser}’s front page, ‘Lacy puts “facts”’, it was claimed that a memorandum prepared by acting Minister of Education, Norman Lacy, described a “serious misrepresentation of the Government’s policy” on the sex education question.\textsuperscript{1036} The bulk of submissions received by the Advisory committee on H&HR courses had been ‘encouraging, and support the validity of the Government’s role in the matter’; Government policy delivered responsibility to school principals and protected the rights of parents and children - ‘no course would be taught contrary to the direction of the school principal’, and ‘parents have the right to exclude their children from subjects to which they have moral or religious objections’.\textsuperscript{1037}

On 1 July, the \textit{Geelong Advertiser} cited a Ministerial memorandum claiming that ‘much attention in the media has been devoted to a submission from the Geelong High School council, which is so far alone in stating its total opposition to any form of health and human relations education’.\textsuperscript{1038} In its editorial opinion in the same newspaper, a counter claim was made that it was not the \textit{Geelong Advertiser} that had misrepresented the situation - it was the Government; ‘all the more cause’, in their opinion, ‘to repeat the demand for a full and open inquiry’.\textsuperscript{1039} During the controversy, Victorian newspapers published a wide spectrum of letters to editors illustrating a diversity of views for and against sex education.

The Concerned Parents’ Association was formed in Melbourne on 7 July to ‘co-ordinate a statewide fight by parents against explicit sex education in schools’.\textsuperscript{1040} Its secretary was Dennis Bails of Geelong. Their pamphlet, \textit{They’ve Got Your Kids}, carried a range of sensationalist claims. It became the subject of a successfully defended court action against the CPA by Delys Sargeant. New Lithographics, who had printed the pamphlet, wrote an apology and retraction, which appeared in the Melbourne \textit{Sun}. The firm ‘unreservedly retracts all statements and imputations contained therein which reflect or may reflect upon the credit or reputation of the Social Biology Resources Centre and its Director, Mrs Delys Sargeant’.\textsuperscript{1041}

Geelong Life Centre and Belmont Full Gospel Church were among those who circulated petitions opposing sex education. However, a meeting of Belmont High School’s

\textsuperscript{1035} \textit{Geelong Advertiser}, 24 June 1980, p.1.
\textsuperscript{1036} \textit{Geelong Advertiser}, 1 July 1980, p.1.
\textsuperscript{1037} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1038} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1039} Ibid, p.4.
\textsuperscript{1040} \textit{Geelong Advertiser}, 8 July 1980, p.1; Bails, \textit{They’ve Got Your Kids}, undated, circulated late 1980.
\textsuperscript{1041} Bails, \textit{They’ve Got Your Kids}; \textit{The Sun}, Melbourne, 22 October 1980, p.5; Legal documents in the possession of Delys Sargeant.
science staff with 200 parents favoured the continuation of the school’s sex education program. Principal Alf Swan nevertheless claimed that parents ‘would now have to register their children for any sex education courses in the school’. South Tech was to share the media spotlight with Belmont High School. The High School’s parent-staff meeting was not televised; however the principal, a student, and some parents made brief comments, and Paul MacLeod and John Cromarty were interviewed on the ABC current affairs program, Nationwide.

At South Tech, I was more aware of a brewing head cold than the brewing Victorian H&HR controversy. I was calm when Jock Thomlinson advised me that Geoff Valence, from the Goulburn Murray Television current affairs program, Outlook, wished to ‘balance’ his report on a controversy at Wangaratta Technical College with the non-controversial South Tech sex education program, on 3 July. Consistent with his philosophy, Jock wanted three students, with parental permission, to explain their social biology course on Outlook. Preferring face-to-face encounters, and also for personal reasons, I declined to be interviewed on television. Being totally committed to my work, I believed it could stand or fall on participants’ opinions.

Geoff Valence interviewed Wangaratta Technical College H&HR program opponents, and principal, Don McCabe; he also interviewed three South Tech students, social studies co-ordinator, Les Pomeroy, and resource team member, Graeme Jones. Students were filmed facing the interviewer with their backs to the camera, to prevent the possibility of their victimisation.

A letter to the editor of the Shepparton News written by T. Fielder claimed there was ‘Cause for alarm’ because of a comment made by one of the anonymous South Tech students on Outlook. The student had commented that, in social biology classes, young people’s confidentiality was respected, and there was ‘relaxed and unembarrassed communication within the class’. Fielder claimed that such learning environments resulted in ‘desensitivation of the individual’ and infringement ‘on the privacy of most’. Fielder wrote that, because of this, ‘the latency period of the twelve year old, the natural modesty of the fifteen year old, the bonding of the honeymoon’ was destroyed. In his opinion, the net result was ‘a reduction of marriage stability later in life’.

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1043 Delahunty, 1980.
1046 Ibid.
A South Tech student wrote an answering letter to the editor, claiming there was ‘No cause for alarm’. Describing her four and a half years experience in the course, she concluded her defence with an invitation to suspend judgement until after visiting the school and participating in the course.\textsuperscript{1047}

A few days after the \textit{Outlook} interviews, Jock announced that a \textit{Nationwide} ABC TV crew would visit social biology classes the following day.\textsuperscript{1048} I hastily made telephone calls to members of my resource team scheduled to attend classes to acquaint them with the unexpected visitors, and gained parents’ permission for journalist Mary Delahunt to interview five students - all facing the cameras.

On the day of the visit, despite the care needed not to trip over camera cables, social biology classes were conducted as normal (although there was unusual evidence of the use of combs). Nursing mothers bathed and fed their babies while chatting with students in one class, and in the next, Dr Graeme Jones, with a visiting medical student, discussed a number of questions raised by the young people. Mary Delahunty conducted individual interviews with Graeme, Jock, Council President Peter Vibert, and the group of five students; copies of the social biology tapes were made available to \textit{Nationwide}.

I experienced the full effects of the ‘flashing’ technique used to advantage by ‘The Concerned Parents’, when the ABC promoted their coming \textit{Nationwide} program by screening a very abbreviated segment of the most sexual scene edited from one of the six South Tech videotapes! ‘Flashing’ was a technique used by H&HR opponents; they often showed nude figures to an unsuspecting person, which produced a shock reaction. The ABC program that went to air some nights later was introduced by Sonia Humphries, who warned that ‘the most sexual aspect of one program’ (sixty seconds of one South Tech tape) was to be shown - therefore some viewers may prefer not to watch. Nevertheless, the ABC’s coverage was well received. Despite my worst fears, there were no parents waving banners promenading in front of the school, and the principal and I received congratulatory telephone calls, indicative of a high level of interest throughout Victoria.

In July 1980, the Roman Catholic Bishop of St. Kilian’s, Bendigo, the Most Reverend N. Daly, was subjected to the flashing technique when examples of ‘explicit sexual material’ were presented to him by a delegation. His response resulted in an open letter and petition to the Honourable the Speaker and Members of the Legislative Assembly of Victoria.\textsuperscript{1049}

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\begin{footnotesize}
\textsuperscript{1047} Shepparton \textit{News}, 23 July 1980, p.5.  \\
\textsuperscript{1048} Delahunty, 1980.  \\
\textsuperscript{1049} Letter and petition to the Speaker and Members of the Victorian Legislative Assembly, from the Bishop of Sandhurst, Reverend N. Daly, St. Kilian’s Bendigo, 11 July 1980.†
\end{footnotesize}
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In his letter, the Bishop made a number of points; firstly, he believed that parents should voice their concerns for the removal of sex education from H&HR until its value in solving the problems of adolescents ‘has been established beyond dispute’; secondly, he advised that parents have ‘full prior access to all materials used in sex education courses’; thirdly, he argued that parents should give explicit approval, ‘rather than have the right to withdraw their children, which exposes the child to pressure from the peer group and teachers’; fourthly, Bishop Daly believed that the ‘right to instruct their children’ and the ‘right to add the correct and proper moral associations’ belonged to parents. There could be little disagreement with this view; however, his assumptions on ‘moral formation’ are open to debate. He claimed that:

when sex education courses - described as Health and Human Relations - promote varied expressions of sexual activity as equally valid options, what is a lesson in biology becomes an instruction in morality. Attempts by the Education Department, or teachers, to promote universal sex education are a denial of the prior rights of every parent to determine the moral formation of his or her child.1050

Bishop Daly hoped that the ‘concerned and thinking people in Bendigo’ would ‘demonstrate their disapproval and press for the withdrawal’ of H&HR Courses. He made a valid point in his petition that with the proposal to ‘introduce, and integrate Health and Human Relations Courses across the school curriculum’ parents would be denied the right to withdraw children.1051 The Bishop maintained that there was ‘considerable doubt about the philosophy and moral value of Human Relation Courses that put at risk the right of privacy and the right of parents to have family life protected’. He also feared that students’ rights ‘to be free from indoctrination’ could be at risk.1052

In the preamble to the petition, Bishop Daly referred to an ‘increased emphasis on controversial social, political and religious issues in the school curriculum’ putting at risk ‘the right to have traditional subject disciplines taught impartially in schools’. The four specific requests were: firstly, for teachers to avoid comment on ‘controversial political issues’ or religious matters; secondly, to restrict schools to ‘objective’ education within ‘traditional established disciplines and defined subject areas’; thirdly, to omit H&HR and Moral Reasoning and Value Courses; and fourthly, to restrict H&HR education to optional after school classes.1053

1050 Ibid.
1051 Ibid.
1052 Daly letter and petition, 1980.†
1053 Ibid.
While the Bishop himself opposed human relations education, not all priests or members of their congregations were necessarily in agreement. Priests from St. Mary’s, Moorooopna, St Mel’s, Shepparton (which had a large Italian community) and Father Donald Gibson of St. Augustine’s Anglican Church, Shepparton, were South Tech resource team members.\textsuperscript{1054} As a South Tech teacher recalled: ‘one of the Catholic churches in Shepparton was against the course’. At a service he attended with his family, when ‘people were invited to sign a petition against sex education courses’, he dissuaded his ‘dear mother’ from signing by pointing out the involvement in the course by the Catholic priest from the other parish.\textsuperscript{1055}

Following a public meeting called to discuss H&HR courses in Wangaratta in early September, the Wangaratta Chronicle carried a number of letters to the editor, including two posted to me by a colleague at the Regional Office. The Anglican Dean of Wangaratta, the Very Rev David Thawley, commented on the ‘smear tactics to arouse fears and prejudices - similar to those in the era of McCarthyism’ which were employed to attack ‘the teaching profession and the sex education courses’.\textsuperscript{1056} Pastor Peter Jenkin intended ‘to ask the government to withdraw Health and Human Relations from government schools’; however, he was ‘far from happy with the conduct and tone’ of the Wangaratta meeting.\textsuperscript{1057} He recalled one speaker who ‘even called the attention of the meeting to what he viewed as a similar to Nazi tactics’. Peter Jenkin was disgusted by his neighbours’ use of ‘the tactics of totalitarian societies’.\textsuperscript{1058}

The Shepparton print media joined in the media frenzy with alacrity. On 29 August, News journalist Tom Carey’s page five headline proclaimed ‘Child sex lessons, parents in uproar’; and said that the sex education ‘furore’ was allegedly ‘ignited in Shepparton’.\textsuperscript{1059} Carey referred to the CPA’s claims that there was ‘irrefutable evidence’ that those who conducted training courses advocated ‘complete sexual “freedom”; that “health” consists of unrestrained sexual activity of any kind’; that techniques used in classes were ‘designed to change people’s values’, and that ‘explicit sex education’ damaged children’s general learning ability.\textsuperscript{1060}

Carey also mentioned that the two secondary teacher unions had mailed copies of Young, Gay and Proud to all their branches, despite Education Minister Thompson’s directive in March 1979 that books fostering homosexuality were ‘not to be available in

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\textsuperscript{1055} TT, interview, 1997.
\textsuperscript{1056} Wangaratta Chronicle, 12 September 1980, pp.4,11.
\textsuperscript{1057} Wangaratta Chronicle, 17 September 1980, p.2.
\textsuperscript{1058} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1059} Shepparton News, 29 August 1980, p.5.
\textsuperscript{1060} Ibid.
\end{flushleft}
school libraries’. The unions’ action was provocative rather than helpful and pressured the Minister and alarmed some parents.

Carey’s article was challenged on 4 and 5 September. Shepparton High School chaplain, the Reverend Leigh Wilson in a letter to the News editor under the heading ‘Schools don’t advocate “complete sexual freedom”’, claimed that Carey’s article was ‘full of ambiguities and unsubstantiated statements’ and thus ‘unfair to local schools’. He explained the role and activities of the Goulburn Valley Social Biology Group, and commented that in each of the Shepparton secondary schools, and some of the primary schools that conducted courses, parents were encouraged to ‘know what is being taught and then express their comments’.

On 5 September, under the title ‘Positive sex education at Shepp school’, the Rev Pearce Barber’s regular Around the Churches columns featured points from the Rev Donald Gibson’s parish paper, in which Gibson claimed involvement with South Tech, and enumerated aspects of the Social Biology program. Tom Carey gave notice of a public meetings in the area; the Mayor convened a meeting to discuss the Wangaratta Technical School courses on 10 September, and a public meeting was organised by the Parent and Citizens Be Aware Group in Cobram.

On 12 September under a heading, ‘Sex education defended’, Carey reported that Jock Thomlinson had issued ‘an open invitation to any parent to attend the social biology courses in five grades (year levels) at Shepparton South Technical School’. In Carey’s report, Thomlinson claimed that the CPA had made ‘no contact officially or unofficially regarding what the course entails’; he challenged the CPA to ‘send me an entry form’ to join their Association if they decided to do something about the negative impact of the media on children:

We [the school] intended to take a week of television viewing, but can’t because of copyright laws, and edit it to show what is being served up to children - an imbalanced view of life. And in any newsagent you can buy an assortment of magazines that give a distorted view of what it is all about. Why the CPA is not concerned about these things is beyond my comprehension. If the CPA would decide to do something about that would

1061 Ibid; Sexuality Education - The Education Department Doesn’t Want You To Know About It, Executive, 11 May 1979, Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.
1063 Ibid.
1064 Ibid.
1065 Ibid.
they please send me an entry form! \[1067\]

Carey stated that ‘Mr Tomlinson agreed his school is itself a resource centre for the State’; he concluded his article with some remarks from a ‘prominent citizen of Shepparton known to be a member of the SSTS council’. This unnamed person voiced ‘emphatic’ disapproval of ‘some animated parts’ of the tapes as ‘too explicit’. \[1068\]

The controversy was further fuelled by a CPA public meeting in Shepparton on 27 October. Pro-formas of a letter available to individuals in the audience, claiming that the State Government’s introduction of health and human relations education was a ‘subterfuge for the introduction of explicit and damaging sex education’, requested local member Peter Ross-Edwards to ‘demand’ the termination of present courses and the withdrawal of ‘the existing principles and policy statements’. \[1069\] A regular visitor to the school since its inception, Peter Ross-Edwards revisited the school to review the course, and took no further obvious action. \[1070\]

The CPA meeting was attended by Frank Purcell, who was the Early Childhood Development Co-ordinator with the Health Department, and a community resource team member at South Tech. His remarks concerning the CPA were reported by the News under a heading of ‘Meeting smeared parents, teachers’. \[1071\] The speakers who had ‘smeared’ South Tech included the Rev Cromarty of Geelong, Trevor Jones of Yarrawonga, who was teacher of the year, and chairman Cr Lou Cook of Numurkah. In a press release, Frank Purcell requested that those who signed pro-forma letters to Peter Ross-Edwards ‘visit Shepparton South Technical School and the school which their own children attend, and find out what is being taught, what texts are being used and by whom it is being taught’. \[1072\]

Frank Purcell, identifying himself as ‘a concerned Catholic parent’, wrote an open letter to Peter Ross-Edwards, making a number of points in the defence of the South Tech program. He claimed that when he had ‘the temerity’ to ask at the CPA meeting, ‘why Shepparton South Technical School parents and teachers hadn’t been given a chance to explain to the meeting what their program involves’, the Rev Cromarty replied that ‘their presence on the same platform would be as incongruous as that of an atheist or an agnostic on the same platform as a preacher of the Gospel’. \[1073\]
Rev Donald Gibson identified himself with the South Tech staff in his defence of the social biology program in the Shepparton *News* on 13 November. In the Rev Pearce Barber’s regular series ‘Around the Churches’, under a headline ‘Father replies to sex course accusations’, Barber reported Gibson’s claim that ‘as one of the teachers so maligned’, the Rev Cromarty’s remarks were ‘insulting, malicious and slanderous’. According to Barber, Gibson described the attack against South Tech’s health and human relations program as ‘impolite, unintelligent back-stabbing, an unChrist-like affront to Shepparton with innuendoes to sow seeds of doubt and mistrust in the minds of local residents’.

Barber had based his report on Donald Gibson’s article, ‘Fact or Fiction’, which pointed out that the chairman of the public meeting had stood for the senate in the recent election under the banner of the Christian Alternative Party. Gibson alleged that ‘there was nothing Christian about the full page ad that the chairman, Cr Lou Cook of Numurkah, took out in our newspapers during the election campaign. It was thoroughly racist, unchristian and horrific’. Donald Gibson claimed that Cook:

is of course a militant member of the League of Rights, an extreme rightist group who believe in maintaining the unchristian indignities of apartheid in Africa and who peddle their nasty anti-Semitism in a manner that makes Hitler and his Nazi regime look like Snow White in comparison.

Donald Gibson, in a letter addressed to ‘principals, teachers and friends of all schools’, invited them to attend a meeting called by the Anglican clergy of the Shepparton Deanery ‘because of the attacks that are being made upon our schools and the Health and Human Relations programmes’. Barber brought his article to a close by specifically inviting the ‘parents who signed the petition at the [South] Shepparton meeting addressed by the Rev Cromarty of Geelong’, to attend the Anglican clergy meeting.

In November 1980, the CPA campaign in the Shepparton area received a setback when the Shepparton and Rodney Shire Councils refused to accede to their request to take action against the courses. The Shepparton Shire ‘refused to take any action’, and the...
Shire of Rodney ‘expressed support of the courses’.\footnote{1082} In December, the *Midland Times*, in front page headlines, reported that, at a meeting where ‘for the first time in living memory the time limit was exercised’, Rodney Shire Councillor, John Gray described the League of Rights as ‘an insidious group that had infiltrated the Concerned Parents Association’ and was ‘duping a lot of people’.\footnote{1083} At the conclusion of a heated exchange, ‘the President had to use his casting vote to retain the status quo and reaffirm last month’s council decision to “leave school curricula to the Education Department”’.\footnote{1084}

Much of the controversy was lost on me - although I was wary when visiting towns reputed to be highly critical of H&HR. Nevertheless, I found the majority of participants in my extracurricular community workshops favoured human relations education. The eventful year, 1980, closed with support for the social biology course outweighing opposition.

The media frenzy dissipated with time, though the Rev Phillip Powells of the Living Waters Assembly in Kyabram continued the attack with letters to the school and to the Minister of Education.\footnote{1085} The school requested the names of the parents whom Rev Powells claimed to represent in order to send them ‘a personal invitation to visit the school, take part in the course and inspect the literature used’.\footnote{1086} This invitation was accepted by Rev Powell, his wife and one other person, early in 1982. Reflecting back on their visit, a teacher recalled:

He sat in on at least one of the classes ... I think the only thing he found he really did disagree with was one of the cartoon pictures in one of the books we used ... I think it was a couple of stick figures looking like lying on top of each other... I don’t know whether we won him over that day, that minister. Yes, it was an interesting day!\footnote{1087}

The attack may have been carried on more insidiously by the CPA who, according to their magazine Alert, announced their move from Geelong to Shepparton in 1984, stating that, ‘while the central committee of the Concerned Parents’ Association will continue to meet in Melbourne, the main base of activities will be in the Shepparton area’.\footnote{1088} One can only speculate whether the CPA’s presence in the district influenced the GNER’s decision to halt the Health Department/Ministry of Education H&HR Initiative in 1986. It seems more likely that, with the Labor’s election victory in 1982, changes were affected in accordance with their education policies.

\footnote{1082} Ibid.
\footnote{1083} *Midland Times*, 17 December 1980.
\footnote{1084} Ibid.
\footnote{1085} Council minutes, 28 April 1981.
\footnote{1086} Council minutes, 26 October 1981.
\footnote{1087} TT, interview, 1997.
\footnote{1088} *Alert*, PO Box 1041, Geelong, 3220, No.15 January 1984.
South Tech staff were encouraged to participate in projects outside the school for a number of reasons, including the strengthening of school-community relationships, the enhancement of skills by working with different age groups in situations outside the school, and extending the community’s understanding of the school’s philosophy and programs. Emilio Fiorenza, using the Art Department as an example, recalled that:

in my own department, we had eight fully trained art teachers. Those eight teachers were experts in their own areas. The majority of them worked in industry outside while they were still teaching, so they were practising artists, they had jobs outside school hours, not during school hours, because that was not allowed. We all worked as either photographers or graphic artists or designers or painters or whatever! That gave us contact with the local community. We were able to scrounge material for the school - get visitors to come in and see the school. We were able to do projects with the community.\textsuperscript{1089}

For the reasons listed above, and also to show my appreciation to members of the social biology community resource team, I conducted regular voluntary workshops outside of school hours. For example, I worked with Koori and ethnic education programs, Church youth groups, Girl Guides, Euroa, Shepparton Community Care and Cobram Citizens Advice Bureau training programs, and Shepparton and Cobram Education Program for Unemployed Youth (EPUY).\textsuperscript{1090} I also attended open meetings at Alcoholics Anonymous, Al Anon and Grow. The Cope program at HM Prison Dhurringile afforded an opportunity to explore rehabilitation programs for male sex offenders, and channel the knowledge gained into the social biology program.

South Tech Council continued to voice concerns about social biology, specifically the changes mooted in ‘Education for Living’. Like other areas within the school, social biology was continuously under challenge. Therefore an ‘Education for Living’ program was proposed, which was a series of one day seminars for senior students. The 1984 seminars focussed on driver education, legal awareness, career education, sexuality, conflict resolution and death and bereavement.\textsuperscript{1091} Almost all parents quietly approved their children’s attendance at classes, and many visited A7 on Parent-Teacher nights. Some parents clearly did not wish to be seen talking with the sex teacher, but commended the program, and expressed appreciation for the improved communication with their offspring.\textsuperscript{1092}

By the end of 1982, South Tech’s social biology program had been rigorously scrutinised by the media. It met many of the student needs, was acceptable to a majority of

\textsuperscript{1089} EF, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{1090} Correspondence to L. Preston.†
\textsuperscript{1091} Council minutes, 25 November 1980.
\textsuperscript{1092} Correspondence from parents: 13 April 1981, 24 November 1982.†
parents, and linked individuals and groups in a supportive, school-community network. The South Tech program developed concurrently with the Consultative Council for Health and Human Relations Education, which had been appointed by Norman Lacy, the Minister of Educational Services on 22 December 1980. The H&HR education principles and policy statements were approved by Cabinet on 15 October 1979, and the guidelines and curriculum statement outcomes were approved by Cabinet on 8 December 1981.\(^{1093}\)

In 1983, the beginnings of what was to develop into the joint Health Department/Ministry of Education Health Education Initiative commenced when I, with three South Tech trade teachers, was invited to join the GNER consultancy team in a part-time capacity. At the time, I did not understand the emerging role of the GNER, the changed role of the Technical Schools Division, how they both related to South Tech, and where I fitted in the complexity of what I now know was the prolonged Victorian Education Department restructure.

Throughout the vast GNER region, one day a week, my colleagues and I visited primary, high, technical and private schools to encourage teachers who were undertaking program innovations, and organise In-service and/or resources to meet their needs. While schools invariably welcomed my colleagues, such was not the case with me. A majority of administrators tolerated my presence, others wished to keep my visit low key. One principal insisted that I remain absolutely silent, and another wished me to leave as quickly as possible.

In contrast, a minority of principals boldly stated that it was not if courses would be held in their schools, but how.\(^ {1094}\) For example, Victor Ryall, Principal of Goulburn Valley Grammar School (GVGS), found ‘one of the most successful models of an appropriate course existed on his doorstep, the Social Biology program that had operated for some years at South Shepparton Technical School’.\(^ {1095}\) Ryall, anticipating the likelihood that some South Tech resource team members would be unavailable on the evening of his parent forum, invited nine South Tech resource team members and myself to address the gathering.\(^ {1096}\) To his ‘embarrassment’, all accepted his invitation, and GVGS staff and parents were well satisfied with his proposed course.\(^ {1097}\) Some primary school principals also responded positively to health education.\(^ {1098}\)

\(^{1094}\) Correspondence: V. Ryall to F. Purcell, 30 March 1983; Correspondence: B. Jackson, Principal, Wodonga High School, to L. Preston, 11 July 1986.†
\(^{1095}\) Correspondence: V. Ryall to F. Purcell, 30 March 1983.†
\(^{1096}\) Ibid.
\(^{1097}\) Ibid.
\(^{1098}\) School Improvement Plan 1985-86, Health and Human Relations, Strathbogie P.S.
My consultancy developed into a full-time commitment in 1986, when each district in the region established community networks and conducted in-services. Due to lack of space in the Shepparton District Education Office, I was accommodated in the Health Department’s Early Childhood Development Program (ECDP); my Health Department colleagues had participated in the South Tech program, and, in addition to accommodation, lent me clerical assistance and colleague support.

Delys Sargeant suggested that I approach the Benalla Regional Health Department Director, who enthusiastically supported a Health Department/Ministry of Education Health Promotion Unit. In June, the Centre I was in the process of establishing within the ECDP office was allocated a seeding grant of $2,000 from the Health Department Health Promotion Unit. On Delys’s advice, I wrote monthly bulletins to regional directors of health and education, senior education officers, and other interested parties, concerning my activities.

To fully inform Heads of Schools, Shepparton Senior Education Officer Joan Guymer invited District Principals to learn about the ramifications of the emerging HIV/AIDS disease at a seminar led by Susie White from the SBRC, on 3 April 1986. I co-ordinated a series of seminars for school staff and community health educators, including a special gathering of principals. An evaluation of this session revealed that at least one principal who attended the meeting ‘came away very conscious of the importance of reducing the risk of spreading infection, but [was] somewhat aghast at the prospect of having to take the decisions needed to do that effectively’. My subjective recollections of a majority of principals’ attitudes is supported by School Nurse Shirley Curtis, who conducted research into the GNER schools’ health education, and made the following observations:

It is evident that the principals and teachers consider health education as a vital component of the total school curriculum ... although the Regional Consultant was available to all schools for advice and resource information, schools did not choose to make contact, so were not aware of expertise or resources within their own community that would enrich their program ... until there is professional recognition of the health educators role and a liaison between health and education at a ministerial and regional level, there will possibly be continuing problems.

On 2 June 1986 I co-ordinated a BRISEC-funded seminar in Wodonga entitled ‘Decisions in Health Education’, which aimed to assist school communities to elucidate the directions of Ministerial Paper 6 as they related to health education.

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1099 Correspondence: Lynda Stephens, Co-ordinator, Health Promotion Unit, Health Department Victoria to Lesley Preston, 11 June 1986.
1100 Consultancy correspondence and records, 1983-86.†
1101 Frank Purcell, AIDS Seminar, 3 April 1986.
1102 14 October 1987.
In a letter to the regional directors of health and education, senior education officers, and interested parties on 22 December 1986, Ray Hocking, the Assistant Regional Director of Education (Operations), announced that budget cuts in the Ministry of Education would oblige the GNER Region ‘to reduce its consultancy numbers from the beginning of 1987’. Consequently, the Health and Human Relations Consultant would now have to return to a ‘school-based position’, and the joint Health Department/Health Education program would not continue in 1987. Hocking commented that ‘policy initiatives being further explored by the Ministry of Health may lead to further work in this field in the future’.1103

In answer to Ray Hocking’s letter, Delys Sargeant expressed her staff’s concern, and asked how:

policy initiatives being explored by the Ministry of Health can satisfy the needs of teachers, in particular, being provided access within their own schools to consultancy on the frequently complex and socially sensitive issues arising in teaching about and promoting health.1104

Delys made two further points. Firstly, from her long experience of delivering in-service programs and consultancy services to school staff in Victoria, it appeared teachers in 1987 would have ‘less professional support in this educational area than at any time since 1972’, even though the ‘needs for health knowledge and skills are even more evident for the young people of today’.1105 Secondly, as a member of the committee which reviewed Health Education and Promotion for the Minister of Health, Sargeant claimed that ‘it was apparent that health education does not belong to only one ministry and that the role of school educators is a very critical one in promoting the health of young people’.1106 SBRC staff member, Gary Jaynes, observed that the termination of the GNER health initiative was ‘an extraordinary decision ... although in keeping with the backsliding in the health area by the Department in the metropolitan regions as well’.1107

Nevertheless, the Regional Office was not alone in abrogating a decade of work by transferring responsibility to the Health Department. In June 1987, the minutes of the TTAV Executive Meeting suggested:

that the Minister approach the Minister of Health with a view to ensuring that adequate provision for in-service training of teachers is made through the

1103 Correspondence to Regional Directors of Health and Education, Senior Education Officers, Interested Parties from R. Hocking, 22 December 1986.†
1104 Correspondence to R. Hocking from D. Sargeant, 23 January 1987.†
1105 Ibid.
1106 Ibid.
1107 Correspondence to L. Preston from G. Jaynes, SBRC, 16 April 1987.
In 1985, the Director-General of Education, Norman Curry, introduced *Decision Making in Health Education: A guide to curriculum planning for schools*, which reflected the Government policy of *Ministerial Paper 1*. This document resembled Norman Lacy’s 1982 *Health and Human Relations Education*. However, by concentrating on ‘collaborative decision-making’ and ‘systematic planning’, I would argue that the guide lacked real world relevance. It demonstrated no understanding of the importance of leadership, for instance, or the need for individual staff and students to personally grapple with a socially sensitive curriculum. It was as if the media firestorm of the 1980s had never happened.


Following Labor’s electoral victory in 1982, secondary techs were merged into post-primary schools, and health education was integrated into the curriculum *Frameworks*. In an interview, a South Tech teacher recalled:

We were the first in Victoria, weren’t we? Of course, Jock, being the Principal, encouraged it and let us have a fairly loose rein, didn’t he? He believed it was very important and supported us all. When you [Lesley Preston] left, I tried to keep some of the classes going and we had a new principal, who wasn’t really … that interested in keeping it going as it was.

It sort of lapsed for some years and now [1997] they run some sex education in personal development and health classes. But it is not the same, I feel, without community involvement. I feel that’s very disappointing. They don’t bring doctors in, they don’t have ministers of religion, they don’t have

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1108 Minutes of Executive Meeting, 16 June 1987, p.7; Points 6.11.3, 6.11.4; Z302, Box 37; Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.
birthing educators - you know, just people that can help them with their problems.\textsuperscript{1112}

Reflecting on the social biology course, Jock Thomlinson claimed that the South Tech school community benefited from the 1980 controversy; understanding was a by-product when people had to ‘stand up and fight’ for their course. In Jock’s opinion:

The whole [education] system needs to be turned upside down and the examples are wherever you look in the world, you can see it’s not done, and the balls-up they have. I can say, because we had our course, and because everybody looked at it, our course was much more unified and knowledgeable about all sorts of things. Not only were the kids learning, but the teachers and the community were learning. Because our parents had to stand up and fight for the course, they had to understand it, and school councillors and the Department understood. It was a tremendous thing, much larger than just teaching the kids.\textsuperscript{1113}

In his history of curriculum reform, Alan Barcan cited NSW Director of Education, (former Director of Studies), Fenton Sharpe’s 1988 claims that:

The tide had turned and the determination of educational policy has slipped largely from the hands of the professionals ... to reside firmly with governments, political parties with their educational policy committees, economists, management experts and their major advisors from business and large employee organisations.\textsuperscript{1114}

In the next chapter former students reflect on their South Tech experiences.

\textsuperscript{1112} JH, interview, 1997.
\textsuperscript{1113} JRT, interview, 1996.
Chapter 7: Former Student Reflections

South Tech students were often called upon to escort visitors around the school and explain their learning programs. For example, during the 1980 sex education controversy, Nationwide journalist Mary Delahunty conducted private, in-depth discussions with students as well as filming classes. In this chapter, three former students’ oral histories reflect their experiences at South Tech during the final decade of Jock Thomlinson’s administration, 1977-86.

I chose Kathleen, Christine and Michael from a large number of possible interviewees who offered to share their reflections on secondary technical education. Some of the possibilities included past students from indigenous, Anglo-Saxon and ethnic origins. Some had stable employment in professions, trades and commerce, others were unemployed. Some had done time in jail, others had survived by accepting any form of work to support themselves and their families. In view of the enduring criticism that technical education was second rate, I chose these three former students largely on their ability to verbalise their reflections on secondary technical education.

At the time of the interview in 2000, Kathleen described her occupation as ‘a mother of two, a three-year-old and a one-year-old, which is the most important thing in my life at the moment’. Prior to the birth of her children, Kathleen was a breast cancer support nurse, caring for patients both during their stay, and following their discharge from hospital, a role that she continued for two days a week after her children were born. Kathleen trained at Bendigo Base Hospital, and ‘at that stage it was still the hospital-based training’; not university or college-based. Kathleen was one of the very few who obtained double distinctions in the State examinations at the end of her three year training in both medical and surgical nursing.

I also interviewed Christine in 2000. Christine’s success in mathematics resulted in her being ‘pushed or encouraged strongly into the maths/science sort of subjects’; consequently her occupation was shaped by the completion of a La Trobe University economics degree with a major in econometrics. Subsequently, Christine managed a Melbourne-based superannuation consulting company, but chose to work from home following the birth of her son.

Michael operated a maintenance engineering business based in Shepparton at the time.

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1115 KM, interview, 2000
of the interview in 2001; the services that he offered to his customers included the repair, maintenance and manufacture of fruit handling equipment.\textsuperscript{1117} Michael described his occupation as:

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\textit{a generalist, mainly. Whatever anybody asks me to do, so long as it’s within the realms of the law, I’ll do it, and that’s what I think helps my business survive locally. Being in the Goulburn Valley, and having a small customer base, if you’re not prepared to generalise, there’ll be times of the year when you are not working. If you are purely a cool room builder, what do you do when there are no cool rooms going up? Nothing, so I’m building cool rooms one day, fabricating another day, concreting, putting up a shed.}\textsuperscript{1118}
\end{center}
\end{quote}

In choosing an occupation, Michael took a number of factors into account. He ‘wasn’t interested in being moved around all over the place because another thing that is important to me is family - like family contact with relations in this area’.\textsuperscript{1119}

As the reader will discover, Kathleen and Christine’s parents made an informed decision to enrol their daughters at South Tech in 1977, despite the extra travel involved. Their recollections open a window on education in the 1970s, before equal opportunity arguments were employed to merge technical with high schools; they also cast a different light on Joan Kirner’s claim in 1989, that it was ‘because of our deliberate encouragement’ that ‘at Year 11 [girls] are studying maths at a level near ninety per cent’\textsuperscript{1120} Michael, rather than simply following in his brothers’ footsteps - given the option of enrolling at the secondary school of his choice - attended South Tech’s Orientation Day and arrived at his own decision.

Kathleen and Christine spent five years at South Tech before enrolling in the Tertiary Orientation Program (TOP) at Shepparton’s Jackson College of Technical and Further Education (TAFE) in 1982; Michael enrolled at South Tech in 1982, completing his twelfth year during the school’s ‘transitional phase’, in 1987.\textsuperscript{1121}

For Kathleen’s family, it was a big decision to enrol at South Tech, as there was a high school within walking distance in her town; travelling time to Shepparton was an hour and a half to two hours every day. However, after visiting the school, the family felt that:

\begin{quote}
\begin{center}
the education there was far over and above what was at the local high school ... You didn’t just have history and language that you had to do. It seemed to look at more the whole person, interests as well as education. Students
\end{center}
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{1117} MP, interview, 2001.
\textsuperscript{1118} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1119} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1121} MP, interview, 2001.
seemed to be respected as individuals. That was the reason why we chose to go there.\textsuperscript{1122}

Choosing an academic course at senior levels, Kathleen nevertheless ‘loved’ the practical subjects - cooking, needlework, leather work, woodwork and sheetmetal - and found herself better able to relate to a diversity of people: ‘it just helped you [to] have a fraction of knowledge in that area when you are talking to people, or just a fraction of appreciation of what might be involved in something in those lines’.

Kathleen reflected that education at South Tech ‘was really going against the tide ... you were really looked upon as having a second rate education by going to a technical school’ by people who were:

mostly outside the technical education system, basically. You often got those vibes from your friends - family friends, and friends in your age group that were going to a high school. You know, we didn’t have the brains to go to a high school so you went to tech school - and then obviously future employers and people that you had to sell yourself a bit more ... they just didn’t think you had the same academic abilities.

Kathleen discussed her experience in the trades, and recounted her memories in the academic areas:

I’ll follow the trade bit first. Sewing is my great passion and relaxation in life so it was really good that I got a really good grounding with that at tech school and I use everything that I learnt there ... definitely to start with, everyone did all the same subjects - so the boys did the sewing and the girls did the sheetmetal and everything all the same ... and then the cooking, that was really good and gave you a grounding in the cooking ... I was just looked after and pampered at home, so I’d never cooked ...

As for the stereotype ‘male type’ trade subjects, I loved woodwork and, you know, to this day, I’m sure I could go to a lathe and start turning something, and you are taught the safety requirements ... You’d just have a bit of a knowledge of how furniture is put together, vaguely, you’d know dovetail is better than non-dovetail - basic little things like that ... the trade subjects were my love.

It wasn’t just getting there and doing stuff with your hands. We had, particularly for woodwork, I can remember we had our woodwork folder and that’s probably just because I threw it out probably only eighteen months ago. [It described] what the tools were and the safety and that sort of thing, and I can remember that some of the classes were structured so you did a bit of stuff with a pen, before you got started on your project.

\textsuperscript{1122}KM, interview, 2000. All comments from Kathleen in this section are from the same interview.
Kathleen ‘loved social studies’, and really got her ‘teeth into all those projects and did well and truly over and above’:

I enjoyed, I mean, those very basic research-type things that you did then ... English was good and I particularly remember one teacher ... No, there were probably two English teachers who really stand out in my mind ... I was taught footnoting, and while there’s heaps of different ways of doing it, I’ve got the basic concept and it's a pain in the neck, but it’s never too big a deal once you get the specifics of what whoever you are studying under wants.

I remember in my early studies after secondary school, other people didn’t seem to have a clue of footnoting ... that’s an interesting thought because that came from the so-called technical stream but it was an academic skill ... [technical education] equips you for things later in life - interests, hobbies and academic requirements to go on to further studies.

Although there were school excursions, ‘nothing hugely’ came to Kathleen’s mind, except for work experience, where it was unclear if the tech had the same, or more opportunities than the high school. However, she focused on the breadth of opportunities, and the lack of pressure to excel, at South Tech:

Just perhaps to emphasise a little bit more the opportunities that existed, you weren’t driven to do things, but there were those opportunities there during your lunchtime or whatever, to do different things in a whole heap of subjects. I did a lot of woodworking in the school during lunchtime, that was a very one-off situation.

There was music, the media studies, the sport and while I didn’t get into automobile in a big way, I can remember that the bigger kids that did - they took cars apart and put them together - that was sometimes happening during lunch breaks. Yes - you weren’t driven, you didn’t have to excel, there wasn’t huge pushes there - but the opportunities were there if you were interested.

Returning to her ‘great passion and relaxation in life’ - sewing - Kathleen recalled her experience on the catwalk:

I remember for a couple of years, with our sewing, they organised a fashion parade in the evening so that what you made during sewing course, you could parade up and down the catwalk. Yes, we had the catwalk in the gymnasium, there was music going and - yes! You came on and paraded what you made. I made this summer dressing gown, and, it must have been mid-years, because the later years I got into the academic stuff. Yes, I made this summer dressing gown and I paraded up and down the catwalk with this summer dressing gown on and a teddy bear in my arms!

Towards the end of the interview, there was one area that had not been addressed - a competitive area in which the school clearly did not excel:
Something we haven’t spoken about that has come to my mind is sport. There was obviously the PE, the physical education subject. Then there was the opportunity to be involved in sporting teams outside of school hours, and for me that was netball.

I remember once a year coming down to Melbourne to play in the evening some games [laughs] I don’t know - yes! We used to practise at lunchtime, so that was outside of the ordinary.

And then there was, they had the 100K club and that was at winter, and we’d have to walk around, is it 100K or 100 laps? Something like that, I can’t remember, around the oval and that was a winter activity, you got all muddy every lunchtime doing that.

So, sport was important? Did South Tech win anything?

South Tech was always hopeless! [laughs] I always got champion swimmer, and I think in Year 7 I was beating the Year 11s or something at swimming. Then when we got the inter-school sports, we got absolutely thrashed in swimming - absolutely! I can’t remember huge successes in any sport. I’m sure we didn’t lose everything, but I can’t remember huge successes in anything! [laughs]

I remember writing an essay for sport too, so there’s the academic part coming into it too. The essay I wrote was something about the importance of sport outside of sporting, so that you learned to work with other people and you learnt about leadership and things like that.

When Kathleen enrolled at South Tech, the school had a bad name for discipline. In her interview, she reflected on two issues contributing to this perception; firstly, ‘the old thing of not having a uniform. A lot of people saw that as poor discipline and kids were running wild and all that sort of thing’. However, Kathleen found ‘the [school’s] philosophy ... just helped people to be individuals’. There were ‘certain dress expectations’ and ‘the opportunity to wear a uniform if you wanted to’. Comparing South Tech’s dress code to primary schools in her urban local area in 2000, she noted that ‘very few primary schools actually have a school uniform. Yes - going around in circles!’

Secondly, she raised the issue of addressing some staff by their first name:

A number of the teachers we addressed by their Christian names and that was seen to be, from the outside, a lack of respect. Whereas, I think often the teachers that were addressed by Christian names, for some reason, had more respect from the students. Perhaps because they just had a better relationship and rapport with young kids. Yes, but that was definitely another reason, another something that a finger was pointed at - that students could speak - call their teachers by their Christian names.
Kathleen also commented on the respect and rapport that seemed to emanate from the student-staff informal address code:

My mind is just thinking about it and exploring it. But I do remember there being a real respect for a lot of those teachers that you did call by their Christian names, because you could relate to them. They were on your level a bit. Just going along with what great rapport there was between the students and the staff. I’m not saying that one hundred per cent that there wasn’t such a good rapport for those ones that were called by ‘Mr’ and ‘Mrs’ but it just put a really nice feel to it, that you could go up and talk to them, and talk to your teachers if you had any worries or anything. They weren’t aloof or distant.

Again, comparing South Tech’s student-teacher address code, Kathleen observed that her child called ‘kinder teachers by their Christian names - so that’s interesting to put two and two together like that!’

Her recollections of staff-student relationships revealed that ‘eighty to ninety per cent’ of her teachers ‘were fantastic ... both trade and academic, they were still interested in you as an individual and you doing the best you could and following the interests that you wanted’.

Responsible for ringing the school bell for a number of years, (the bell being activated by a button located on the Public Address system in a senior teacher’s office), Kathleen, ‘probably a dozen times a day’, gained a unique insight into discipline procedures:

I did sometimes overhear a bit of discipline going on and there was never the strap used. It was more - there were discipline procedures taken, but it was more discussion and notes to parents were involved, and I guess - along the lines of education from an individual perspective for the student - trying to get them interested in something they could excel in, was my understanding.

In the classroom situation:

The strap ... to my knowledge it didn’t exist. I can’t remember - OK, you had the disruptive kids and that. I guess sometimes in the trade subjects it was harder, if you were actually trying to do some work, because you needed so much supervision and help. I guess sometimes that was a little bit frustrating if you were interested in a subject and trying to do something. It was worse in the [Year] 7, 8, 9 age group and after that, the kids [that] didn’t want to be there weren’t there. In the academic subjects I can’t remember [there] being too much disruption, but it is stretching the memory a bit.
There was a ‘huge diversity’ in the student body, including different ethnic groups, ‘who were really interested in a wide range of subjects - yes, and who wanted to make use of it at the time’. On the other hand, there was the perception that ‘only “hoods” went to South Tech. They were seen as disruptive, wild-type kids. That was all the outside opinions, not within’. Kathleen ‘didn’t venture out hugely ... into friendships outside ... birds of a feather flock together, I guess’. Keeping in contact with one friend from her South Tech school days, Kathleen attributed the fact there were ‘no others, probably partly that was because I went - it was a secondary school outside of my own town so I didn’t grow up with the families and kids around’.

Drawing the interview to a close, I asked Kathleen to comment on South Tech’s approach to female students, their education and opportunities.

*Did techs put down women? Were they no good for the girls?*

A lot of hogwash. Because we were given the opportunity, as I said in Year 7, to do everything across the board. Girls and boys did the same. So then you were able to follow the interests that you chose, so I did . I followed woodwork for as long as I could, but I remember some of the girls doing automotive stuff and sheetmetal stuff - there wasn’t many. I mean, we all fit into the stereotypes very easily, but there was the opportunity there to do it if you wanted to.

*You could have become a carpenter or a plumber if you had wanted to?*

Yes. Definitely! Yes. I’d say far more so than - yes, my opinion would be far more so than in a high school - you wouldn’t have the same opportunities, I wouldn’t think.

*The education was very second rate, very ordinary?*

 Totally wrong, because, well, I got to where I wanted to go from an academic perspective and I was given all this broad range of interests and basic knowledge in other areas that I didn’t actually choose to follow, but I would say it far excelled, over and above a traditional high school education.

*What about being called one of the South Tech hoods?*

Well, I just stood straight and tall and showed them that I wasn’t!

*The philosophy - can I ask you what that philosophy was, when you were there?*

When I was there, it was the individual bit of students, that students were treated as individuals and respected and helped and encouraged in every way. And the broad education and the opportunities that students were given and
the teachers were really brilliant to give you those opportunities. The teachers were really there for the good of the students - that all comes in under philosophy as I saw it.

*What was technical education?*

Technical education was the opportunity to explore a wide variety of things. So a wide variety of trade and academic issues were addressed. [You had] the opportunity to explore them. [And] to be treated as an individual and encouraged and helped, not just one of a huge class that didn’t matter.

There’s something else on the tip of my tongue that I want to - what was technical education? The opportunity to explore a range - and that the whole of a person’s personality was important, so therefore, while your academic abilities were important - to have interests in life was also considered important, in order to equip you to be a balanced person in life.

Another former South Tech student, Christine, recalled that she grew up in a ‘very, very close-knit, very small, small-minded community’; she felt that her parents wanted her to broaden her ‘horizons and keep as many options open as possible’. Christine’s family were among the first to decide not just to do what most students had done in their town and ‘blindly go to the High School, but they checked another option, which was South Tech’:

We were quite impressed so, I think, eight or ten of us decided to make the trek across to Shepparton every day to school. I know a lot of boys from our class as well took the other option and went to Echuca Tech. I think we just decided, well, my parents, probably mostly - at twelve I don’t think I had a big part in the decision - decided that, one - they wanted to get me out of the small-mindedness of a tiny community like that, and two - wanted to keep as many options open for my future as possible, as far as I understand it anyway.

Christine recalled being impressed by the facilities - the ‘big kitchen’, the woodwork and the sheetmetal: ‘it’s a long time ago now, but I remember thinking that they were fabulous’. At twelve years of age, Christine ‘didn’t know whether I was going to be a rocket scientist or a cook, so you’ve got to keep your options open!’ At the time she accepted the presence of the facilities without thinking, ‘oh! Wow! This must be really expensive and amazing to have in a school’. She did, however, recall her delight that the television studio was ‘cool, from the point of view of, you know, it was “a telly studio”, sort of thing’.

Like Kathleen, Christine enjoyed the practical areas, although perhaps not the ‘very ugly hairnets’, that were an essential safety feature in the trade workshops:

I remember the very ugly hairnets they used to make us wear. We all did everything ... I can quite clearly remember the boys cutting the cotton as we

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1123 CH, interview, 2000. All comments from Christine in this section are from the same interview.
were sewing - finding no cotton left! ... we did six months of motor mechanics, and we did sheetmetal ... We made some lovely things in woodwork.

I remember making those swan things. The three swans in a row that you hung on the wall in the 70s. A pencil box that my father still has. I made an entire table that stayed at my parents’ house for a very long time, so it was a well-constructed table. Key hooks and that sort of thing in woodwork. In metal work, we made key rings and rings and I remember making a silver ring in one class.

After the early years, with the exception of woodwork, Christine elected to study the ‘girl’ subjects. Although she kept up her woodwork, she found that it did not impede her academic studies. Maths at South Tech was ‘fairly strong’, and provided a sound basis for mathematical studies at a tertiary level:

I remember then, doing less and less and less of those subjects because they weren’t of interest to me in the end. I did a lot more sewing and cooking - I did the ‘girl’ things, I guess ... I think I kept up woodwork because I always enjoyed woodwork - that was very satisfying. I think the table was made at quite a higher level than Year 7 ... I do know more boys did choose them in the end, although a couple of girls ... did more of the trade subjects and ended up in some trade-type occupation, so, yes. I’m speaking very generally. Girls tended to go off and do the cooking and things, but I guess that’s natural.

There was a wide variety of options open and we all did them in the younger years as I remember ... and then we had electives as we grew older - pottery as well! There was art as well.

South Tech students learnt both sides of the camera and Christine was introduced to computers:

I remember filming other students while some of them were acting and talking. I remember pretending to be a news presenter one day, and someone filming me, because it was all in the dark. There were dark rooms ... I remember going and taking photographs and learning how to develop films from scratch. Yes, there was a television studio and ... we had to get dressed up, maybe, and act out certain scenarios ... we were taken to quite a few movies ... that must have been part of humanities - maybe we had to come back and critique the movies.

There was a computer area as well! ... That was really state of the art back then, too. Eddie Spain taught us typing, and I remember the boys having to do typing.

Christine’s mother chose to dress her daughter in uniform - South Tech had ‘a basic uniform, but it was very brown and horrible, and no one wanted to wear it anyway, [laughter]
though brown was the fashion in the 70s!’ South Tech kids looked a bit ‘daggy’, in their ‘different T-shirts’, compared to other schools whose students dressed in uniforms, which ‘tend to make you look a bit smarter and together’.

As Kathleen has already described, staff introduced themselves by their preferred name to their students. Christine recalled ‘being scared of some of [her] primary school teachers’, but ‘never any of those [South Tech] teachers. [First names] broke down some of the barriers. Yes, they were more on your level’.

However, South Tech could also present dangers, especially in the form of ‘rough kids’. Christine recalled:

not wanting to walk down particular corridors because that’s where particular girls would hang out, where, if you walked by them, they would spit at you, or throw things at you, or punch you, or whatever, and being quite afraid of some of them. The older I got, it became more segregated, I think, the ones that weren’t going to go on in school. The ones that left school early tended to pick on the so-called ‘smarter ones’. Yes, I remember it being quite threatening, sometimes.

The boys, however, were not ‘threatening’, and Christine had ‘a good lot of friends, that were both male and female. We stuck together’. Reflecting that South Tech ‘had a terrible name’ for rough kids, Christine nevertheless suggested that this reputation was undeserved:

Being there and experiencing it … there were some rough kids but I’m sure there are in every school. It was a myth, and it was a myth perpetuated by the Shepparton Highs, I think. [laughter] I know, at home in Kyabram, if you went off to the technical schools, you weren’t doing anything worse or better. You were just doing something different. It’s a shame it was such a myth, really. You were obviously aware of the reputation. As a teacher, did you get the same?

Christine suggested several factors contributing to the ‘myth’: the school’s geographical location; students’ socio-economic circumstances; the school’s acceptance of ‘rejects’ from other secondary schools; and the lack of success at interschool sporting competitions, where South Tech’s lack of compulsory school uniform was also very obvious:

I think it was just that end of town, the poorer, the less well-to-do end of town and the rougher type kids that tended to go to - it was the socio-economics, I guess of that area, where it was a lower class of people. Sounds terrible, doesn’t it?

There was also the reputation of people who had failed at the high school,
or people who weren’t ‘academic’ went to a technical school. I guess, it was people - if your parents are doctors and lawyers and things they expect you to be a doctor or lawyer and so they send you to an academic school. If you worked at SPC factory or something, you probably expected your children to be tradesmen, so you sent them to a technical school. It was the socio-economics, I think.

I do remember an influx of people in about Form Four that had decided that they weren’t going to go Shepparton High any more and they’d come and do some technical education stuff, and then they were seen as the rejects of Shepparton High.

It always had a terrible reputation, which, I don’t think any of us realised until we got there - and battled with that, but I don’t think it was true; it was more an external reputation, more of a myth, than anything - one of those urban myths - but I’m sure that happens at every school.

Despite the reality of very antisocial students in the school, Christine didn’t recall detention, and all sorts of ‘weird and wonderful’ disciplinary procedures that she had since heard were common practice in high and private schools of the same era. Her feeling, with the benefit of hindsight, was of openness - ‘there was no real hierarchy, and there was no one really to be frightened of’. Christine reflected that some of the rough kids were ‘particularly good at some of the trades’. Always in A classes herself, Christine felt that the D classes were probably for the ‘bad guys’ [laughter]:

There were different levels of maths, I think, different difficulties. So in 7A we always did the hardest levels and things, but there were lower levels for kids. I remember quite a good remedial program as well. It was a school that really did look after everyone - or tried to look after everyone. An Aboriginal guy that helped the Aboriginal kids, because there were quite a lot of Aboriginal kids - and I think he took the remedial program as well.

Having attended a reunion in her hometown the previous weekend, Christine reflected on the ethnic diversity represented in some old photographs, and the benefits of this natural learning environment in the understanding of cultural differences:

Looking at the photos at the weekend, there was certainly diversity. There were a couple of Aboriginal kids - I don’t recall there being any racism or anything - I know we had quite a lot of Albanians, Italians - it was a very Italian end of town ... and Turkish kids. And I think that sort of broadened my education as well, mixing with those cultures.

A lot of them were going home at night-time and picking fruit and things and couldn’t do their homework - didn’t do their homework because they were so busy at home, working.

I know a couple of the kids that we grew up with, that were great guys, had wives chosen for them flown over from Yugoslavia and Albania, to be
married to them. One of them married a woman that he’d never met before. We’d go out with them and stuff, but they were never going to - there was never any chance that there’d be any longer term future with an Australian girl.

Similarly to the interview with Kathleen, I invited Christine to comment on her secondary education’s weaknesses and strengths, and the South Tech philosophy as she experienced it. In her opinion, a negative that was ‘very, very specific to South Tech’ was its image:

That still sort of follows me now, if someone asks you where you went to school, and I guess that’s a part of my group of friends or whatever now. Most people see technical education, now, still, as a second class education. Again, I guess my peers now and most of the people I associate with are my friends from university and they all went to grammar schools and colleges and things in Melbourne. To say you went to South Tech in Shepparton is really sort of daggy. [laughter] But I’ve ended up just as good as them, so [laughter] there is a real stigma about it. Probably not now, but from our generation, there is still a stigma about having had a technical education rather than a - even a high school education is seen as better.

Christine also recalled her disappointment that, as a ‘smarter’ student, she was encouraged to pursue a course that did not satisfy her needs; she realised from her ‘very limited experience of having been pushed into the science things, that that was a really bad thing’. Christine ‘shouldn’t have done them, I’m better at English and ... I did well at economics ... but pushing a child into anything is not something that should be done’.

We had to leave South Tech in Form Five and go off to Jackson [College of TAFE]. Most people left school at Form Five, or Year 11, and the few who did go on had to go to Jackson and ... this was a disappointment having done - I was always classified as one of the ‘smarter’ students, in inverted commas - so I was pushed or encouraged strongly into the maths/science sort of subjects, so I did pure and applied maths, chemistry, physics and English in Year 12 and, probably could have chosen subjects better.

Christine pointed out that at seventeen years of age, ‘you do what you think is best’, and take advice from those in positions of authority, including teachers; nevertheless, a practical solution to her dilemma appeared after her first year at university:

I went to university and had no idea what I wanted to do and actually got into an arts course, but did maths in my arts degree. I did maths in first year and thought, ‘I don’t know what doing maths, just doing maths, is going to do for me’, and had to choose an elective as well, so I chose legal studies, and became quite interested in that. Through that I decided that I’d do something more practical, I moved into economics, doing mathematical economics - I’ve
always been quite mathematical through my life, so it was mathematical/economics degree that I did, so my major was in econometrics.

The major strength of technical education in Christine’s opinion was that it introduced young people to a wide range of opportunities:

I didn’t know that I wasn’t going to be a wiz at woodwork or - and I just happened to take the academic track, but a lot of people didn’t - so it opened you up to as many opportunities ... I can still sew really well, and I cook really well and I don’t know where that came from but I assume it came from my schooling ... I can still touch type, I do a lot, you know. It's obviously something that never left me, because I didn’t ever learn typing anywhere else ... it opened you up to a very, very, very broad range of opportunities.

For Christine, technical education permitted a choice between education leading to university, and technical education - it avoided the ‘dangerous’ tendency to streamline children towards narrow life options:

[It gave you] you the broadest range of possibilities, and then [lets] you decide which ones to take, which ones you were going to use. So it needs to have a good academic stream and a good technical stream, and if you choose to take the academic, good. But if you choose to take a mixture, fine! It’s getting out of it what you want rather than streamlining children into academia, which I think is a really dangerous thing.

Both Kathleen and Christine left South Tech the year before Michael enrolled in 1982. Michael’s primary education was completed at St. Brendan’s Catholic School; his brothers found that private secondary education did not meet their needs, and they therefore transferred to South Tech. The boys flourished at the tech, and became ‘very good friends with the teachers’; they also ‘honored their practical skills’, and became very skilled in learning areas including ‘welding and engineering ... very handy for an orcharding family’.1124

His brothers’ tech school experiences influenced Michael’s decision to enrol at South Tech. ‘Given the option at the end of primary school, Michael attended South Tech’s Orientation Day and was ‘very impressed’, especially with the trade area. As their family was ‘third generation orchardists’, Michael’s career path was planned: he was ‘going to just leave school and go to work on our orchard’. However, his plans were thwarted when the orchard was sold and his future removed. ‘Then I had no direction. Didn’t know where I was going’.

Michael enrolled at the school when uniform was compulsory. He was in ‘uniform from day one ... we had uniform all the way and it was strict’. Out of uniform days were eagerly anticipated and, on reaching Year 12, students dressed in mufti, which they ‘took

1124 MP, interview, 2001. All comments from Michael in this section are from the same interview.
advantage of as well’. The uniform was:

shades of brown, and the girls had the shades of green ... a bit ‘crappy’, for want of a better word, I suppose. But the actual items of clothing were quite functional ... the brown was good for what we were doing: working in the different trade classes and things like that.

While the new compulsory school uniform policy was strictly monitored, staff-student relationships continued as in past years. Michael pointed out that he had ‘two brothers that had been there and made their mark’ ten years earlier. He found that some of the teachers had taught his brothers: ‘you’re Gary’s younger brother’. He didn’t mind that at all: ‘you get a leg up from those sort of things and an opportunity presents itself, you take it’.

Michael also reflected on being allowed to call some teachers by their first name:

Used in the correct way, that works well! It takes away a wall. If kids don’t respect that, then I don’t agree with it. If you can deal with a class and have them call you by your first name with respect, that’s much more relaxed. It’s a fine line, I know that. There are students that you can’t deal with - you can’t trust them to give you that respect. Calling Don Anderson ‘Don’, you know, it was just relaxed. In Year 7 you had us for social biology - I can remember it in A Wing, sitting there - and - ‘Lesley’! That’s the first time - South Tech was the first time I ever spoke to a teacher by their first name. My God, you know! That’s a bit odd!

Michael had ‘excellent relationships with most of the trade teachers’, and although the other teachers created a ‘very relaxed learning environment’, there was a teacher that he ‘didn’t get along with, but, even though I didn’t get along with that teacher, when you get past that personality clash thing, which we did - I got something out of that person - I got praise from that person’.

Michael recalled that school assemblies were infrequent, perhaps monthly - ‘something like that’:

Ron Dell’oro would get up and have his chat about this and that and - it was informative. There was usually only an assembly when there was something to say. On one or two occasions, I was up the front, anyway, with ‘Driver of the Week’ award or whatever, at the DECA thing. [The Driver Education Centre of Australia in Shepparton.] That was embarrassing.

Young people were singled out in assemblies to receive awards towards Michael’s latter years at South Tech (1985-87), as he described:

I thought that the awards that we used to have - which only really started to
kick in, from my memory, towards the end of my time there - that was great, it was a recognition of hard work that you’d done. It meant a lot to receive an award for this or that. It gave you a big pep boost for the following year. The ones that I received, originally, were Most Improved awards.

The first part of my secondary schooling I was just one of the crowd and just finding my way, I suppose. Toward the end - Year 10, 11 and 12 - I came into my own and started to realise what I could and couldn’t do. That’s when my marks went up. As a result of my marks going from average to slightly better than average at the time, I received the first award. Then you think: ‘Gee, I’ll try harder, I’ll try harder!’ ... Then, my aim was to try and get A’s in every subject!

Michael pointed out that he had always believed, ‘even if you are illiterate ... if you can get through life and not have anyone know that you can’t read and write, you’re incredibly intelligent’; he felt that people in this situation ‘have done it a lot harder than what we have’. He linked this perception with South Tech’s:

very fair, relaxed schooling environment that would reward endeavours to be better. Anyone could be a star there if they tried hard enough, it was just up to them to try. If you were prepared to have a go, you’d end up with an accolade of some sort. You’d get recognised.

Michael recalled that, in his early years, homework was straightforward: ‘it was more a time management thing’. However, in the senior years:

the homework for me was horrendous, because I was also working part-time. I had four hours Thursday night, four hours on Friday night and five hours Saturday morning, which only left me Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday night and Sunday. I at least tried to keep Sunday free. Definitely, every weeknight, I was - Year 10 and 11 - I was slogging out the homework like you would not believe.

I think it depended on the subjects that you chose and because I had three maths going in [the] sciences, and English, I was really going for it! Looking back, I think that was a great experience for me. I never got a chance to play up or be out on the town or any of that sort of thing - I was too bloody busy!

Relating his education to the present, Michael was ‘always disappointed’ with his English skills. He could write (‘waffle on’, as he put it) but his spelling ability didn’t really start until he left school. He felt the training ‘when it came to spelling was not quite as strict’ as he needed, although there were ‘certain teachers who did try and were good’. Social studies provided a ‘brief introduction to other countries, cultures, whatever ... that was interesting’.
Michael felt that a high school education would have been inappropriate for himself. Using history and a second language as examples, Michael explained that:

If I had gone to a high school, I personally can’t see how history - learning the subject of history, for instance - would have helped me one iota. I now am very interested in history. I sit back and I watch the documentaries that are on the ABC and SBS dealing with the history of this country, history of that country - I’ll read the Pearl Harbour history. I’m interested in it now. I sit down - I’m interested and I’ll learn it. If someone had tried to teach me history at school, I personally would have been wasting valuable time that I could have been devoting to something else like the metalwork, trades or whatever. I’m glad that I never learnt a second language and I’m glad that I was never taught history at school.

Now, as far as the language is concerned, a lot of my customers are Macedonian, Greek, Italian - all of that. I’ve found as long as I can see their hands, I can understand what they’re saying. We get by just fine! I’ve been on a trip to Korea, for work, and I’ve been in an environment there where I had no idea what the signs said - I had no idea what the language said! How am I going to learn every language I need? You’re not!

In his adult life, Michael was able to satisfy his interest in history to the full; he could also communicate with a range of people from different social and ethnic backgrounds:

I’m very happy that I didn’t do history or languages, because now I am actually interested in history. I seek out the documentaries when I can get them and I watch them. I go to work the next day and at smoko I’m telling the boys around the smoko table: ‘did you know that this happened and that happened?’ It’s really good.

Michael ‘did cooking for one year - it was alright ... sewing for two years - that was OK’. He enjoyed ‘brief success in certain things in sport’; but he and his family ‘never really followed’ sport. However, he ‘used to enjoy competing in the athletics for school and getting sunburnt to a crisp!’ He remembered other learning areas, including typing. Whereas Michael’s touch typing only reached ‘a certain speed’, his wife, Robyn [also a former South Tech student] ‘can type like you wouldn’t believe - she’s a gem! She had office work everyday’. Michael considered himself ‘lucky’ that he didn’t pursue an interest in media because ‘all the productions moved out of Shepparton’; he also ‘played the organ for a little while ... that’s actually Robyn’s over there [pointing] - she was quite good at it. Robyn used to do exams!'

‘Maths was great. You either had to get it right or you didn’t’. Michael found the external maths exams were a ‘level playing field’ that enabled students to know how they were faring ‘amongst other people in the state’. A friendly competition arose between Michael and his best friend:
he [Mark] was handling all the English and the maths and the science and he was just shining. I was - he helped me learn, too, I mean, being the best friend of Mark and him pushing so hard, it was always a competition between Mark and I. I was always trying to beat Mark. It was just between us, and that kept each other going as well. I knew I could whip him in the art and the woodwork and whatever, so, we had our good points and our bad points.

However, when he studied Maths B, Michael failed to see why he ‘needed to do it’; he couldn’t understand it, nor the reason why he’d chosen to work in this learning area, apart from the fact that he ‘needed to do a lot of maths to stand me in good stead for any occupation that I might want’: ‘I knew that English and maths were something I needed - all the other stuff didn’t really matter as long as you had English and maths, you could get whatever you wanted’.

When Michael asked his teacher, Don Anderson, ‘When am I going to need it?’, Michael recalled his reply: ‘well, you probably won’t, but it will help you deal with your life - if you have problems, and sorting things out, like that’. Michael response was to take ‘a whole new outlook to the subject then. Put my head down, kept working on it with purpose. Before then, I was just working on it - “Why am I doing this? I’m never going to use this again”’. Michael appreciated Don Anderson’s approach: ‘if he saw that you were willing to try hard, he would try hard back’.

Don came over to the Common Room on my spare classes, and sat across the table from me, one-on-one, and went through the things that I was having trouble with, I felt more relaxed. I was talking to him face to face without anyone else sitting around going: ‘Uh uh, you don’t know that!’ or ‘Ha ha ha’. I could ask him stupid questions that didn’t matter. Sometimes it was that stupid question that was the difference between me understanding it and not, because it was just some simple little fact that everyone else had picked up on that I hadn’t.

Michael reflected that this incident was the first occasion in which he encountered a general principle in life: that ‘if you are willing to give something a go, people will support you, even if you’re not quite good at it just yet, they’ll give you a go’. Perhaps it was this philosophy that encouraged Michael to think laterally about his occupation:

I also, over the years, have made contact with a gentleman, who owns a company … He sells controlled atmosphere equipment and I worked for him for quite some time, and established myself as a local agent for his equipment. He has over a hundred customers in the Goulburn Valley, as well as all over the world. I handle mainly the Goulburn Valley area for him.

Once again, I’ve got a young family. I don’t want to spend too much time travelling abroad. If I have too, I will, but when I don’t have to, I prefer not to. Me being here frees him up to do more of the interstate and overseas
travel. I just look after all his problems here.

I felt I needed to get involved with that - I was very keen when that came along because, let’s say the fruit industry in Shepparton has a problem with fire-blight or some other disease that gets in and wipes out the industry, I need to have a back up skill to go into a different industry somewhere else. If I can be dealing with as many different pieces of equipment as possible, I’ll at least have half a chance of getting in to do something else.

I’ve also got another customer that is a bit of an entrepreneur. He’s got a blow moulding machine that makes drink bottles. He wants someone local to service that. Now, I’ve never seen - know nothing about them, whatever - and he said: ‘Fine, I don’t care - you come along - you learn how to do this and away we go!’ He’s been giving me training from Japanese technicians that come over here to help. I’ve got that up my sleeve, also. I feel I need to take every opportunity to multi-skill so that if I’m faced with a problem, I can go somewhere else and do something else.

Michael recalled that South Tech’s ‘sciences were great’. He found that, indirectly, he used the scientific knowledge ‘every day ... you understand when you’re mixing chemicals together to do a certain thing - like paint, or whatever, you understand why it says you can’t mix “this” with “this’”. Gary Murdoch’s ‘relaxed approach to physics’, helped Michael understand that ‘the physics was a maths that you could see and touch. It existed’:

There was a tractor going up a plank or forces acting upon a beam, waves radiating out from the centre of a pond. There were things that you could physically see in your head. The way he used colourful words to explain what was going on, like ‘two atoms “lobbing” together’ and ‘a tractor “smacking” into this’ and, you know, it was just a relaxed atmosphere and it was enjoyable maths.

In the practical learning areas, in Michael’s opinion, ‘you had to produce something that was a viable item - it had to work! You were marked on that and the workmanship’. In manufacturing viable products in his adult life, Michael stressed the importance of graphics:

I picked up skills in graphics that I use these days - like, I’m designing a plan to build something, I draw it the same way I used to draw it then. Yes. The graphics was excellent - I must stress that - graphics was really, really good. Before I make something, I need to work out materials. To work out materials, I need to create it. I create it on a bit of paper with a scale rule and I can measure up with that scale rule and get all the unknown measurements that I can’t know till after I’ve drawn it. I do use graphics. Setting things out - I use the skills that I received there.

Michael respected his introduction to workmanship at South Tech and claimed that:

at the end of the day, you had to produce a viable item, and in my occupation at the end of the day, I have to produce a viable item, too. It was an introduction to the medium. It wasn’t: ’you walk out of this subject and
you’re an engineer or you’re a craftsman that can make cupboards’, or whatever. It was an introduction. At worst, if I ended up being a lawyer of a doctor or something like that, it would have been: ‘gee, I’ve done that! I can do that as a hobby, on the weekends - I can go and make a bookcase’ or something like that.

The learning areas suited Michael’s interests and development during his adolescence. He finds that, as an adult:

I’m interested in things now after school that I don’t have to learn them: I want to. I do spend time, now - devoted to - I suppose you would call it further education, with no point other than interest. If I was trying to learn the metalwork or woodwork or plasticwork skills now - that would be very difficult ... I feel that, at that point in time - that was very important to me.

I’ve often thought of this - learning history and a second language, things like that, were of no consequence to me whatsoever. The maths and English - yes! You need them all the time - you need them in primary school, you need them in secondary school, you need them in tertiary education if that’s where you are going.

In general, Michael was lavish in his praise of technical education, and claimed that it ‘brought me forward’. However, he found that his twelfth year in 1987 was less than adequate, and felt he knew the reason why:

It was a transitional phase between when South Tech did not have Year 12 and between when it was trying to standardise with all the other schools in Victoria to get a mark that was recognised all throughout and no one was organised. They didn’t know what they were setting up - that was what I feel. Yes. I understand why Year 12 was a flop for me. Like I say, it did not, and will continue not to be a problem for me.

Michael’s closing comments elaborated on the student diversity at South Tech; as Kathleen and Christine recalled, ‘there were rough people there’. Yet, in his adult occupation, Michael had to know ‘how to deal with rough people - you have to be able to talk to them’. Michael especially recalled one student who ‘was like a mortal enemy of mine’:

I see him often now. He loads containers, he’s there, lumping boxes, loading containers - with the tattoos and the shorts, he’s like a long lost mate. I saw him, and I saw him first as an adult, and I thought ‘you bastard!’ ‘I’m not going to talk to you, you treated me like shit during school.’ He comes up to me: ‘Mick! What are you doing, Mick?’ … Every time he sees me now, he’s best of mates and I return that now, because that was a long time ago. We’re past it all.

Michael had a schoolmate who ‘was a brave person’. ‘If any of those other guys would hassle
him, he would just walk up to them and push them over’.

Michael recalled that there were also a number of students representative of a socio-economic group not usually found in a technical school:

[South Tech] even had people there that you wouldn’t expect there. [Michael named two students whose fathers were doctors.] I don’t know why they came there. That’s the other thing - I never found out why, because they came in halfway through. I don’t know why they transferred from wherever they were - whether they were having problems and South Tech would take them or - don’t know!

Michael also pointed out that a number of staff enrolled their own children at South Tech. He cited two in particular who ‘made it through school’ and, in his opinion, ‘it made no difference’ that they were teacher’s sons or daughters.

In summary, Michael felt that South Tech’s program gave him a plethora of opportunities, including some that he wouldn’t necessarily have elected to experience, such as a ‘broad outlook on life’ that contributed to his chosen lifestyle and occupation, and the ability to relate to a diverse range of people:

It was really, being able to experience that many different things. That’s what made the tech school life so rich, I feel. Where else are you going to do radio announcing? TV production? Cooking? Sewing? Pottery? Technical illustration and design? Typing? Computers? Woodwork? Metalwork? Plastics? You name it! It was all there!

It gives you a broad outlook on life. Helps me out, in my occupation, wonderfully. Early on, ‘forced’ is probably not the right word, but forced to experience all these different things, like when would I sign up for sewing or cooking? Not going to happen! Glad I did it. I know that I can go and grab a sewing machine now if I have to, and repair a hole in my overalls if I have to. I know I can cook now.

As these three oral histories indicate there was a very real element of threat from the ‘rough’ kids, which, in their opinion, was part of the richness of the school. Jock said: ‘we can take anybody ... We weren’t afraid of any kids!’ Christine, Kathleen and Michael each demonstrated their ‘connectedness’ with the school; in the face of the school’s reputation, they developed understanding and resilience to deal with the stigma, and those who spat at and punched them. They were involved with their education, and are still reaping the rewards.

The next chapter describes the government policies that merged technical and high

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schools to form comprehensive post-primary colleges.
Chapter 8: From Secondary Schools to Post-Primary Colleges

In a 1984 report on *Administrative Structures in Education*, Lawrie Shears claimed that the administrative structure of the Education Department had changed during the 1970-80s. Instead of the Director General of Education being a main source of policy advice to the Minister of Education, a variety of competing individuals and groups vied for the Minister’s attention after 1978.\(^{1126}\) The ‘main person model’, wherein the DGE had advised the Minister, was replaced by the ‘many person model’ in 1983.\(^{1127}\) Shears listed the ‘bewildering array of statutory authorities’, most with ‘formal boards and councils’ and ‘associated lobby groups, legal bodies’ and ‘a large collection of voluntary organisations’, all competing for Ministerial attention.\(^{1128}\) I would argue that in promoting their own agendas, the competing groups - including the parent and union activists - failed to address young people’s need for education suited to their aptitudes and abilities.

Lawrie Shears argued that the first political intervention occurred with the 1965 VIC Act.\(^{1129}\) The administration of technical education was affected when three regional directors, ‘junior to, and responsible to, the central office Directors’, were appointed in 1971, with eight more regions created in 1973.\(^{1130}\) W.F. Connell claimed that the remainder of the 1970s was ‘plagued by in-fighting and duplication of responsibilities’.\(^{1131}\) In his history of the APVTI, Bill Johnson reflected that in November 1972, the APVTI expressed their concern to the DGE at the documents proposing a reorganisation of secondary education ‘emanating from the regional directors and the high school principals association’.\(^{1132}\)

Victorian Education Minister Alan Hunt, and Assistant Minister Norman Lacy, announced a review of education policies in May 1979.\(^{1133}\) Alan Hunt was a solicitor; he was educated at Melbourne Grammar School before graduating from the University of Melbourne.\(^{1134}\) Norman Lacy was educated at Richmond Technical School, then the Royal Melbourne Institute of Technology (RMIT), before graduating with a degree in theology.

\(\text{References:}\)


\(^{1127}\) Ibid, p.22.

\(^{1128}\) Ibid, pp.22-24.

\(^{1129}\) *Victorian Statutes*, Act, no.7291, pp.319-337.


\(^{1134}\) Browne, *Biographical Register*, 1985, p.103.
from the University of Melbourne. A strong statement included an aim to decentralise administration and promote responsibility and accountability for local community educational policy ‘as far as is possible’. A Green Paper on the proposed Strategies and structures for education in Victoria was tabled in Parliament in May 1980. ‘Green papers’ were a 1960s government innovation whereby documents were circulated at an early stage to encourage parliamentary and public discussion on matters with which the government proposed to deal; they were followed by ‘white papers’, which formulated government policy. The 1980 paper pointed out the fallacy that ‘funding will solve every problem’, and argued that ‘there was insufficient recognition that resources are, and will always be, limited’. The Green Paper indicated that the Government had a ‘clear responsibility to build on what is best in that which has gone before’.

The Green Paper’s central theme was also a feature of the White Paper - the devolution of power and responsibility from a centralised bureaucracy to schools and regions. The Green Paper suggested that ‘the roles and functions of the three teaching divisions should be reallocated’; that the developmental directions - at a time of ‘stringent funds, declining enrolments, and the redundancy of some facilities’ - involved a consideration of buildings, curriculum, finance, personnel, and policy and planning initiatives; that the school principals were ‘in a better position than any other person to influence the course of education and its effectiveness’, and therefore ‘serious consideration should therefore be given to the process of selecting principals’.

Hunt and Lacy cautioned in their 1980 Green Paper that the White Paper’s recommendations should be ‘sensitive and exploratory ... change which is achieved gradually is likely to be most acceptable ... evolutionary, as part of a planned and open process, but not unduly slow’; the issues concerning technical and further education were ‘reserved for future consideration’.

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1135 Ibid, p.121.
1136 Ibid.
1141 Ibid.
1145 Ibid, pp.25,26,27.
However, the TTAV felt that technical schools had been ignored in the *Green Paper*.\footnote{TTAV Response to *Green Paper*, Council Paper No.9; Z302, Box 9, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.} Claiming that a restructured system should recognise their schools, they described the technical schools as a ‘highly student-centred’, autonomous, alternative system working with local communities; their technical staff, experienced in the workforce, represented a wide vocational range; they also maintained close links with TAFE.\footnote{Ibid.} Although the union opposed the role proposed for principals, they felt it would be appropriate ‘to ensure the spread of the better aspects which have been developed into all the secondary schools’\footnote{Ibid.}

A report to the TTAV Council in December 1980 from the Council Committee that had been established to draw up a proposal for policy on the amalgamation of technical and high schools, expressed concern that ‘an overall trend to the levelling out of resources will most certainly be to the detriment of technical schools’.\footnote{TTAV, Report to the December (1980) Council From The Council To Draw Up Policy Proposal On Technical-High Amalgamation; Z302, Box 9, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.} Early in 1981, the TTAV convened a meeting with representatives from relevant groups, to discuss the future of post-primary education and procedures for change; the meeting recommended the establishment of five organisation regional committees.\footnote{Ibid.} The five organisations were composed of the Technical Teachers Union of Victoria (TTUV), Victorian Federation of State Schools Parents Clubs (VFSSPC), Victorian Council of School Organisations (VICCSO), Victorian Secondary Teachers Association (VSTA), and the Victorian Teachers Union (VTU).

The 1980 *White Paper* acknowledged the successful initiatives already undertaken within the Technical Division with regard to the selection of principals and vice-principals.\footnote{White Paper, 1980, p.39.} It was proposed to give schools increased responsibility under the leadership of the principal.\footnote{Ibid, p.40.} Overwhelmingly, school staff and teacher organisations pressed for retention of central appointment of staff.\footnote{Ibid.}

The *White Paper* stressed that ‘the principal is the educational leader and administrator, the most critical point in the system and is in a strong position to influence the course of education and its effectiveness’. Selection of principals should therefore be taken very seriously, and ‘proven leadership must take precedence over seniority’.\footnote{Ibid, p.41.} Minister Hunt claimed in a letter to the APVTI that technical school principals’ fear that secondary
technical schools would lose their identity was groundless, as schools were not to be reclassified:

The *White Paper* in section 5.29 indicates that there will be no change in the present classification of schools into primary, secondary and technical schools. My Ministerial Statement of 7th April, 1981 about the Organization of TAFE also indicates that ‘the provision of TAFE through State Technical Schools furthermore represents an effective use of community resources which must be maintained’.  

Hunt stated unequivocally that ‘technical schools would not lose their present identity, no matter what restructuring occurred’. Bill Johnson recalled Hunt’s claims that Victorian technical education had been a ‘marked success’. Hunt also claimed that other States lacked a ‘comparable system’, with ‘people such as those here who have such pride in the system that we have’. Other Victorian systems lacked its readiness to ‘adapt to changes in society’. According to Hunt, it was recognised that technical education had a ‘breadth and depth of education to offer that is not available in any other class of school’.

Further support for retaining the staffing levels of technical schools came from Robert Fordham, who was the Shadow Minister for Education from 1973-82 and Deputy Opposition Leader from 1973-82. Fordham was educated at Essendon High; he gained a Bachelor of Commerce (BCom), and later, a Bachelor of Arts (BA) at the University of Melbourne. MLA for Footscray, Fordham argued that:

Over the past decade, the Technical Schools Division has unquestionably been better staffed than have the other two divisions. My worry is that, because of the overall staff ceiling, the Government is attempting to run down the staffing establishments that were determined over a long time.

Fordham expressed his hope that serious consideration could be given ‘to relaxing the staff ceilings’ that had been determined for technical schools in 1981. He claimed that ‘technical schools have a difficult and important task and they need an additional degree of flexibility in staffing to allow them to relate to the needs of children in their care’.

The TSD attempted to match school need with staff personal qualities, as well as qualifications. The attitudinal difference to staffing technical schools was illustrated at a
meeting with a TTAV deputation in July 1979, when ADTE Dick Armitage pointed out that ‘the Secondary Schools Division did not categorise their teachers, they [high schools] just ask for a number in order to provide more flexibility in staffing’. Fordham claimed that technical schools:

One of the great strengths of Victorian education over the past twenty years has been its technical schools. That has come about because of a whole host of factors, one of which is the degree of independence in the operation of technical school councils, the selection of principals and the relationship of school to the local communities. Another factor has been the close understanding between the Technical Schools Division and the schools concerned, which has partly been a function of size - that division is much smaller than the other divisions - but has also come about because of the individuals who were involved. Ted Jackson, Len Watts, Ron Ritchie and Dick Armitage all did magnificent jobs in fostering the development of technical education in Victoria. I would hope that, rather than attempting to bring technical schools and their work back to the rest of the field, the Government would aim for all schools to achieve the standards that have been achieved in technical schools.

Fordham’s attitude, while Shadow Minister for Education, seemed to augur well for technical education.

The educational and administrational role of principals was opposed by unions and parent activists, who ultimately succeeded in bringing about the devolution of decision-making. The TTAV Executive was concerned about Acting Director of Technical Education Ron Ritchie’s proposal for the reorganisation of the TSD - specifically, the role of the principals, policy development, the Tertiary Orientation Program, and the separation of TAFE from the TSD. However, the TTAV Council Report to the 12th Annual Conference (1979) resolved that ‘the present dual system of high and secondary technical schools was unacceptable [and determined that] the TTAV should initiate consultation with parent and other teacher organisations to prepare proposals for any restructure of the education system’.

Ron Ritchie, Fay Moore and Dick Armitage met with a TTAV delegation in June 1979, who stressed that ‘policy formation was not the sole prerogative of principals and the TSD’. They complained of a lack of consultation with ‘appropriate
bodies’ and a lack of widespread publication of reorganisation proposals.\footnote{Ibid, p.2.} Minister Hunt also met with the three main teacher union representatives in October 1979, who also expressed their fear that the ‘power of the principal [would be] unduly increased’.\footnote{Meeting with the Minister of Education, Regarding the Initial Tenure of New Teachers, 5 October 1979, Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.}

Following numerous meetings, it was noted in a TTAV Council Report that guidelines had been established for union-parent activist consultation ‘at Five Organisations’ level’.\footnote{TTAV Council Report to 12th Annual Conference, 1979, p.3; Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.} The TTAV planned to ‘regenerate public education as an election issue’, and ‘to build understanding and to further co-operative relationships with like-minded unions, parent bodies and other community organisations to ensure broad support for our objectives and to entrench the gains that are made’.\footnote{Education as an election issue; 1979, Z302; Box 8, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.}

Along with the TTAV’s move towards unity with mainstream union and parent groups, a further serious threat to technical schools was the discontinuance of technical teacher training programs at the State College of Victoria (SCV) at Hawthorn.\footnote{TTAV Council Meeting minutes, November, 1979; Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archive Centre, ANU.} Efforts were made to oppose this decision at a Federal level. Former SCV lecturer John McMahon recalled the innovative schools, alternative education methods, trade teachers and type of teacher training offered at the SCV in the 1970s.\footnote{JMcM, interview, 2000.} In his opinion, a ‘more conservative phase’ overtook education in the 1980s.\footnote{Ibid.} As the head of the staff association, John McMahon travelled to Canberra to persuade W.C. Fife, the Federal Minister of Education, that the SCV should remain separate from universities. McMahon argued that the SCV had a more practical approach to training technical teachers, and should therefore be retained. Fife turned him down.\footnote{Ibid.} This led to a shortage of trained technical staff, which further exacerbated the technical schools’ precarious existence.

The \textit{White Paper’s} recommendations reallocating the roles and functions of the three teaching divisions were put into place. Shears claimed that, in 1981, ‘evolution became revolution, community and teacher analysis became business management analysis, and time for adjustment became action to a timetable dominated by the next election’.\footnote{Shears, \textit{Administrative Structures in Education}, 1984, p.17.} According to Shears, in October 1981, a new Education Act acknowledged that there would be a Director-General but ‘in the Act his power to administer it was removed altogether’; the DGE’s power

\begin{thebibliography}{99}
\bibitem{1167} Ibid, p.2.
\bibitem{1168} Meeting with the Minister of Education, Regarding the Initial Tenure of New Teachers, 5 October 1979, Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.
\bibitem{1169} TTAV Council Report to 12th Annual Conference, 1979, p.3; Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.
\bibitem{1170} Ibid.
\bibitem{1171} TTAV Council Meeting minutes, November, 1979; Z302, Box 8; Noel Butlin Archive Centre, ANU.
\bibitem{1172} Ibid.
\bibitem{1173} Ibid.
\bibitem{1174} Ibid.
\bibitem{1175} Ibid.
\bibitem{1176} Shears, \textit{Administrative Structures in Education}, 1984, p.17.
\end{thebibliography}
contained in the 1928 Amendment was now ‘vested firmly in the hands of the Minister’.  

The Labor Party won the April 1982 election; John Cain became premier, and Robert Fordham became Minister of Education. In October 1982, Fordham outlined the government’s policies on education. Claiming to ‘revitalise the education system’, he nevertheless pointed out that ‘many of those who voice criticisms are unaware of the existing developments which have taken place both at the primary and the secondary level’. Fordham issued the first of a series of six Ministerial Papers in 1982. The first paper, Decision Making in Victoria, addressed the curriculum, and ‘Devolution and Shared Responsibility through Representative Bodies’; the second, The School Improvement Plan, proposed funding schools which submitted project documentation in line with government policies; the third, fourth, and fifth - The State Board of Education, School Councils, and Regional Boards of Education - outlined priorities concerning structure, function and relationships.

As far as phasing out the TSD went, Fordham reported that a group had been established to ‘consider the contribution and policies of secondary-technical education with a view to facilitating further access to education in this field’. The Committee considering the School Improvement Plan (SIP) was in the final stages of completing its implementation proposals. Fordham’s review team examining the selection process of principals was also under way, and a working party had been established to make recommendations concerning the abolition of corporal punishment. In the consultative process, Fordham claimed that there had been ‘a significant increase of support to the Victorian Council of School Organizations, the Victorian Federation of State School Parents Clubs and financial support for the new State Board’.

There was some support for the retention of technical schools from the Opposition. National Party Member for Rodney, Eddie Hann, MLA, argued for the retention of technical schools, and voiced the ‘serious concern in the community that technical education is being downgraded’. Hann was concerned with the phasing out of the TSD, and argued that

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1176 Ibid, p.17.
1178 Ibid, p.1066.
1180 Ministerial Papers 1-6, Issued by the Minister of Education for public information and discussion, 1985.
1182 Ibid.
1183 Ibid, p.1069.
1184 Ibid.
technical school councils had ‘proven their worth in the very efficient manner in which the technical schools had operated’.\footnote{Ibid, Vic. PD (LA) 1982-83, vol.367, pp.1094-5} He claimed that ‘there is considerable distress and concern that the attempt to integrate technical education with secondary education could mean the disbandment of the effective technical education system’.\footnote{Ibid, p.1095.} Arguing that technical schools had been upgraded, and that they were very popular in country areas for children who wished to enter both trade and academic careers, Hann claimed that technical schools had ‘unique and important features which should be considered for integration into the secondary school system as well as being retained within the technical division’.\footnote{Ibid.} He added that ‘if the division between technical and secondary schools were broken down, some sort of mechanism would be needed so that technical schools could retain their independence’.\footnote{Ibid.}

Eddie Hann cited figures in support of his argument:

In 1981, technical schools in the five metropolitan regions showed an increase of nine per cent in Year 7 enrolments. This increase would have exceeded ten per cent had the technical schools been able to accept all the students who wanted to attend. In addition, there is a continuing demand for places in Year 10 and 11 classes in technical schools. In 1982, a total of 3,692 students from government and non-government schools in the metropolitan area transferred to technical schools.\footnote{Ibid, p.1096.}

Hann claimed that if ‘attempts are made to integrate the technical school system within the secondary system, it could effectively downgrade the technical system as it is known today’.\footnote{Ibid.} Hann further contended that the ‘services of technical schools are in demand by students and they retain the competitive nature within the State school system’.\footnote{Ibid.} He felt that maintaining some competitiveness within the school system protected it from ‘complacency’, ‘laziness’, and ‘a lack of introduction of new initiatives’.\footnote{Ibid, p.1097.}

Bill Johnson recalled Regional Director Jeff Dunstan’s address at the 1982 APVTI conference in Mildura.\footnote{Johnson, The Final Twenty Years, 1993, p.69.} In a discussion on the ‘future ‘without the protective umbrella of a technical division’, Dunstan ‘exhorted principals to take up the challenge to develop new concepts and to provide landmark experiences as they moved into the future’.\footnote{Ibid.}
Johnson claimed that, prior to the Conference, Fordham had proposed to set up a committee from TSD, APVTI and TTUV; the role of this committee would be ‘to recommend on the philosophy and needs of secondary technical education’. As Fordham himself indicated in 1980-81, Johnson understood that the Minister valued the special role played by tech principals and would consult with them on a range of issues, suggesting that ‘the APVTI should make a submission to be recognised as a bargaining unit’.

Unable to attend the 1982 Conference, Fordham was represented by a newly elected MLC, Joan Kirner. Kirner was a parent activist; educated at Aberfeldie State School, Penleigh Presbyterian Ladies College and University High, Kirner gained a BA and Dip Ed from the University of Melbourne by 1958, and taught in a technical school for eighteen months.

Johnson recalled that Kirner’s address ‘completely demolished the props which technical schools were so painstakingly establishing so as to support their continued operation’. He also commented that her predictions concerning technical schools were ‘quite different from that spelt out by Education Minister Fordham the week before’. In his address during the 1980-81 Approbation Bill Opposition Minister Fordham had clearly indicated his support for technical schools, as discussed above. However, in an interview in 1988, then Education Minister Kirner claimed that her educational philosophy had not changed significantly with time, and that in her view ‘directions for education in Victoria were clearly established when this Government first took office in 1982 ... these were clearly stated in Ministerial Papers 1 to 6’. Labor’s June 1964 Plan for Education, Fordham’s 1980-81 statements, and the Government’s subsequent actions are a conundrum.

In 1983, the APVTI took the ‘unusual step’ of writing to Premier Cain concerning the fact that principals were ‘being ignored in a welter of ideological jargon regarding “consensus and democratic decision-making”’. Former principal Jack Thomas recalled visiting the Ministry (then at the Rialto building): To Rialto

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1198 Ibid, p.70.
1199 Ibid, p.70.
1200 Browne, Biographical Register, 1985, p.118.
1202 Ibid.
1203 T. Pilley, An interview with Joan Kirner, ‘We now have the opportunity to turn the rhetoric of a continuum of education into reality’, Education Victoria, Ministry of Education, November 1988, p.1,2.
1204 Johnson, The Final Twenty Years, 1993, p.76.
1205 Ibid, p.81.
Nevertheless, TAFE remained a significant component in the technical education structure. However, the Post-Secondary Education (Amendment) Act of 1983, which separated TAFE from the Education Department, left the technical schools isolated. An important development was the Commonwealth Government’s increased power and influence in education. According to Shears, in 1983 the Commonwealth attitudes and decision-making were a factor influencing TAFE and schools, although the largest part of their budget came from State sources. Thus the techs became vulnerable to policies imposed by State and Federal governments.

For example, the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) was introduced in 1984 by Commonwealth Minister for Education and Youth Affairs, Susan Ryan. Funding schools and TAFE colleges, PEP aimed to increase young peoples’ access to secondary education, empower disenfranchised groups, and increase equality of opportunity and outcomes.

PEP was endorsed by the Ministerial Paper ‘Decision Making in Victorian Education’, and the Five Organisations (TTUV, VFSSPC, VICCSO, VSTA, VTU). However, as Jock Thomlinson pointed out in 1985, the proliferation of imposed programs made their integration into a unified curriculum difficult to achieve.

The difficulty of fully informing the teaching staff and councillors about the new State and Federal governments’ programs and policies was exacerbated by the glut of correspondence to School Councils. Milton Stanley Whiting explained the difficulties during a debate on the Education (Amendment) Bill in November 1983. Whiting, the National Party MLA for Mildura, claimed that it was impossible to read all the documents with only one copy shared among the many people at School Council meetings.

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1210 PEP Participation and equity program guide. The participation and equity program guide for schools. Published August 1984 by Participation and Equity Program Committee, Victoria, c/- Equal Educational Opportunities Branch, 416 King Street, West Melbourne, p.3.
1212 PEP Participation and equity program guide, 1984, pp.4,7
Commenting on ‘the powers and responsibilities’ the Labor government ‘wishes to impose on school councils’ outlined in the *Ministerial Papers*, Eddie Hann asked if school councils could ‘opt out of accepting the responsibility for determining the general educational policy of the school and, if so, how that might be done’. Hann also pointed out that there was a lack of clarity in the State system’s structure, and that:

Some very capable people are dissatisfied with the way the system is currently operating. Now officers at the school level ring the regional office, the regional officers ring the Melbourne office, and the Melbourne officers ring back to the region, which then rings the school.

Walter Jona, MLA for Hawthorn, regretted that insufficient time had been allowed for community consultation for ‘such an important measure as amendments to the Education Act’, but recognised the need for the amendments contained in the Bill to be passed so that ‘they can be put into effect for the start of the 1985 school year’. In the Legislative Assembly, during ‘Questions on Notice’ in February 1984, Fordham indicated that only post-primary schools would be opened in the future. Robert Fordham - unlike John Lemmon in 1930 - later announced that there would be no distinction between secondary and technical schools; the 1958 Education Act was accordingly amended. Shears claimed in 1984 that ‘only one thing was certain - the Minister of Education was not only politically but also administratively the arbiter of educational decision-making and subject only to the decision-making procedures and the policy platform of the Labor Party’.

In 1984, Robert Fordham delivered *Ministerial Paper 6*, claiming that it had been developed with the ‘assistance of the State Board of Education’, and that it delivered a ‘clear sense of direction’ to guide schools in curriculum development. Fordham also convened the Blackburn Committee to review post-compulsory schooling in 1984. In their 1984 *Discussion Paper*, the Blackburn Committee suggested that the division between Victorian high and technical schools had ‘continued long after its demolition in other states in favour of comprehensive secondary schooling, and its basis in manual/non-manual division of labour in

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1214 Ibid.
1215 Ibid, p.2427.
1216 Ibid, p.1608.
the work force is anachronistic’. The Blackburn Committee argued that exclusive paths into apprenticeships and post-secondary technical colleges no longer existed, and that secondary high and technical schools contributed to a narrowly academic orientation abstracting learning from real life and productive work. They also argued that the early division of young people into academic and practical courses must be challenged on the basis of its inconsistency with open options, democracy, and the changed nature of the work force.

The 1985 Blackburn Report made forty-five recommendations. These included increased participation to the end of Year 12; the introduction of courses at Years 11 and 12 organised as a two year course of study in semester-length units; the provision of ‘a comprehensive curricular range’; and a single certificate, the Victorian Certificate of Education, to mark the completion of secondary schooling. Most significantly in the present context, Blackburn recommended that:

comprehensive post-primary education be extended through the integration of activities and programs of neighbouring high and technical schools under a single council from 1 January 1987; that all existing high technical or technical high schools become post-primary schools from that date; and that by 1988 all schools become comprehensive rather than being designated, equipped or staffed as technical or high schools.

This recommendation is important because it was used to rationalise the Education (Amendment) Act 1984, No.10148.

The Blackburn Report elicited continuing debate centred on whether the restructuring of schools and curriculum changes would produce the desired effects; there was also unease that the Report had ‘unwisely ignored changes already under way’ in Victorian secondary schools. Some critics also argued that the Blackburn recommendations were ‘likely to work to the detriment of the junior school which after all is the location of the basic compulsory schooling for all students’. With hindsight, many of their arguments proved to be valid. Nevertheless, in a June 1986 Ministerial statement, Education Minister Ian Cathie

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1222 Ibid.
1223 Ibid.
1225 Ibid, pp.63,64.
1226 Ibid, p.66.
1229 Ibid, p.25.
used Blackburn’s ‘principal recommendations’ to justify the introduction of the VCE in all Victorian secondary schools in 1987.\textsuperscript{1230} Four ministers implemented the Government’s policy between 1982-90 (Fordham, 1982-85; Cathie, 1985-87; Hogg, 1988; Kirner, 1988-90).

Thus the demise of the secondary technical schools - threatened by the dismantling of the TSD under the Liberal Government’s 1980 \textit{White Paper} proposing the reallocation of personnel and resources - was achieved by Labor’s 1984 post-primary school policy, and justified by the 1985 Blackburn Committee’s recommendations.

Betty Lawson claimed that Jean Blackburn was at a loss to understand the criticisms of the Report regarding technical education. Blackburn believed that the report had respected the ethos of the techs.\textsuperscript{1231} The tech philosophy and practice were complex and often misunderstood. As Mary Kennedy argued, ‘poorly thought out’ philosophies, ‘insufficient resources (including teachers)’ and ‘liberal curriculum for working class students’ did not achieve success at Collingwood Community School in the 1970s.\textsuperscript{1232} And technical schools were expensive. How it was possible to upgrade all schools, when the Government was unable to adequately staff even the technical schools, (as Fordham argued in 1980-81), is problematic. In the face of the Hawke Federal Government’s budget cuts and the alleged mismanagement of funds by the Cain Victorian State Government, financial limitations surely would impact on the successful implementation of the Blackburn recommendations.

In 1986 the Hawke Federal Labor and the Cain State Labor governments announced cuts in spending. The Victorian Council of Social Service (VCOSS) concluded that: ‘together with expected Commonwealth cuts in its own programs and in the grants to the states that make up a substantial part of Victorian spending on education and labour-market programs, this promises a rougher ride for young people’. Of course, the effects of cuts were by no means restricted to young people.\textsuperscript{1233}

Other factors impacted on the implementation of the Blackburn Report. A ‘strictly confidential’ memorandum describing the Ministry’s teacher leave and payroll unit as ‘a disaster area’, was published by Geoff Maslen in the \textit{Age} in September 1988 in an article titled \textit{Teachers overpaid $3.6 million}.\textsuperscript{1234} Maslen claimed that the Chief General Manager of the Schools’ Division, Kevin Collins, provided the figures following inquiries by the \textit{Age}.\textsuperscript{1235}

\textsuperscript{1231} Lawson, \textit{The Rise and Demise}, 1987, ch.4, p.6.
\textsuperscript{1232} Kennedy, \textit{A History of Collingwood Community School}, 2002, p.5.
\textsuperscript{1234} \textit{Age}, 22 September 1988, p.5.
\textsuperscript{1235} Ibid.
Collins admitted to ‘problems’, claiming that ‘the unit was being reviewed in an effort to improve its performance’; he also commented that the ‘overpayment problems occurred mainly in cases involving long service or sick leave’. With teacher mental health the subject of a 1986 symposium, there were more than financial problems at stake.

Unless they were union or parent activists, school staff and parents were probably unaware of the constant changes in government policy that were altering the education system. The arguments outlined in parliament indicate that secondary technical schools had strong support from the community. Donald Clark also found that his junior technical schools were popular with boys, parents, and local industries. Boys responded to the practical work taught by trade teachers who subsequently became their role models, and facilitated their entry into the workforce. Nevertheless, in spite of continued support for techs since their inception in 1910, the Labor government destroyed them by homogenising the education system in the 1980s.

In the 2000s, frequent media reports bemoan the State schools’ lack of standards and discipline, raise concerns over boys’ education, and report a critical lack of apprenticeships. In an article titled, ‘We need something radical to lift the standard of state schools’, Shane Green commented that ‘life paths other than university, such as apprenticeships have become devalued. In a perfect society, the uni choice would rank equally with the trade choice’. In 2004, Bruce Mackenzie, Director of Holmesglen Institute of TAFE, claimed that ‘the VCE [has] failed as a universal and generalist Year 12 qualification, as evidenced in rural and regional Victoria’.

The Labor government’s policy for one system of post-primary schools is a conundrum; why did the Labor government in the 1980s fail to uphold similar values to John Lemmon in 1930? In his review of Australian education from 1960 to 1985, W.F. Connell suggested that in the 1950s and 60s, Australia was divided into three classes: firstly, a working class of manual employees with a sense of community and purpose, who were ‘strongly supportive of the trade union movement and the Labor Party’; secondly, a ‘status conscious and socially mobile’ middle class consisting of white collar workers, many of whom wished to ‘increase their material possessions and improve their standing; their education and upbringing stressed individual achievement and the need to press ahead’; and thirdly, a small upper class distinguished by the ‘continuity of its property holdings and

1236 Ibid.
1239 Victorian Qualifications Authority, Update, Issue no.6, Communications Division of the Department of Education & Training, Melbourne, June 2004, p.4.
wealth, by its consciousness of authority, and by the interrelatedness of its personal and economic interests’.  

Connell claimed that equality of opportunity was assumed to be a ‘freeing up of the way to enable each individual somehow to raise his status’. He argued that undertaking subjects such as English and social sciences, and the study for ‘understanding’, blended with a widening and growth of the tertiary sector and the increasing number of intellectual workers led to a ‘more visible intelligentsia’. Many children channelled into secondary school, then university in the 1960-70s became ‘professionals’. As university graduates replaced working class politicians, their assumption that ‘brains’ were superior to ‘hands’ resulted in the downgrading of technical schools, and forced all young people to aspire to qualify for university entrance. Joan Kirner exemplified this phenomenon. In contrast, Robert Fordham appeared to share similar values with his predecessor, John Lemmon. Nevertheless, as Bill Johnson argued, Kirner appears to have been more successful in having her policy implemented.

How this policy affected South Tech is discussed in the following chapter.

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1241 Ibid, p.17.
1242 Ibid, p.25.
Chapter 9: South Tech’s Final Years

In an evaluation of the Australian education system, Kevin Donnelly claimed in 2004 that, ‘whether measured by staff morale, student absenteeism and lack of interest, the exodus of parents out of the government system, falling standards or the politically correct nature of the curriculum’, the education system is ‘in crisis’. Donnelly found that even the ‘excellent schools’ and ‘hard working, dedicated and successful teachers’ were ‘often undermined by unresponsive bureaucracies, left-wing education academics and teacher unions more concerned with ideology than supporting what happens in the classroom’. I argue that some of these findings were evident in the decade following the Labor victory at the 1982 Victorian State election, that secondary technical schools were not second rate, that the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) was inferior to the Secondary Technical Certificate (STC), that pressures for Year 12 courses took precedence over the junior student curriculum and children with special needs, and that technical schools were degraded when high and technical schools became secondary colleges.

Jock Thomlinson continued to administer South Tech as a tech, despite the school’s official transition to a post-primary institution during the years when James Docherty’s ‘high drama’ was being enacted.

In October 1979 Education Department correspondence to the School Council requested them to consider a proposal headed ‘Year 12 for Technical Schools’. This suggestion evoked Jock’s response that Shepparton was ‘not big enough to seriously consider this at SSTS’. The absence of a Year 12 had been a characteristic distinguishing technical from high schools; following five years secondary education, technical students had a range of options, including entry to the workforce, entry to senior technical college, completion of apprenticeships, or transfer to a high school to qualify for university entrance. In March 1981, Year 12 courses in secondary technical schools, with particular attention to their relevance to South Tech, was high on the agenda in Jock’s report to Council. Jock Thomlinson resisted its introduction until the pressure to compete with other schools made a Year 12 inevitable in 1984. He subsequently ‘charged Laurie Frost with the challenge of introducing an STC [Secondary Technical Certificate] Year 12 program’.

No sooner had the school obliged when, in a statement clarifying policy directions in

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1245 J. Docherty to B. Lawson, personal communication, mid-1980s.†
1246 Council minutes, 23 October 1979.
1247 Council minutes, 24 February 1981.
1248 Past Images, p.28.
In June 1986, Minister for Education, Ian Cathie, announced that the Government had accepted the Blackburn Report’s principal recommendations.\textsuperscript{1250} Therefore, the VCE would be introduced in 1987 as a ‘Year 12 certificate by the incorporation of existing Year 12 courses into the single certificate’.\textsuperscript{1251} Cathie anticipated that Years 11 and 12 would be organised as a two year course of studies, that the curriculum would be developed in semester-length study units, and the students would undertake twenty-four semester-length units over their final two years in school.\textsuperscript{1252} The Minister also announced that a range of assessment methods ‘for selection into higher education’ would be encouraged.\textsuperscript{1253}

Despite Thomlinson’s misgivings, during the transition to the VCE, South Tech boasted ‘the largest VCE-STC enrolment in the state, [with] approximately forty per cent of [Year 12] students transferring to Shepparton South Technical School in 1987’.\textsuperscript{1254} The reasons for the high enrolment, according to Year 12 co-ordinator, David Slingo, were varied; however, he believed that the unique style of education that STC offered and the range of subjects offered had enabled many students to ‘tailor courses of study that meet their needs and aspirations’.\textsuperscript{1255}

Silvia Filej, who transferred to South Tech on the advice of a friend who had just completed Year 12, wrote in the 1987 South Tech magazine that her ‘greatest relief was that there were no exams to undertake in the STC’. Filej found the STC students were ‘much more co-operative, because there was no competitive examination system’. She described the year as an ‘extremely rewarding one’ for herself and many others, and concluded that she would ‘recommend the course to anyone interested in obtaining more from Year 12 than stress headaches and an Anderson Score.’\textsuperscript{1256} The Anderson Score was an aggregate used to select students for tertiary entrance.

Yet in May 1987, the TTUV claimed that, although technical education had been under considerable pressure in recent years, ‘it has met this challenge positively and welcomes the development of the VCE as part of the response to change’. They further claimed that:

Technical schools have been fortunate in that they have been resourced in such a way that they can develop courses centred around direct “hands on” experience for students. Their curriculum philosophy and principles have been well integrated with all aspects of school organisation and management.

\textsuperscript{1250} Cathie, Future Directions, 1986, p.1.
\textsuperscript{1251} Ibid, p.2.
\textsuperscript{1252} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1253} Ibid, p.3.
\textsuperscript{1254} SSTS Magazine, 1987, p.57.
\textsuperscript{1255} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1256} A Year 12 Student View. VCE/STC versus VCE/Group 1, SSTS Magazine, 1987, p.63.
at school levels.\textsuperscript{1257}

In contrast, the South Tech Council minutes indicate that the ‘changes being undertaken by
the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Board (VCAB) to alter the structure of VCE and
not including any part of STC will most likely have an adverse affect upon SSTS’.\textsuperscript{1258} The
need for STC was ‘very obvious to this school as our enrolment in Years 11 and 12 has
increased dramatically compared to other secondary schools in this area’.\textsuperscript{1259} Assistant Vice
Principal Bill Brearley’s spirited document, \textit{In Defence of the STC}, was tabled; a motion was
moved that Council endorse the paper as its policy:

The compulsory and graded nature of CAT’s [Common Assessment Tasks] is
totally irreconcilable with STC courses. STC courses allow students and
teachers to negotiate the content and assessment of subjects and provide
detailed individualised assessments. As such they can be tailored to meet the
specific needs, abilities, natures and ambitions of individual students. Instead
of relating students to arbitrary and removed statistical standards, STC
courses deal with students as individuals ...

The blatant failure of the VCAB [Victorian Curriculum and Assessment
Board] in the VCE guidelines to incorporate the principles of STC courses
threatens to banish a great number of Victoria’s youth from the education
system and all that it can offer. If the Victorian Government is genuine in its
desire to encourage students to remain in schools, it must review the
Ministry’s short-sighted rejection of STC programs.\textsuperscript{1260}

In his history of South Tech, Bill Brearley claimed that, by 1988, the STC program had
become ‘the largest and most successful of its type in the State attracting in excess of 130
students’.\textsuperscript{1261} Brearley’s description of the STC recalls aspects of the South Tech general
studies program.

In 1990, David Caulley, in association with staff at the La Trobe University School of
Education, conducted an evaluation of the CATs and their trials.\textsuperscript{1262} He described the CATs
as ‘designed to give importance to other outcomes than those that can be assessed by a
written three-hour examination’.\textsuperscript{1263} All Year 12 students were required to complete three,
four or five CATs; in each subject, at least one CAT was to be ‘externally set and
marked’.\textsuperscript{1264} VCAB identified ‘ten possible major types of CATs: research project, folio,

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\textsuperscript{1257} State Council, Business Paper 3.1, 8 May 1987; Z302, Box 37, Noel Butlin Archives Centre, ANU.
\textsuperscript{1258} Council minutes, 5 May 1988.
\textsuperscript{1259} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1260} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1261} Past Images, p.28.
\textsuperscript{1262} D.N. Caulley, \textit{An Evaluative Report on Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) and Their Trials}, La
Trobe University, Bundoora, 1990.
\textsuperscript{1263} Ibid, p.1.
\textsuperscript{1264} Ibid, pp.1,2.
short-answer questions, worked problems/applications, performance, essay, structured questions, product/model, practical activity, aural comprehension and oral production'.

Caulley identified problems of comparability, commonality, consistency and authenticity in the CATs - a marked deviation from the tech’s theory and practice philosophy and curriculum. Significantly, the La Trobe evaluation also found that the CATs system may ‘result in changed relationships between teachers and students’ with the teacher cast in the ‘dual role of helper and judge’. In an interview, a retired teacher recalled that he had reported to the Minister of Education in 1990 an anonymous offer of a thousand dollars for him to write a CAT.

A former South Tech teacher, Ray McDonald, reflected that, in contrast to the established and successful STC, the introduction of the VCE was marked by confusion, misunderstandings and a lowering of standards. Ray claimed that ‘to be honest’, the students weren’t capable of selecting courses appropriate to their needs. As the La Trobe evaluation also found, Ray argued that the situation was compounded by a lack of teacher experience in guiding their students. Ray recalled how the trade subjects were all blocked together and called ‘Technology’, which led to the misunderstanding that ‘Technology’ meant ‘Computers’, which was only one component of the course:

> It meant that a person could do a Technology course, and gain a unit in Woodwork, which would be six months work or half a year’s work. They could get a unit in Metal Work, they could get a unit in Motor Mechanics or they could get a unit in Turning and Fitting.

Because of the recombination of units and the time limit in which they were to be completed, students were unable to develop proficiency in any one of the areas; the former trade subjects were consequently degraded.

Ray observed that, after students chose what they wanted to make, ‘their task was to design it - to decide what materials they would use for it, how it would be assembled and how it would be made - and then to carry out the task of doing it’. Having achieved these tasks, Ray recalled the diminishing skill levels, as students ‘were expected to be literate enough to explain all that they’d done’. A built-in failure rate meant that about seventy-five

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1265 Ibid, p.2.
1266 Ibid, pp.1,2.
1267 Ibid, Executive Summary.
1270 RMcD, interview, 2000. All quotes from Ray McDonald in this section are from the same interview.
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per cent of students were incapable of achieving the imposed aims:

They had to justify the strength of the article that they had produced - whether it would stand up to wear and tear, external use, internal use, and so on. And seventy-five per cent of those kids were not capable of carrying out all those sections of the work. They could make it, some of the literate ones could write about it, but there were very few who could complete all components.

Himself the convener of the VCE Technology exam, Ray reflected that it was ‘quite a mystery’ during the early years when they ‘ran it as a Regional exam’:

We’d lay them [the projects] out in classrooms and we had hundreds of drawings and graphic work, and we would walk up and down, up and down and evaluate and the students were allowed to put a note on their work, why and what they had done. We evaluated their VCE as a region rather than a single group.

According to Ray, from 1985 it became ‘more and more of a problem to get kids interested enough to complete a unit’:

Then you found the dropouts started from the tech trade areas, or the previous trade areas. The students just said ‘well, I can’t do enough in that trade area to learn skills; I’ll just do another maths or I’ll do another English or I’ll do another computer course’.

Now, after another generation of this has gone on, we’re finding now [in 2000] that students are given two hours a week for one term in any of those particular practical areas. The rest of the time is taken up in other skills.

Ray observed that the trade areas have ‘disappeared almost completely’. He claimed that, at the former South Tech, only one part-time teacher was employed in the area that four woodwork teachers had occupied previously. Ray deplored the non-recognition of the former technical system’s strength, and the effect its absence has on young people:

It’s a shame that the young people are not being given the opportunity to develop their physical project skills that we found were the strength of the former technical systems. It used to get students interested in practical areas of work, and now there’s nothing for them there and we wonder why they lose interest in their school and have got problems!

Ray McDonald claimed that secondary colleges could not adequately service the wide spectrum of student ability with the same proficiency as the former technical schools. The techs ‘coped with the bright students - they were able to achieve to their potential’. Equally important, the lower achievers were given the satisfaction of achieving their potential in several areas and experiencing success ‘using their hands’, in the tech system. Thus rather than advantaging the ‘less well-off’ students, the South Tech history supports Donnelly’s
argument that Kirner’s ‘social engineering led to the opposite result of what was intended; the new certificate [VCE] gave already privileged students greater opportunities to succeed and less well-off students suffered greater disadvantage’. 1271

Former technical school principal, Cate Garner, also reflected that ‘the tide had turned’. In addition to the State Government policies, the Federal Government’s ‘economic rationalism’ resulted in less than optimum conditions, thus the technical schools were effectively downgraded:

We no longer had marvellous staffing arrangements that we’d had as tech schools, where we’d had lots of extra staff, staff in excess, money, our own Councils. We still had our own Councils, but there was a much bigger emphasis on the education budget and what was happening with it.

We had what was called Local Administrative Committees that helped the principal to decide who got what teaching load and the staffing office staffed us according to how many children we had. When you got staffed according to how many children you had, you then couldn’t afford to do all these lovely things that we had done! 1272

As argued throughout this history, technical schools responded to local community needs; principals were carefully chosen for their educational competence and leadership qualities. School Councillors, many of whom were philanthropic, were invited to serve on Council on the basis of their expertise and willingness to spend time serving the school. Where possible, teachers were appointed to a school to match student needs. In contrast, Local Administrative Committees (LACs) were set up in each school as a result of an unprecedented Industrial Agreement negotiated with the Labor government following the 1982 Victorian election. The LAC was to be gender balanced; its role set out in The Conditions and Staffing Agreement 1992 stated that the committee:

assists the principal in determining allotments, staffing allocations, class sizes, the length of periods, the allocation of organisational duties and their time allowances, the allocation of HDAs [Higher Duties Allowance], the tagging of positions to be advertised and other administrative matters in accordance with this Agreement. 1273

In research exploring how successfully the new administrative structures were operating, Watkins conducted a case study at a Victorian secondary high school. His findings, reported in 1993, found ‘inherent contradictions in trying to impose the time/space administrative structure of a representative committee system on top of the traditional,

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timetabled, clock regulated structuring of teachers work’.\textsuperscript{1274} Watkins reported that female and male teachers found the increased demand on their private time was frustrating, intrusive, unpaid, and family unfriendly.\textsuperscript{1275} Teaching became ‘almost a sideline’, with a conflicting role expectation to be both ‘classroom teacher and school administrator’.\textsuperscript{1276} In this case study, ‘the costs involved in the administration of the school were perceived to have been pushed down the line through the committees onto the teachers who had now to bear this additional burden to their teaching duties’.\textsuperscript{1277}

Similarly to Milton Whiting’s comments on the pressures on School Council discussed in Chapter 8, teachers found they could not ‘wade through all the policy documents’; one senior male teacher pointed out the inevitable result of the pressures would be ‘burn out’.\textsuperscript{1278} Watkins’ findings reflect Jackel’s research on The Decline of Local Influence in the Administration of Elementary Education in Victoria, 1862-1884, when, due to local committee members’ inadequate administrative and professional competence, they were replaced whenever possible by Education Department officers.\textsuperscript{1279}

The pressures that Watkins identified in 1993 also affected South Tech in the early 1980s. Jock Thomlinson recalled that elected representatives - parents, students, and unionists - all of whom were ‘elected on a platform of their own bias’ did not necessarily look at the objective that education’s ‘common aim [was] to develop students’.\textsuperscript{1280} In his opinion, ‘they weren’t effective’.\textsuperscript{1281}

Thomlinson recalled that in the 1980s ‘with the changes of government that occurred, and unions taking a much greater part in school affairs, things changed dramatically’.\textsuperscript{1282} His high regard for teachers who had worked in industry is apparent in his observation that ‘the worst thing that can happen to a school is for it to have only academics in it’.\textsuperscript{1283} Thomlinson used the woodwork department to illustrate how ‘everybody helped everybody else’, before the union worked to regulations in the 1980s:

The reason for that was that they knew the people they were working with, they supported each other, and the kids weren’t penalised ... if a teacher needed some time off, their peers in that area would support them and we

\textsuperscript{1275} Ibid, pp.139-140.
\textsuperscript{1276} Ibid, p.140.
\textsuperscript{1277} Ibid, p.142.
\textsuperscript{1278} Ibid, p.139.
\textsuperscript{1279} S.G. Jackel, \textit{The Decline of Local Influence in the Administration of Elementary Education in Victoria, 1862-1884}, M.Ed. thesis, University of Melbourne, 1980.
\textsuperscript{1280} JRT, interview, 2000.
\textsuperscript{1281} Ibid.
\textsuperscript{1282} Ibid.
were able to give them that sort of advantage. It worked to the school’s advantage when that happened.

However, after regulations were imposed:

it became very difficult, and penalised students, because somebody in the humanities class would be ‘taught’ humanities by a turner and fitter, who (a) didn’t understand the objectives [and (b)] didn’t have the training, so that no real education took place, and it was a wasted session.

The former staff-student match no longer applied. Jock Thomlinson reported at the November 1985 Council meeting that the staffing computer program (at the Department), had been ‘programmed for High Schools and was not of much help’ in planning for 1986.  

As discussed in the previous chapter, schools had been stressed by regionalisation in the late 1970s. The regional staff’s role was unclear, and direct links to the TSD were dislocated. Betty Lawson recalled that ‘possibly as early as the 60s - certainly in the 70s’, there was ‘a closing of ranks’ to protect the Division; Lawson reflected:

a feeling of trust and friendliness pervaded the offices of the Technical Division. Members of his [Ted Jackson’s] board worked unstintingly there, principals and school members were welcome to call in ... monthly meetings were held with the TTAV and the APVTI – teachers’ problems were discussed with assistant directors and board members. The place didn’t even feel like a bureaucracy. 

Jeff Dunstan was appointed Regional Director of the GNER in June 1974. At the time, Jock Thomlinson was not unduly concerned with regionalisation; ‘it didn’t worry me, I must admit’, he claimed, ‘because I didn’t take any notice of it’. However, he ‘didn’t have the support to do what [he] wanted to do’. Jock recalled that:

We needed a motor mechanics workshop ... In dealing with the Tech Division, you would be dealing with people who knew exactly what you were talking about, what was required, what was capable of being got, and you would very quickly arrive at a method of achieving it. With the Region, you’re talking, in this case, to a primary teacher, who knew absolutely nothing about buildings! That made it very difficult.

Historian Bill Brearley recalled how Jock, thwarted by the regional office staff, ‘manipulated

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1284 Council minutes, 28 November 1985.
1286 Holloway, The Inspectors, 2000, p.514.
1288 Ibid.
1289 Ibid.
Denied funding for a motor mechanics workshop, Thomlinson applied for funding for three walls and one roof. Thus, Councillors attending the 27 May 1980 meeting may have been amused by the Acting Regional Director of Education’s correspondence concerning the ‘alteration to [the] original submission for a storage shed’. 

Past Images revealed that ‘Ray McDonald, the Head of the Graphics Department, drew up the plans for the workshop. South Tech teacher, Ian Mitchell, and Jim Broadbent from TAFE, supervised apprentice work on the building project’. Funded for three individual walls and one ceiling, the Automotive Workshop was created by locating the walls and ceiling against an existing wall. On 25 November 1980, Council authorised the Principal to write to the Assistant Minister of Education with respect to the ‘priority list of buildings for each region’. Similarly, when the 1977 South Tech Commonwealth Library failed to materialise by 1979, the school launched its own construction program in 1982 [through cyclic maintenance, in negotiation with the Region]. Bill Brearley wrote that ‘by removing the hall walls in rooms A8 and A9 and placing a door across the A Wing corridor, the school was able to improvise a State library’.

Thus Jock Thomlinson continued to administer the school in his unique style; his report at the June 1977 Council meeting advised them that he was chairman of the Benalla Region Technical Principals’ Association (he became their representative on the executive of the APVTI). However, he heralded the ‘pressures for change’ in August 1978, following his attendance at the APVTI meeting in Sale, ‘particularly in relation to Technical Education and of how these changes may affect this school’. He drew Council’s attention to other matters, including the ‘recent decisions’ by the GNER ‘regarding facilities and of the training of high school staff by Technical Schools; and he reported that it was ‘becoming clear that Years 7, 8 and 9 will be common for all post-primary schools’. A motion was passed that the next lunchtime meeting of Council be used for discussion of the future of secondary education.

In-depth discussion and questions followed Thomlinson’s report to Council in

1290 Council minutes, 27 May 1980; 24 June 1980; 25 November 1980; Past Images, p.33
1292 Past Images, p.33.
1294 Past Images, p.33.
1295 Council minutes, 21 June 1977.
1296 Council minutes, 22 August 1978.
1297 Ibid.
1298 Ibid.
September 1978: firstly, on the ‘present structure of the various facets of Education in Victoria in relation to Financing and Administration’; secondly, the diversity of Technical Education; thirdly, the trends in financing TAFE, and other post-secondary education and likely effects on Secondary Technical Education; and fourthly, possible changes in the structures of the Education Department’.¹²⁹⁹

In November 1981, Vice Principal Ernie Jones drew Council’s attention to other Shepparton schools’ policies - particularly with regard to Years 7, 8 and 9: ‘students [were] being directed to transfer [to South Tech] if it is considered that they are not academically suited to a secondary education’.¹³⁰⁰ Ernie felt that South Tech Council ‘needs to be aware of the problems posed by this policy and its implications for the school’.¹³⁰¹ Underlying South Tech’s history is its philosophy to offer any child an opportunity to develop an interest in learning. In a diagram, Jock Thomlinson illustrated this supportive structure at the 1973 in-service. The government policy enabling education professionals autonomy was a given at the time.

In addition to the proposed changes in curriculum, the consequences of the 1983 Report of the Working Party on the Abolition of Corporal Punishment caused concerns that were raised at South Tech Council meetings.¹³⁰² The main challenge demanding Council’s immediate attention in March 1984 was the implementation of Regulation XVI. The existing Regulation defined and limited ‘the conditions under which corporal punishment may be administered’.¹³⁰³ In an amendment, the use of corporal punishment in Victorian Government schools was absolutely prohibited.¹³⁰⁴ Having abolished corporal punishment in the early 1970s, South Tech’s programs were nevertheless affected by the intrusion of regional staff into their student welfare structures.

The government now demanded that school principals notify the Director-General, the regional director, the school council and the parent(s) or guardian(s) in writing when suspension - ‘an action of last resort for serious offences’ - was necessary.¹³⁰⁵ Ron Dell’oro voiced concerns regarding the effect of Regulation XVI on staff, the reaction of the students and the lack of support.¹³⁰⁶ It was agreed that Ron should prepare a report to be submitted at

¹²⁹⁹ Council minutes, 26 September 1978.
¹³⁰⁰ Council minutes, 24 November 1981.
¹³⁰¹ Ibid.
¹³⁰² Education Department of Victoria, Report of the working party on the abolition of corporal punishment, Materials Production, Curriculum Branch, Education Department of Victoria, March 1983.
¹³⁰⁴ Ibid, p.34.
¹³⁰⁵ Ibid, pp.37,38.
¹³⁰⁶ Council minutes, 29 March 1984.
Discipline was also to be the subject of the Shepparton And District Education Council (SADEC) meeting on 20 April. ¹³⁰⁸

In July 1984, the Council minutes indicate that Jock Thomlinson delivered a comprehensive report covering students’ mid-year assessments, concerns with the current reporting system, the need to look at the relevancy of some subjects taught and the success of seminar-type activities conducted by the school. ¹³⁰⁹ Thomlinson pointed out that the school lacked teachers for extra duties and sufficient emergency teachers; therefore there were ‘many stress factors relative to teachers as the term [drew] to a close’. ¹³¹⁰ He observed that with the changes in discipline policy, there was a need for teacher in-service; mandatory penalties would involve enquiries for students who were suspended for more than ten days. ¹³¹¹ The principal’s report evoked serious discussion ‘regarding the problems being encountered and the inability of the school to cope with certain students’. ¹³¹² Councillor Cronin requested that the list of students suspended be provided for Council at the next meeting. ¹³¹³

In October 1984, Thomlinson again initiated a discussion regarding discipline procedures under the new regulations, mentioning ‘the number of suspensions and enquiries relative to students’, and the consequent problems, ‘especially with regard to Aboriginal students’. ¹³¹⁴ Council passed a motion that ‘a letter be drafted to the Director-General of Education, Dr N. Curry, advising that the School Council is unhappy with current discipline policies, particularly regarding Aboriginal students involved in suspensions and/or enquiries’. ¹³¹⁵

The subject of student suspensions again ‘stimulated considerable discussion’ in Council in November 1985, when it was recognised that further suspensions would cause ‘such problems from people outside the school’ that South Tech’s efforts to control the situation would be ‘basically nullified’. ¹³¹⁶ A list of four students under the same family name was included in the minutes, and a motion was carried expressing Council’s concern:

Council indicates its concern and dissatisfaction over previous

¹³⁰⁷ Ibid.
¹³⁰⁸ Ibid.
¹³⁰⁹ Council minutes, 26 July 1984.
¹³¹⁰ Ibid.
¹³¹¹ Ibid.
¹³¹² Ibid.
¹³¹³ Ibid.
¹³¹⁵ Ibid.
¹³¹⁶ Council minutes, 28 November 1985.
correspondence on the matter of what it sees to be inappropriate reinstatements and, in the event of further such directions, resolves to advise the Minister that the decision of the inquiry is not acceptable.1317

South Tech, the repository for many young people whose offensive behaviours had caused their expulsion from other Shepparton schools, was prevented from employing their previous management methods by the new policies. The inquiry panel often had no option available under Regulation XVI other than to return them to the school, a procedure disempowering to all, and negatively impacting on South Tech’s relationship with the Koori community.

In their fight for power to control schools, teacher unions, associated parent organisations and education academics employed industrial action in the 1970s. On 9 November 1978 about fifty teachers from the five Shepparton and Mooroopna high schools took stop work action over the Education Department’s ‘continued refusal to negotiate with the VSTA on several issues’.1318 The proposed strike made front page headlines in the Shepparton News on 8 November 1978. It reported that the ‘main issue involved in the decision to hold the statewide stop work meeting’ was the ‘conditions, salaries and assistant class vacancies’.1319 On 28 November 1978 the South Tech Branch of the Technical Teachers Association of Victoria (TTAV) alerted the Council to more union activity.1320 They sought Council consent to circularise a letter to parents ‘regarding the proposed strike action’. South Tech teachers Sandy Guest and Rick Sinclair addressed Council and, rather than withdrawing their services from the school during the strike, they and their South Tech union colleagues decided to ‘donate one day’s pay to finance research into the needs of students’. Councillors were impressed; they suggested a revision of wording [in the letter], and left the ‘final decision regarding acceptability’ to Thomlinson and Turnour.

Thus on 29 November 1978, the Victorian technical teachers stop work action had little effect on classes in Shepparton. South Tech teachers did not strike, and very few teachers were absent from Shepparton Technical School.1321 The News reported South Tech TTAV members’ decision to remain at school and donate one day’s pay to a campaign to inform parents and the public of the implications of government policy for staffing local schools.1322

1317 Ibid.
1318 Shepparton News, 8 November 1978, front page.
1319 Ibid.
1321 News, 29 November 1978, front page.
1322 Ibid.
In February 1979, the composition of the Council changed from selected to representative membership.\(^{1323}\) Council was to be composed of sixteen members, plus the principal, the vice principal and the District Inspector as ex-officio members.\(^{1324}\) According to the formula, ‘there were to be two teacher representatives, elected by teachers; not more than two would be elected by parents and citizens; the Shepparton City Council would be represented by one member.’\(^{1325}\) In spite of these changes, the Council seemed to work well, retaining a focus on student-centred technical education. However, all secondary school councils were to change focus after 1982, when the Labor Government demanded the delivery of a comprehensive curriculum (technical schools were to deliver a more theoretical curriculum, and high schools a more practical curriculum).\(^{1326}\) As Cate Garner recalled, councils were obliged to concentrate on the education budget and staffing.

While the minutes do not record the details, in his report to Council in October 1979, Thomlinson sketched out the problems the Minister would encounter in deciding on the fate of Victorian technical education. The minutes record that he ‘read extracts from the document to be presented to Mr Hunt from the APVTI’.\(^{1327}\) Council passed a motion that:

> Once the Minister makes his statement as to any proposed restructure of the Education Department, Mr G. Chandler [District Inspector, Shepparton] be requested to convene a meeting of representatives of Councils of Shepparton Schools with the view to investigating the implications of these proposals as they affect the Shepparton area and then prepare a submission to the Minister in this regard.\(^{1328}\)

In the 1980 February Council meeting, the principal’s report was concerned with matters such as: the changes in education, the role of TAFE in relation to secondary education, teachers and school establishment, and a need to clarify what was expected of parent, community, and Council input into education. It was clear that changes were inevitable.\(^{1329}\) Consistent in his argument to keep South Tech operating as a tech and resist a twelfth year, Jock Thomlinson challenged his Council to consider ‘if we want a Year 12 or if we want to separate and be a secondary school in its own right. i.e. If we believe in trade subject teachers we could influence decisions to [be] made about our future’. Perhaps by 1980, as the composition and role of the School Council was in the process of change, Councillors may not have understood that by introducing a Year 12, techs lost one of their

\(^{1323}\) Council minutes, 21 February 1979.
\(^{1324}\) Ibid.
\(^{1325}\) Ibid.
\(^{1326}\) Ibid.
\(^{1328}\) Council minutes, 23 October 1979.
\(^{1329}\) Ibid.
\(^{1330}\) Council minutes, 26 February 1980.
most distinguishing features, and placed themselves at greater risk of being absorbed into an homogenised secondary system.

The tensions produced by the rapid changes in Council composition were exacerbated by the Liberal Government’s staffing arrangements. It was during the reading of the 1980-81 Approbation Bill that Shadow Minister for Education, Robert Fordham, delivered his defence of the technical system’s staffing arrangements in the Victorian Legislative Assembly.\textsuperscript{1330} South Tech Council was obliged to notify the Department of the teachers ‘concerned in stop work action’ on 11 June 1980.\textsuperscript{1331} The three teacher unions - primary, secondary and technical - had called a strike to protest about the issue of limited tenure.\textsuperscript{1332}Nevertheless, weathering the industrial unrest, Council retained its primary focus on self-review and the wellbeing of their school, and the June Council minutes contain a list of current councillors, a summary of their role, operation and specific functions.\textsuperscript{1333} On 23 September 1980, the School Council moved a motion to approve the change of name of the Technical Schools Association of Victoria (TSAV) to the Association of Councils of Technical Institutions in Victoria (ACTIV).\textsuperscript{1334}

A report on the Cobram Regional Principals’ Conference (also attended by Alan Hunt) was the main thrust of Jock Thomlinson’s November 1980 report; he indicated that the Green and White Papers were ‘designed to make the Education Department more efficient’.\textsuperscript{1335} Because of pressures to compete with the other secondary schools in the areas, in a losing battle to keep secondary techs quite distinct from high schools, Jock ‘outlined the new proposal for Year 12 courses’.\textsuperscript{1336}

Following a meeting with the ADTE on 24 March 1981, Thomlinson reported on their discussion of ‘the problems of teacher resignations and the difficulty of recruiting suitable new staff’, and ‘strategies to allow the continuance of Technical Education’.\textsuperscript{1337} While secondary technical teacher training was being phased out, a strong program of TAFE teacher training continued at the SCV, Hawthorn. Council responded by signalling its intention to explore ‘strategies to allow the continuance of Technical Education’.\textsuperscript{1338} Of particular significance was ADTE Bill Johnson’s impending visit, as the ADTE had ‘confirmed the

\begin{tabular}{ll}
\textsuperscript{1331} & Council minutes, 24 June 1980. \\
\textsuperscript{1332} & \textit{Sun}, 11 June 1980, p.21. \\
\textsuperscript{1333} & Council minutes June 1980. \\
\textsuperscript{1334} & Council minutes, 23 September 1980. \\
\textsuperscript{1335} & Council minutes, 25 November 1980. \\
\textsuperscript{1336} & Ibid.; Council minutes, 22 September 1981. \\
\textsuperscript{1337} & Council minutes, 24 February 1981. \\
\textsuperscript{1338} & Ibid.
\end{tabular}
invitation to be present at a meeting regarding the school review’. While it was possible to manipulate and circumvent new policies and work with the Region, the limitations on recruiting suitable industrially trained technical staff was more difficult to manage.

In September 1981, the Association of Councils of Technical Institutions in Victoria (ACTIV) circulated a document regarding the ‘alleged decline in the standard of equipment being supplied to Technical Schools’. South Tech Council also received a copy of the APVTI’s submission on secondary technical curriculum for consideration by the White Paper Implementation Task Force in September 1981. In October 1981, the APVTI Executive circulated a document regarding the ‘necessity for industrial experience for technical school teachers’ - Council agreed to write a letter of support to the State Member of Parliament. At this same meeting, Jock Thomlinson reported on the White Paper’s implementation, and stressed that the new Regional Director should be ‘fully advised regarding the needs of technical education’.

However, South Tech still had reason for optimism, with both the Liberal and Labor politicians voicing their support for the continuance of secondary technical schools. The Shepparton News February 1982 report, It’s back to school time. Return was smooth as silk, was very optimistic. Shepparton Technical School acting principal, Bill Probst, reported an enrolment of 855 students, which would stretch accommodation and resources ‘to the limit’. Jock Thomlinson announced that South Tech’s enrolment was 690, up by twenty on the previous year’s enrolment of 670. Students would be offered new subjects, which included plastics and a reorganised social studies program. In addition, the new motor mechanics building had been erected. In the February Council meeting, Jock reported his attendance at a farewell to former Regional Director, Jeff Dunstan and the appointment of former BITS inspector, Noel Watkins to the position.

With an election looming in April 1982, inwards Council correspondence in March noted that Shadow Minister of Education, Robert Fordham, had forwarded a copy of the Australian Labor Party’s policy for primary and secondary education. His 1982 education policy recognised the ‘significant growth in community demand for secondary-technical education over the previous decade’; he claimed that a Labor Government would ‘maintain

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1339 Council minutes, 24 March 1981.
1340 Council minutes, 22 September 1981.
1341 Ibid.
1342 Council minutes, 26 October 1981
1343 Ibid.
1345 Ibid.
1346 Ibid.
1347 Council minutes, 23 February 1982.
and develop’ secondary-technical education, ‘ensure that sufficient resources are provided for it’, and allow ‘all existing single sex secondary schools to become co-educational’. According to Fordham, a Labor government would encourage girls ‘to widen their occupational horizons and move into the full range of skilled trades and technical areas’, and enable rural secondary students to have ‘greater access to technical education facilities’.

Jock Thomlinson’s March 1982 report to the School Council covered ‘changes taking place in the structure of the Education Department’, and drew attention to five matters. Firstly, he discussed the advantages or disadvantages in belonging to a regional or sub-regional group of the Federation of Principals. Secondly, on the matter of school autonomy, he asked ‘who controls our future?’ Thirdly, Thomlinson expressed his hope that decisions made in the future would be based on curriculum needs rather than expediency. Fourthly, he felt that there was a ‘need for an education plan for the Region and for the sub-region’. Fifthly, Thomlinson reported the Minister’s prediction of stringent limitations on spending in education.

Donnelly claimed in 2004 that there has been an exodus of parents out of the government system. In his book Reshaping Australian Education, 1960-1985, W.F. Connell also concluded that independent schools seemed to be increasing ‘in number and prestige’. In Shepparton, the South Tech Council reacted to the Shepparton News 5 February 1982 front page article titled Teacher approach slated. Vic Ryall, the principal of the new Goulburn Valley Grammar School (GVGS) in Shepparton, observed an ‘increasing drift to private schools’. He suggested that one of the many reasons for this drift was ‘a lack of dedication by many teachers in the State education system, particularly in secondary schools’. Estimating that twenty-six per cent of students were attending independent schools in 1982, Ryall claimed that ‘independent schools provided pastoral care, with students taught to respect and care for each other, and spiritual and moral development. This [these values] was excluded from the State system where if religion was taught, it was not carried out by teachers’.

Having taught in state high schools for eight years, Ryall claimed to have ‘worked with colleagues who were tremendously dedicated and some who should never have been in

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1349 Ibid, pp.27, 33.
1350 Council minutes, 23 March 1982.
1354 Ibid.
1355 Ibid.
He pointed out that, ‘by virtue of their independence, the principal of an independent school could hire and fire staff’. While not focussing specifically on Shepparton schools, Ryall nevertheless reported that ‘a number of principals had voiced concern that they could not select the best teachers’. He gave the lack of government financial assistance as a further reason why there was an increase in the numbers of students attending independent schools. Ryall was not alone in attacking State School teachers. According to John Richardson, MLA, in the Assembly in 1982, some union leaders had led the teaching profession into disrepute. In response to Ryall’s comments in the News, the South Tech Council passed a motion on 19 July 1982 ‘that staff be advised that the Council has full confidence in them and in the work they are doing’. Ryall sought help from South Tech to establish the GVGS’s health and human relations program in February 1983, thus beginning a warm relationship between the schools.

Following Labor’s election in April 1982, government education policy set out in Ministerial Paper 1, 1983, demanded that all secondary schools should conform to ‘the principles and framework of Government policy’. In effect, South Tech was no longer an autonomous technical school.

Council chairman Paul Cronin concluded the February 1984 meeting by stating that it would be the last under the present Council - the next meeting would be composed of ‘a new Council elected under the provisions of the new constitution’. The role and composition of the reconstituted School Councils was outlined in Ministerial Paper 4. The post-primary council composition would be: parents (including representatives of parents’ clubs) no less than one-third; staff, no more than one-third; adequate student representation; and up to one-fifth of the total membership would be co-opted by the elected council, to represent ‘wider community interests’. The principal was to be a ‘voting member of the council and, for the purposes of co-option, shall be considered as an elected member’.

Compared to the 1970s, the reconstituted Council received increased inward correspondence. For example, the February 1984 School Council minutes registered the receipt of over forty items, with only four of immediate relevance to the school; the

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1356 Ibid.
1357 Ibid.
1358 Ibid.
1359 Ibid.
1360 Council minutes, 19 July 1977.
1361 Council minutes, 23 February 1982.
1363 Report on Cope, ch.6, p.32.
1364 Council minutes, 23 February 1984.
remainder addressed the new procedures and policies. On 29 March 1984, Paul Cronin was re-elected School Council President. Jock Thomlinson explained the Department’s expectations of School Councils as set out in the *Ministerial Paper* on ‘The Roles and Responsibilities of School Councils’ and stressed the need for both short and long term planning.

Thus the implementation of the new policies and curriculum created stress at student, teacher and Council levels. In May 1984, Jock reported to Council that there were problems arising from writing and evaluating relevant curriculum, and staff were stressed because of that responsibility. He felt that this situation had led to a ‘lack of adequate representation on the School Operations Committee’.

The minutes lack detail concerning the nature of the curriculum, however PEP, SIP, and the *Curriculum Frameworks* were introduced to schools under Federal and State Labor policy in the 1980s. Bill Brearley claimed that, by 1991, ‘the Curriculum Frameworks has restructured the College in nine subject areas: English, Maths, Social Education, Science, Commerce, Arts, Technology Studies, Personal Development and LOTE (Languages Other Than English)’.

During the May 1984 Council meeting, Thomlinson indicated that there was a need for more liaison between Council and school committees, and a need for subsequent reviews. Jock Thomlinson argued that the Council could only operate successfully from ‘an informed base, and therefore Council [needed] to adopt a working relationship with the school community to enable it to make the type of decisions which it has been given the power to make’.

At this same Council meeting, Vice Principal Ernie Jones predicted that there would be ‘major changes in the way education is developed within the State’ in the wake of the anticipated Blackburn Report. Because of Shepparton’s proximity to other schools and the TAFE college, Ernie also predicted that there would be ‘changes in the inter-relationship between these places’. Benalla, South Tech and Shepparton Technical College principals had ‘raised the future of the Technical Division ... as a matter of concern’ with Don McKenzie - TTAV Field Officer - as early as March 1975. In their opinion, the ‘separation of the TAFE area’ would be ‘inevitable and disastrous’.

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1367 Council minutes, 23 February 1984.
1368 Council minutes, 29 March 1984.
1369 Council minutes, 24 May 1984.
1370 *Past Images*, p.43.
1371 Council minutes, 24 May 1984.
1372 Ibid.
1373 Ibid.
1374 Ibid.
Jock’s September 1985 report to Council gave a clear indication of the complexity of the task they faced in coping with a range of competing demands.\textsuperscript{1376} Listing a number of matters, he pointed out that, although school councils had decision-making authority, their role was not straightforward, as the opinions of other bodies, including the unions and the LAC must be taken into consideration.\textsuperscript{1377} Jock predicted that the Regional Board would make ‘impromptu decisions’. He observed that the Participation and Equity Program (PEP) seemed to ‘work independently’ when it needed to be co-ordinated. He explained the different guidelines for supplementary grants. ‘Multicultural needs’ were a constant to be taken into account in all Council decision-making. The changing communications systems utilising computers was adding to the complexity.\textsuperscript{1378} Thomlinson realised the difficulties that would be experienced by councillors in reaching appropriate decisions given the complexity of the issues competing for their attention.

In his report to the November 1985 meeting, Jock Thomlinson listed the failings introduced into the system that have since been identified by researchers such as Donnelly. The difficulty in ‘adapting existing resources human and other’; the problems of ‘apportioning all the extra jobs to teachers’; and the difficulty of ‘sorting out priorities’.\textsuperscript{1379} Thomlinson outlined the problems inherent in Ministerial Frameworks, such as the need to help teachers cope with ‘varying standards in the group’. He pointed out that some classes may have to be combined, and that the trade areas would need to ‘adapt to modern needs’. As early as 1985, Thomlinson noted there were ‘problems motivating students in their electives’. He also noted the need to update the media course. Jock reiterated the school philosophy that ‘schools should be a place where staff and students want to go’.

Ironically, at the Council meeting on 27 February 1986, Thomlinson reported an increase of thirty-seven enrolments, at a time when most other schools had decreasing enrolment. It was anticipated that there would be a hundred Year 12 students in 1987, compared to the present enrolment of sixty. Increases in Years 10 and 11 were anticipated to offset the decreases in Years 7 and 8. It was anticipated that enrolments would total over 800 students in 1987.\textsuperscript{1380}

Bill Johnson reflected that principals became increasingly frustrated as a result of

\begin{footnotes}
\item[1376] Council minutes, 26 September 1985.
\item[1377] Ibid.
\item[1378] Ibid.
\item[1379] Council minutes, 28 November 1985.
\item[1380] Council minutes, 27 February 1986.
\item[1381] Johnson, \textit{The Final Twenty Years}, 1993, p.80.
\end{footnotes}
their exclusion from ‘many decision-making forums’. Betty Lawson recalled an interview with a young principal who summed up what had happened: ‘Once we were valued, we were supported and given responsibility and expected to accept it - people did. Now with this bureaucratic structure ... we have no value as people ... economic values have taken priority!’ While the young principal attributed the bureaucracy’s priority as ‘economic values’, the devaluation of his job was also the result of the State Labor government policy, which required them to follow rather than lead, and which discouraged the development of alternative programs, such as those initiated at Cobden TS, Huntingdale TS, Swinburne TS and South Tech.

Technical school principals were not alone in reacting to the situation thrust upon schools. Wanganui Park High School’s 1986 school magazine article, The ABC of Education, was written in a cynical vein:

Another interesting development to take place soon in Shepparton comes as a result of MP6. The MOE has established a special SRU to facilitate reorganisation. Our RDE has made known his enthusiastic support for the concept, and planning committees of the five constituent P/P schools have formed the SDRPC as directed by Ministry guidelines. Reps of the VSTA, VFSSPC, RBE and TTUV are also on the committee and the RDE is represented by a local SEO.

In ‘looking forward to another very interesting year in 1987’, the writer was ‘confident in the belief that one of our major campaigns - to eliminate meaningless acronyms and jargon from the school communications - is having remarkable success’. Bill Johnson’s claim that school principals’ views were ‘being ignored in a welter of ideological jargon regarding “consensus and democracy in decision-making”’ appears to be as valid in the high schools as it was in the techs.

During the 26 June 1986 Council meeting, Jock Thomlinson gave notice that he intended to retire in February 1987. In his report he noted that, unless it was represented on all committees, the ‘tech influence will be lost’, because the more numerous primary and high schools would create a greater influence on finance and needs. Bill Johnson claimed that ‘about twenty-five per cent’ of the APVTI principals were also ‘opting for


Wanganui Park High School Magazine 1986, p.2. (All acronyms are explained in the List of Abbreviations.)

Ibid.

Johnson, The Final Twenty Years, 1993, p.76.

Council minutes, 26 June 1986.
Thus the Victorian education system lost the mavericks who would do ‘almost anything that was legal for the needs of our students’. These were the principals who were marked by ‘great individuality and personality’, and who James Docherty said would be of interest to ‘future students of the history of education’. They, like their schools, were just about gone.

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In 1987, Terry Mulvihill, the new principal, reported that the enrolment of 820 students was a slight increase over the 1986 level of 813. Due to declining numbers in primary schools the Year 7 intake was lower, however this was offset by the increased enrolment of 104 in Year 12. Plans for 1988 included an extension of Year 12 programs to include group 1 and 2 VCE subjects as well as STC (VCE), a building program, South Tech’s ‘first ever Debutante Ball’, and ‘further development and beautification of school garden areas’. All of these were reported in the School Magazine as: ‘a new principal, fresh ideas, roses in the garden, a new foyer and a new assessment system’.

In 1989, Minister for Education, Joan Kirner, announced that the previous ‘proliferation of courses, subjects and methods of assessment’ would be replaced by a ‘common certificate’ in 1990 - the new VCE, comprising forty-four subjects. Kirner commented that the Common Assessment Tasks (CATs) were a ‘judicious mix of in-school, moderated and external assessments’. The CATs were an attempt to link ‘what is taught and what is assessed’, outside of examination conditions.

In a memorandum from the Acting Chief Manager Office of Schools Administration, it was announced that all post-primary schools would be ‘classified as secondary colleges by 1990’. The tenor of the School Council minutes changed as the Ministerial policies were implemented. The 6 April 1989 School Council minutes noted the new ‘Ministerial [classification] Policy’, between notes on school vandalism and the debutante ball. On 3 August, declaring that ‘all avenues have been exhausted to allow everyone an opportunity to vote for the future name of this school’, a motion was passed to adopt the name ‘Shepparton

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1388 Former BITS inspector, interview, 1997.
1389 J. Docherty to B. Lawson, personal correspondence, mid-1980s.†
1391 Ibid, p.5.
1394 Ibid, pp.8,9.
1395 Executive Memorandum, No.314, Change of school name and reclassification of schools, 5 July 1989.
South Secondary College’. \(^{1396}\) It was claimed in a school magazine article that the name change ‘symbolised fundamental changes that were occurring in the school’: the ‘revitalised building program’, the introduction of ‘awards nights, debutante balls, expos, college football and netball teams, a studio orchestra and college musicals accompanied the transition from South Tech to the Shepparton South Secondary College’. \(^{1397}\)

The school vandalism indicated that children with special needs - perhaps the focus of Robert Fordham’s 1980-81 argument - had not faded away. In England a decade earlier, Alex Clegg claimed that:

There are politicians who believe that putting all children in the same comprehensive school will somehow or other remove these differences which are brought about by differing social and domestic circumstances. What is not fully realised is that birds of a feather will tend to flock together even when put in an aviary with other birds. And to continue the metaphor, there are certain birds with so much oil on their wings that it can only be removed by the most specific attention and the use of plentiful and costly resources. \(^{1398}\)

Robert Fordham appeared to understand this when he argued that technical schools had a ‘difficult and important task’, and needed an ‘additional degree of flexibility in staffing to allow them to relate to the needs of children in their care’. \(^{1399}\) Yet Joan Kirner argued that equal opportunity policy justified the merging of technical with high schools in May 1989. \(^{1400}\) Robert Fordham’s argument that the technical schools were one of the great strengths of Victorian education suggests that there was in fact an inequality in the secondary system, that the techs had earned the extra staffing and resources they enjoyed to cater for children.

Equality is a complex concept. Duncan Forrester outlined the difficulties of understanding ‘the human meaning of inequality’; he felt it was necessary to undergo what Richard Tawney called ‘an intellectual conversion, a change of direction and priorities and of self-understanding’ - a call for ‘intellectual humility before the complex truth’. \(^{1401}\)

Forrester employed Douglas Rae’s analysis of the grammar of equality. \(^{1402}\) Rae claimed that when arguing for equal opportunity, the subject of equality often assumes an ‘extreme individualism’; for example ‘one person, one vote’ does not recognise impediments

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\(^{1396}\) Council minutes, 3 August 1989.
\(^{1402}\) Ibid, p.43.
debarring individuals from voting. Similarly, elevating the status of mathematics, science or technological studies does little for those whose first choice is for artistic, domestic, or trade areas; it also does little for those with learning difficulties.\footnote{\textsuperscript{1403} Rae suggested some equal opportunity domains - politically, a vote belongs to individuals in a democracy, but power is not distributed equally; equality in law is theoretical rather than practical; gross inequalities in social and economic status remain the subject of vigorous debate.\textsuperscript{1404} Equality of opportunity, the value of equality, and ‘absolute and relative equality’ are of particular interest in terms of Kirner’s claim to rid the education system of inequalities.\textsuperscript{1405}}

Equality of opportunity is commonly understood in a competitive society as meritocracy, or as a race, where individualism is inherent, the prize is awarded to the winners and the ‘losers go to the wall’. It could be argued that, if there is equal opportunity at the outset, there is a case for ‘consolation prizes for the unsuccessful’ - even the most talented do not necessarily ‘deserve’ success because they may possess advantages that contribute to that success.\footnote{\textsuperscript{1406}}

Rae argued that ‘equality of provision is not identical provision’; different needs are not always best met with the same methods, but with equal care in choosing the most appropriate methods at close quarters - not at a political distance.\footnote{\textsuperscript{1407} He distinguished ‘absolute’ from ‘relative’ equality - the latter relating to ‘direct “cash value” for policy making, and the former to subtle ‘social ideals’ - the ‘equal worth of human beings, equal respect for people, and equal regard for people’s interests’.\textsuperscript{1408}} South Tech practised absolute equality by offering to all young people courses of equal value; those who excelled in music were equal to those who excelled in science, trade, art or business studies - all were of equal human worth. As former student Michael said:

\begin{quote}
At worst, if I ended up being a lawyer or a doctor or something like that, it would have been: ‘gee, I’ve done that!’ I can do that as a hobby, on the weekends, I can go and make a bookcase or something like that.\footnote{\textsuperscript{1409}}
\end{quote}

Under Jock Thomlinson’s leadership in the context of the TSD, specialist staff with a variety of resources developed youth-centred programs. Students were encouraged to explore their aptitudes and abilities, thus opening up to them a range of interests and possible

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\begin{enumerate}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1403} Ibid, p.35.}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1404} D. Rae, \textit{Equalities}, Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press,1981, cited in D. Forrester, 2001, p.34-36.}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1405} Ibid, p.34-39.}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1406} Ibid, p.38.}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1407} Ibid.}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1408} Ibid, p.39.}
\item \footnote{\textsuperscript{1409} MP, interview, 2001.}
\end{enumerate}
vocations. Jock’s philosophy is the antithesis of the distribution of status and material rewards in the wider community. He and his staff moderated tendencies to overrate the academically able by employing the ‘service subjects; (literacy and numeracy) in a wide continuum of learning areas’ - academic excellence was not an end in itself and thus ‘academic arrogance’ was averted.

From 1982 to 1990 the Victorian Labor government, the state teacher unions, Industrial Agreements determining the setting up of LACs, and the parent activist groups diffused the responsibility for educational decision-making, and changed the role of the principal from an educational leader and administrator to that of a public servant implementing policy. As discussed above, Jackel found that an untrained school community could not effectively make sound administrative or professional decisions in the 1800s. Watkins found that ‘for even the committed teachers, the rhetoric of decentralisation and allowing school some degree of self-management masked the hidden burden of time costs’. In contrast, John Kumnick claimed that the South Tech Council was rewarded by the ‘evidence of kids who love going to school’. John observed that the recruitment and training of Councillors was ‘a formidable package’ that took ‘inspired leadership’. Forrester argued that visionary leadership creates a sense of ‘solidarity, shared destiny and mutual accountability’.

Throughout the technical system, staff solidarity and sense of purpose was shattered; former technical staff were bereft of a system and they mourned for it. In her unpublished manuscript, Betty Lawson described the TSD’s demise as a ‘tangle of forces acting at the one time independently and in unison. The demise had all the awful inevitability of a Greek tragedy, and a tragedy it was, many believe’. The ‘tangle of forces’ rending the system included the clash of ideologies, the education department restructures, the loss of defined paths to technical colleges and university, the industrial action and parent activism, personal conflicts, and the rivalry between the Divisions, the ‘often deep resentments and jealousies’.

Lawson reflected that criticisms suggesting that the technical division did ‘little to salvage its identity in the confused and confusing restructure exercise’ were ‘unduly harsh’:

\[1412\] JK, interview, 1996.
\[1413\] Ibid.
\[1416\] Ibid.
The division along with the rest of the Education Department had to fight too many skirmishes simultaneously and had to adapt to changes and innovations quickly. The Technical Division was capable of doing this as exemplified by its quick and successful setting up of middle-level courses. But within the framework of the more cumbersome and less volatile Education Department many of these efforts lost their impact.\textsuperscript{1417}

‘The Division was no stranger to threats’, Lawson wrote; by the ‘sheer strength and dedication of its protagonists, [it] had managed to weather many storms in the past’. However:

> Inevitably, all this clearly took a toll of the health and time of its members. Ted Jackson’s long illness and untimely death in 1975 saddened and grieved his fellow teachers. A lot of life went out of technical education when he died.\textsuperscript{1418}

Following Ted Jackson’s death, Len Watts was appointed Acting Director, and held this position for two years before being made Director. In Lawson’s opinion, this was ‘a difficult and unstable situation [which] proved hard for Watts’.\textsuperscript{1419} Len Watts, Oliver Nilsson, Ron Shannon, Jack Kepert and Ted Jackson all died in office or within a couple of years of retirement. Bill Johnson speculated on whether this was ‘a reflection of the stresses inherent in the position or whether it was simply chance’.\textsuperscript{1420}

> Furthermore, Betty Lawson argued that the demise of the TSD ‘hurt and even crushed many individuals and the casualties of the first and subsequent restructures were heavy’. Casualties in the teaching profession were acknowledged in a symposium on occupational mental health titled, \textit{The Teachers’ Experience}, which was held in Melbourne in 1986. Edmund Chiu, a psychiatrist from the University of Melbourne, edited papers from contributors who included representatives from the Victorian Teachers’ Union, the Mental Health Research Institute, a senior lecturer in Sociology, the State Insurance Office, and psychiatrists in private practice.\textsuperscript{1422} Sociologist Rosemary Otto, pointed out that ‘the highly stressed include many of the best and most committed teachers’. Otto outlined contemporary factors contributing to teacher stress, including the expectation that teachers should attend numerous meetings and be involved in committees in addition to their regular teaching duties. Teachers were also expected to deal with constant changes in

\begin{itemize}
\item \textsuperscript{1417} Ibid, ch.6, p.9.
\item \textsuperscript{1418} Ibid, ch.1, p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{1419} Ibid, ch.6, p.3.
\item \textsuperscript{1420} Johnson, \textit{Technical to Post Primary}, 1992, p.112.
\item \textsuperscript{1421} Lawson, \textit{The Rise and Demise}, 1987, ch.6, p.10.
\item \textsuperscript{1422} E. Chui, (Editor). \textit{Occupational mental health. The teachers’ experience. Proceedings of a symposium}. Clunies-Ross House, Melbourne, St. Vincent’s Hospital, Fitzroy, Victoria, 1986.
\item \textsuperscript{1423} Ibid, p.35.
\end{itemize}
Government policies. Rosemary Otto argued that ‘the problems of students which teachers are expected to solve are largely rooted in societal structures and inadequacies, and current school structures’. 

However, the greatest casualties over the past twenty years may be the young people. In 1982, McGarvie suggested that the government systems are losing their ‘more highly motivated and able pupils’ to private schools. Badcock, in 1988, claimed that the ‘chief losers in this partially devolved system are the pupils/students’. Donnelly in 2004 asserted that the already disadvantaged children have suffered greater disadvantage. In contrast, in 1981, journalist Judy Congdon chose the title, *School: A brick and concrete parent*, to describe South Tech’s curriculum - a curriculum that was designed to demonstrate to children its care and concern for them. Vice Principal Ernie Jones observed that ‘as soon as you show through the curriculum that you care, the kids will come for help’. At the Technical Teachers College, Hawthorn, in 1972, Thomlinson had described his school as having a philosophy and a curriculum which were ‘all tied up’ with resources and buildings. However, he claimed that he would sooner his kids taught ‘in a tin shed with a good teacher than the best school with all the equipment in the world ... our facility is our teacher’.

Eighteen years after the demise of the technical schools, politicians continue to argue about education funding. But they fail to address how the available money can best be spent to educate all young people, and they neglect to define a philosophy linking curriculum within a student-staff-community support structure.

Programs such as the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL), the ‘new’ vocational course, have brought ‘some dropouts back to the classroom’. In a front page headline on 6 October 2003, the *Herald Sun* announced that there was a ‘Class of Lost Kids’. Education reporter, Jeremy Calvert, observed that ‘student absenteeism is reaching crisis levels in Victorian schools’. In November 2003, Lynne Kosky announced that there would be a ‘Jobs course for Year 7’ - ‘vocational subjects will be expanded to cater for Years 7 to 10 students from next year [2004]’. Kosky was reported as saying that ‘broader practical “hands on” learning would keep more students, especially boys, interested in

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1425 Ibid, p.38.
1431 Ibid.
1434 *Herald Sun*, 2 November 2003, p.32.
education’. Ordering the Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority to reassess the learning program for Years 9 and 10, ‘the danger period for students at risk of dropping out of school’, Kosky suggested that ‘the success of VCAL suggested its approach for students to “learn by doing” should be introduced earlier’.

Lynne Kosky’s announcement had been preceded by accumulating evidence for ‘hands on’ education. Under a headline in July 2002 Blue collar is back, Ian Royall claimed that, ‘for years our education system has been skewed towards university [however] ... demand and earning power are seeing a swing back to apprenticeships’. In the same vein, and in accordance with their historical support for technical schools, the State Liberal opposition spokesman for education announced a plan in July 2002 ‘to address the staff shortages in trade subjects in secondary schools’. ‘We have lost a whole generation of young people who enjoy getting their hands dirty and want to build things’, claimed opposition spokesman, Phil Honeywood in August 2002. These recent findings question the worth of the Cain/Kirner policies.

South Tech staff oral histories reflect John Kumnick’s passionate belief in ‘what we did’ and ‘how we did’. Some of the former technical staff interviewed were compelled to implement policies they believed to be contrary to the best interests of many young people. Some staff adjusted to the new system and furthered their teaching career; some became ill, some resigned, some retired from the Ministry. As John Kumnick recalled:

> there were too many vested interests, and not everyone’s endowed with vision, and the capacity to act on that vision and see it through to fruition … First of all, the system allowed for technical education. It was quite intelligent in those days, to say: ‘hey, there is a real need for people with vocational skills, taught by people who have industrial experience and knowledge’ and to have an alternative stream in secondary education.

He suggested that, had ‘a good sense of logic’ prevailed, South Tech could have become ‘a self-funding, autonomous learning institute’:

> It would have been funded as a stand alone technical college in Shepparton, with its philosophy, its approach, its resources, its teachers - wedded to a close relationship with the parents, the community, the local employers, the service communities of psychologists and social workers, the law, and medical people and spiritual leaders, and - all those sorts of people could have

**Notes:**

1435 Ibid.
1436 Ibid.
1438 Herald Sun, 29 July, 2002, p.15
1439 Herald Sun, 4 August 2002, p.7.
1441 Ibid.
worked - continued to have worked to have made a fabulous response to the specific needs of kids in their community.\textsuperscript{1442}

John Kumnick believed that South Tech represented ‘what a school should bloody well be’. He described the vulnerability of the school philosophy:

It was as simple as that: ‘what do the kids need? What are our resources? How do we put them together to have a productive outcome?’ It was never, ever complex. It was never, ever highfaluting. It was so fundamental as to be vulnerable.\textsuperscript{1443}

The stress induced by the TSD demise culminated in November 1982, when Jock Thomlinson was one of an inner circle of teachers and administrators who attended a function at retired ADTE Dick Armitage’s home. Betty Lawson recalled why these people gathered: from a ‘sense of disaster and bewilderment which unnerved many in headquarters and in the schools’. They knew that the change was inevitable and ‘had to be faced. And the way they knew best was through humour’.\textsuperscript{1444} The function was titled ‘DECEASTD - Directorate Examining Certification Establishing Attendance Saluting Technical Division’.\textsuperscript{1445} Following the burning of significant documents ‘relating to service in the Technical Schools Division’, a burial service was performed. Ron Ritchie and Bill Moore led a procession carrying the container of ashes on a long pole to the grave.\textsuperscript{1446}

In 1983, the gathering reassembled for ‘Deceased Revisited’.\textsuperscript{1447} ‘Dick’s Last Bell Call’, with the theme ‘Bemoan’, was held in 1987.\textsuperscript{1448} Jack Thomas was asked to write verses to commemorate the tech schools.\textsuperscript{1449} His original intention was to ‘write a long epic poem to bemoan the demise of the Tech Division’. He started:

\begin{quote}
Whether it is nobler in the schools
To suffer the slings and arrows of outrageous restructure,
Or to take up dusters against this sea of reformers
And by opposing them, end them.
To VCE, to Frameworks,
No more!
And by return to techs we end
The heartache and these thousand recent shocks.\textsuperscript{1450}
\end{quote}

Abruptly, he stopped here. He was crying.\textsuperscript{1451} He tried a lighter format, and devised a nursery
rhyme:

Sing a song of five cents
A pocket full of lies,
Something about curriculum,
When we really know its size.
The government can’t afford
The Ministry, it’s a wreck.
Oh! Wouldn’t it be nice again
To run schools like a tech.\textsuperscript{1452}

\textsuperscript{1451} Ibid, p.3.
\textsuperscript{1452} Ibid, p.6.
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Appendix: Shepparton South Technical School's Philosophy and Objectives (1974)

Philosophy

1. A school is a place for teaching and learning.
2. For effective teaching and learning to take place, teachers must look at students as people and take into account personal needs and circumstances.
3. Every child can be good at something. The school’s task is to help each student find out what it is and extend each student as far as possible.
4. Society is changing rapidly, so in addition to training students to be productive, responsible and enlightened citizens in today’s world, we must help them cope with change.
5. Whilst there is no perfect system, the school must constantly strive for better ways of doing things.
6. Schools are a combination of students, teachers and resources. Each of these must grow and attempts must be made for each to fulfill their potential.
7. Just as teachers place high expectations on students, the school places high expectations on teachers.
8. All learning experiences should have a purpose which teachers can explain and students can understand.

Objectives

We want a school where students:

(a) like to go.
(b) make friends.
(c) continue to be taught the basic literacy, numeracy and manipulative skills.
(d) are exposed to a wide range of experiences to broaden their outlook and provide a balanced education.
(e) feel a sense of achievement and have something to show for their efforts.
(f) respect the rights, property and ideas of others and become increasingly sensitive to the needs and feelings of others.
(g) leave the school better equipped to make decisions affecting themselves and others.
(h) develop strong, healthy bodies and take care of their appearance, behaviour and hygiene.
(i) take an active interest in maintaining and improving their school environment.
(j) qualify to become productive members of the work force.

We want a school where teachers:

(a) share their ideas, training, skills and experiences and use them in the interests of students.
(b) are given the resources, support and encouragement to work happily together.
(c) improve their knowledge, techniques and performance through ongoing in-service education.
(d) feel a sense of achievement.
(e) can participate in all aspects of school life.

We want a school which:

(a) takes advantage of technological advances.
(b) generates new ideas and ways of doing things.
(c) serves the wider needs of the community.
(d) does its best for all students.
Author/s: Preston, Lesley Florence

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