

New Learning Federation leader maps out a course for the future

BRIDGEWATER/Brighton Learning Federation manager Andrew Bennett certainly has his work cut out.

Just a month into his new job of overseeing the implementation of the recommendations of the Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Educational Renewal Taskforce [BAS-MERT] taskforce, Andrew has established some key priorities for ensuring that the revolutionary educational concept becomes reality, sooner rather than later.

While he is no stranger to the Bridgewater/Brighton community, having worked in the late 80s and early 90s as a teacher in the area, Andy has spent the past month re-engaging with the community and establishing a home base.

“The good thing about being here again is that many of my former students are now parents who are engaged in many of the great community groups here,”

Andy said.

Now permanently based at the East Derwent Primary School, Andy has spent the past month meeting with as many people in the community as possible, from community groups, educators through to a range of Council staff and councillors in his effort to ensure he is “talking and listening” to everyone concerned about the way forward.

“One of my first priorities is building relationships with everyone from principals, community representatives, Council and the general community so I am spending a lot of time getting reacquainted with the community,” he said.

His most recent meetings have involved those who are providing community services from birth to age four.

“There are so many people doing great things here, and we are working out how we can work effectively with



Andy Bennett

them in the future,” he said.

“The Learning Federation is an educational enterprise that is trying to improve the provision of education for everybody in the community from zero to adult.

“What we are doing is setting a benchmark for education for the future and so therefore the eyes of education and the community in general will be on us as we plan and implement the concept.”

Andy said the BAS-MERT recommendations provided a strong blueprint for moving ahead which was guiding the federation.

Andy was full of praise for the Bridgewater and Green Point Primary School communities for working collaboratively and effectively through the challenging amalgamation process.

“I recognize that school amalgamation is a difficult emotional issue,” he said.

“The parents, students and staff of the two schools should be congratulated on all that they have achieved in a relatively short time.

“It was a great pleasure to attend the launch of the new school uniform a week before school began.

“You could see the pride and in the faces of the students who modelled the new uniform.

“I was particularly impressed with the comments of parents who indicated that the students

themselves were leaders in bringing the two schools together.”

An immediate key is to ensure that the community understands what the Learning Federation is doing and how its work is to engage with community and government services.

Andy said establishing agreement and understanding to ensure that it worked effectively with all groups and other providers was a priority.

“The challenge is to do this quickly and take advantage of current funding opportunities,” he said.

Most of the planning is likely to be undertaken by

June, earlier if possible, so that a commissioning brief can be provided to the architects for the start of the new financial year.

“This really is a fantastic chance for us to build something new and exciting – it is not just about restructuring schools and tinkering at the edges,” Andy said.

“We are looking at the best possible provisions of education for the community from birth through to adulthood and while this is challenging, it provides tremendous opportunities for the whole community.

“The most important thing is it’s going to happen.”