# By-election: Michael McCluskey on education

**[box]MICHAEL McCLUSKEY is running as an independent in the by-election for South West Coast. Here he writes about improving education:[/box]**

[quote]

[dropcap style="font-size: 60px; color: #8F9F59;"]A[/dropcap]ccess to affordable education is a cornerstone pillar of how successful a society is when it comes to economic and social development. If we look at any community throughout the world the more freedom people have in being able to access education, the more developed and evolved that society becomes particularly in relation to it's economic and social well being.

Many studies have shown a strong association between better education and economic growth. The impact of this education

continues throughout generations owing to the fact that educated individuals are more likely to nurture healthier and more educated generations

Education is one of the key determinants of an individual's empowerment within their society. It is one of the reasons why totalitarian regimes try to prevent the access of children, especially young girls, to a full and broad education. The International Conference on Population and Development has stated that 'Education is one of the most important means of empowering women with the knowledge, skills and self-confidence necessary to participate fully in the development process.' Also a a study by the International Centre for Research on Women highlighted that 'Women are more likely to control their own destinies and effect change in their own communities when they have higher levels of education'.

**Education needs to be thought of as a 'many rather than one' pathway.**

I think we need to be cautious in our tendency to sometimes believe that Year 12 and beyond is 'the be all and end all' of education. The trade, technical and other creative pathways are all valid and important pathways and it is crucial we provide and foster the options that best suit each individual rather than trying to push people down paths that might not be a good fit for them.

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The Victorian ombudsman's recent report on prisoner rehabilitation highlights the importance of the link between education access and social well being. The report noted that the Year 12 or equivalent completion rate amongst Victorian prisoners has varied between 5 and 7 per cent over the last decade compared to a Year 12 completion rate of 89% for 20-24

year olds in the general population.

I also lament the way the Victorian TAFE system has been underfunded in recent times. It may take a number of years before we fully appreciate the economic and social cost of having failed to properly fund our TAFE system.

I struggle to see the wisdom in bringing in large numbers of foreign workers on 457 work visas on one hand and then on the other failing to provide a well funded and sustainable education system that could train up the skilled workers we need from within our own community.

Our political system needs to do all it can to improve the accessibility to education at all levels for all people.

Dr Michael McCluskey B.V.Sc. (Hons.)

Independent Candidate

South-West Coast electorate

(8 Megan Ct, W’bool.)