

## **1. If you were elected, what would be your first initiative within the electorate, to improve the outcomes for young people moving from school to work or further study?**

Our first initiative will be to ensure the state government spends the \$80 million I secured to build road overpasses in South Morang to enable the rail line to be extended to Mernda. Lack of access to public transport is a major inhibitor for young people to develop their careers if they wish to continue to live in the regional community

Secondly, to open La Trobe University's tertiary courses in nursing and business studies at the Goulburn Ovens Valley Tafe campus in Seymour.

Then, continue to fight for more funding to assist all our local high schools who want to improve their technical skills base and monitor the roll out of broadband to ensure there are no more black spots.

I will continue to work closely with all our schools and training centres to ensure the courses being delivered match the needs of business and industry and provide our young people with the skills they need to start their careers and succeed in our fast changing workplaces.

Importantly I'll ensure that young people are provided with access to the information and skills they need to develop their entrepreneurship, especially through the award winning [www.business.gov.au](http://www.business.gov.au)

## **2. What resources would you commit to better synchronise state and federal education, employment and training programmes operating throughout the electorate?**

Build on the work and cooperation already happening across the electorate between schools, both public and private, TAFES, training providers and now La Trobe University through workshops held across not just the electorate but together with neighbouring regions.

The LLEN has achieved this but there needs to be better promotion of the opportunities created through this level of cooperation. Funding for this can be achieved not just through the Department of Education, Science and Training but from other avenues, including the private sector.

## **3. What will you do to improve the skills of the community and enhance the local regional economies and labour markets?**

At the last election, the Coalition committed to build a national network of Australian Technical Colleges providing quality senior schooling and trade training for young Australians. Today, there are 21 Australian Technical Colleges in operation, with around 2,000 students. Another four Colleges will open for the school year in 2008 and plans are well advanced for three new Colleges.

When all 28 Australian Technical Colleges announced to date are open, around 10,000 students will be studying at the Colleges, spread across 50 campuses. The Coalition believes the option of quality technical education is critical to ensuring Australians are equipped to help build our nation and our future prosperity. A re-elected Coalition Government will establish a further 100 Australian Technical Colleges, 30 through direct funding and a further 70 existing state or independent secondary schools being funded to convert to Australian Technical Colleges.

These initiatives will invest a further \$2.1 billion over 10 years into skills training in Australia and will build on the Coalition's strong track record of supporting and encouraging technical trades training in Australia. The Coalition believes State and Territory Governments made a mistake when they closed the technical school systems in the 1970s and 1980s. It was part of a flawed mind-set which saw skills training as a second class choice for young people.

Successive Labor Governments at the Federal, State and Territory level forced young Australians to think that a university degree was the only path to a prosperous future. The Coalition has challenged the attitude that apprenticeships and skills education are "second best" to university and turned around the approach to vocational education across the nation.

Following the Coalition's lead in 2004, no fewer than six State and Territory Governments have reintroduced some form of school-based trade training in their state school systems. The Coalition's trades initiatives, including Australian Technical Colleges, Commonwealth Trade Learning Scholarships and Australian Government Tool Kits for apprentices, have elevated the status of skills training and rewarded those students whose talents flourish in environments which bring together both academic and technical tasks. More support for technical training is part of the Coalition's plan for achieving full employment by continuing to grow the Australian economy. The Coalition's goal is to cut unemployment to 3 per cent over the next three years.

The Coalition's Tax Reform Plan announced by the Prime Minister and Treasurer on 15 October 2007 provides the incentives to encourage an additional 65,000 people into the workforce over the medium term. This comprehensive plan will particularly benefit working women with children, 65 per cent of whom will pay no more than 15 cents in the dollar in tax.

Tax cuts delivered by the Coalition have encouraged an additional 300,000 people into the workforce since the year 2000. This has helped contribute to our 33 year low in unemployment and a workforce participation rate which is at record highs.

To provide the opportunity for more Australians to improve their skills and move into the workforce or get the job they want, a re-elected Coalition Government will also make available a \$3,000 Work Skills Voucher to anyone who is eligible. Each year this will help at least 60,000 people over the age of 25 who have not completed year 12 improve their skills. Work Skills Vouchers have already helped 45,000 people without a year 12 qualification to access the training they need to help them share in Australia's prosperity.

#### **4. How will you address youth unemployment across the electorate?**

The Coalition's strong economic management over the past 11 years has ensured sustained economic growth and moved Australia closer to the important goal of full employment.

The Coalition has a plan to achieve full employment by ensuring the continued growth of the Australian economy. Our goal is to cut the unemployment rate to three per cent over the next three years. A significant part of Australia's economic prosperity is the Coalition's willingness to make important decisions including the two waves of workplace relations reforms we have made over the last 11 years.

The Coalition believes it has in place a workplace relations system that strikes the right balance between providing strong protections for workers and fostering modern and flexible workplaces that will make the most of future economic opportunities. We will in no way weaken the existing protections for workers under our system. Workplace reform works in conjunction with a range of other economic policies including recent tax reform and skills initiatives. The combined effect of these policies is to get more Australians into better jobs.

In stark contrast, Labor has promised to turn back the clock and return Australia to the workplace relations system of 15 years ago. Labor wants to deny Australian workers and their families the freedom to choose the type of working conditions that best suit their particular needs. Labor believes in a 'one size fits all' system, where union bosses are dominant.

We now have in place a flexible workplace relations system, one which promotes a cooperative and harmonious workplace environment and enables Australia to compete in the global marketplace. It is now time to bed down the workplace relations system which will take Australia forward.

#### **5. What is your position on the immediate needs to better synchronise education and training provision in the electorate?**

Incorporate the activities of xxxx listed above and promote the opportunities for young people through the Australian Technical Colleges and the extra funding available for our local schools to improve their technical skills base.

For example, match the skills provided by our education faculties to the needs of the region and aim to create individual facilities centres of excellence for particular training. As an example, it is my vision to have the La Trobe University course in nursing at Seymour as a regional centre of excellence for nurse training.

Where possible ensure that we provide these tertiary opportunities within our regional communities to reduce the cost of further study for regional families.

## **6. What do you see as the future for the current federal government's Local Community Partnerships [LCP's] initiative?**

In the 2005 Budget, the Australian Government extended its commitment to improve the career education and transition support services available to young Australians with the announcement of funding for the Australian Network of Industry Careers Advisers (ANICA) initiative. This program is currently funded to June 2008. No announcements have been made during the campaign about the extending the program

In response to market research and focus groups conducted with young people, the initiative was re-named the Career Advice Australia (CAA) Initiative.

The CAA initiative aims to support all young people from 13-19 years of age to assist them to achieve a successful transition through school, and from school to further education, training and employment.

There are six key outcomes for the Australian Government CAA initiative:

- improved career choices by young people;
- increased school engagement;
- increased industry and employer engagement in schools and career development;
- increased awareness of the range of vocational education and training opportunities;
- improved quality and availability of career and transitions education across Australia; and
- effective Local Community Partnerships providing coordinated career and transition support.

There are several elements under the CAA initiative which aim to achieve these outcomes, as follows:

- i. expanding the role of Local Community Partnerships (LCPs);
- ii. extending industry leadership through the establishment of two industry-led networks, National Industry Career Specialists (NICS) and Regional Industry Career Advisers (RICAs); and improving the standards for, and status of, Career Advisers.

From 2006 Australian Government Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) will be incorporated, not-for-profit, community-based and locally operated organisations contracted by the Department of Education, Science and Training to provide a strategic approach to the implementation of the following three LCP career and transition programmes:

- Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) Programme;
- Career and Transition Support (CTS) Programme; and
- Adopt a School Programme (ASP)

LCPs will facilitate the delivery of the three LCP career and transition programmes to all schools (across all Government, Catholic and other non-Government schooling sectors) for the benefit of all young people (aged 13-19) within their contracted LCP Service Region(s).

LCPs will partner with industry and employer groups, schools, professional career advisers, community organisations, parents, young people, youth service providers and other government and community organisations to assist all young people aged 13-19 years to gain the skills, experience and professional guidance to help them achieve a successful transition through school, and from school to further education, training and employment.

To achieve national coverage, 213 LCP Service Regions have been established.

## **7. What role do you see for the use of high speed telecommunications infrastructure in this electorate?**

On 18 June 2007, the Minister for Communications, Information Technology and the Arts, Senator Helen Coonan, announced landmark funding and a legislative initiative called Australia Connected, which will deliver fast affordable broadband access for all Australians.

The centrepiece of Australia Connected is the rollout of a new, independent, competitive and state of the art national broadband network that will extend high speed services out to 99 per cent of the population and provide speeds of 12 megabits per second by mid 2009.

In parallel with the deployment of this new network, the Australian Government also announced a new commercial fibre optic rollout via a competitive bids process and subsequent enabling legislation.

Australia Connected is a comprehensive and complete broadband solution for Australia that involves:

1. A new national high speed wholesale network: The awarding of a \$600 million competitive grant, formerly known as Broadband Connect Infrastructure Program, will deliver a mix of fibre optic, ADSL2+ and wireless broadband platforms to rural and regional areas. This rollout has been boosted with an additional \$358 million in funding to ensure coverage to 99 per cent of the population;
2. A new commercial fibre optic network: Facilitating a fibre network build in cities and larger regional centres via a competitive bids process and subsequent enabling legislation;
3. Australian Broadband Guarantee: A safety net that ensures Australians living in the most remote or difficult to reach areas (the remaining one per cent) are entitled to a broadband subsidy of \$2750 per household;
4. Creation of BroadbandNow: A new one-stop consumer help centre with telephone and web information to assist consumers understand the technology options available to them and provide ready information about how to get connected will be available on 2 July; and the

5. Preservation of the \$2 billion Communications Fund: To ensure the funds are protected in perpetuity by legislation for the benefit of regional and rural Australians and to provide for an income stream for future upgrades.

The Australian Broadband Guarantee is a targeted Government program aimed at providing universal access to a metro-comparable level of broadband service across Australia.

The Australian Broadband Guarantee will ensure that the broadband access rights that regional and rural Australians have enjoyed under the Government's HiBIS and Broadband Connect programs are maintained, and extended across Australia, which will roll out improved broadband infrastructure and services across Australia.

The Australian Broadband Guarantee will fill in those broadband blackspots remaining, whether in metropolitan or rural Australia. The Australian Broadband Guarantee follows on from the success of the Broadband Connect program, and replaces that program and the Metro Broadband program.

The Australian Broadband Guarantee will enable a smooth transition from the current programs to the Broadband Connect Infrastructure program.

## **8. Can you provide a commitment to increase resources/funding available to education and training providers in this electorate?**

Since the election of the Coalition Government, Australia has experienced more than 11 years of strong economic growth and now has the lowest unemployment rate in a generation. This has given rise to unprecedented opportunities for Australians to pursue vocational and technical careers.

A re-elected Coalition Government will continue to implement the policies necessary to deliver a strong economy with the goal of achieving full employment over the next term of office. The Coalition's target will be to achieve an unemployment rate of 3 per cent. To help achieve this target, a re-elected Coalition Government will uncap the Work Skills Voucher programme providing an estimated 110,000 additional \$3,000 vouchers between 2007-08 and 2010-11.

This will provide opportunities for thousands of Australians to enter the workforce with practical and marketable skills. Additional funding of \$392.9 million will be provided to deliver on this commitment. This will result in an estimated 60,000 vouchers per year.

Over the last four years, 544,000 Australians have completed an apprenticeship, compared with just 30,900 in 1996 when Labor was last in office.

This exciting initiative will build on the Coalition Government's \$2.9 billion annual investment in skills training. Uninterrupted economic growth, combined with a rapidly ageing population, has led to labour shortages – too many jobs chasing too few people. These labour shortages lead to skills shortages. In 1992, when there were nearly a million unemployed people, there were no skill shortages.

The Coalition Government has addressed these labour and skill challenges on a number of fronts. We are:

- Encouraging people to once again value technical and vocational training and careers;
- Providing incentives to those in the existing workforce to train, retrain or top-up skills throughout their working life; and
- Encouraging anyone who can work into work, or to stay in the workforce.

**9. Each community is unique and education providers need to be flexible to meet the needs of their students/community. What do you propose as an appropriate funding model or models that would support a student-centred education and training system?**

I believe the best working example in regional communities is where high schools work cooperatively and share resources, together with universities and TAFE campuses.

Funding by all levels of government should support this and be sufficiently flexible to enable sharing of resources that includes facilities, staff and resources.

**10. If you were elected, what would be your first initiative within the electorate, to improve the outcomes for young people moving from school to work or further study?**

Refer to response for Q1.