

# EDUCATION & THE WORKFORCE

A collaboration between Deakin University, South West Local Learning & Employment Network and South West TAFE

## Stars of home and away

**R**EMEMBER the old TV show *Welcome Back, Kotter*?

Today it is probably best known as the launching pad for John Travolta's career but the main theme of the show was the return of former student Mr Kotter to teach a new generation of troublemakers in his old inner-city high school.

Taking such a route is

not uncommon, whether it is in education, health, law enforcement or other fields of employment.

While many people prefer to stay around home to pursue their dreams and take advantage of local educational and training opportunities and others find the grass is always going to be greener on the other side of the fence, many people working in

the south-west have dipped their toes in the water elsewhere before returning home to settle into their careers.

Warrnambool mayor Cr Michael Neoh is one of those who took the circular route, having moved to Ballarat to study before returning to work in his home town.

Cr Neoh said he moved away to take up the course

of his choice but the dislocation from home wasn't always easy due to transport and accommodation problems.

Deakin University Pro Vice-Chancellor (Rural and Regional) Professor Sue Kilpatrick said regional education was as good as that offered in Melbourne but couldn't always match the variety of options in metropolitan areas.

"Education institutions such as Deakin and South West TAFE are constantly reviewing the courses on offer to make sure we match the needs of local industry and give local students a variety of options," she said.

"However, there will always be instances where people want to move away for a particular course that isn't offered locally or

simply to experience life in another city. However, if people can return and bring that experience back to the region then that is still a great result."

This month *Education & The Workforce* highlights some of our own "Kotters" who were raised in Warrnambool and district, then returned to successful careers after studying out of the region.

### MICHAEL NEOH



**CURRENT POSITION:** Executive officer, South West Sports Assembly (previously teacher 1988-1995 Warrnambool North Tech, Warrnambool Secondary College and Warrnambool College).

**WHEN AND WHAT DID YOU STUDY?** 1984-1987 Ballarat University Bachelor of Education (Physical Education & Science) Secondary Teaching.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT COURSE?** I was interested in sport and health promotion and there were not the sport science/management/administration courses that are available today.

**DID YOU CONSIDER STUDYING LOCALLY?** Yes, I would have undertaken the course locally but only primary teaching was available locally. My second preference was accounting at Warrnambool.

**WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES OF MOVING TO ANOTHER AREA?** It was good to gain life experiences outside of Warrnambool but I appreciated travelling back home to get away from Ballarat.

**WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES?** Travel (public transport from Warrnambool to Ballarat was constraining). Finding accommodation, particularly in the first year. Part-time employment.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CAREER ASPIRATIONS?** Currently balancing my role as mayor and my role with South West Sports Assembly. I am interested in politics, maybe in the future.

**WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?** I wasn't sure, but that is the beauty of life, there are many opportunities and pathways. My interest in sport had led me to community development and local government.

### ALISTAIR McCOSH



**CURRENT POSITION:** Senior project manager Deakin University.

**WHEN AND WHAT DID YOU STUDY?** Bachelor of Arts and Diploma of Education (Secondary) Deakin University 1987-1991.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT COURSE?** The Bachelor of Arts provided me with an opportunity to study a variety of subjects and then decide which areas I had a real interest in that I would focus on in my Diploma of Education.

**DID YOU CONSIDER STUDYING LOCALLY?** I started my university studies in Ballarat but returned to Deakin Warrnambool as I could live at home with my parents which was financially beneficial as well as play football with my home club the Koroit Football Netball Club.

**WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES OF MOVING TO ANOTHER AREA?** Once I graduated I spent two years teaching overseas. This was an exciting time having the chance to work and travel abroad, gaining experience in my profession at the same time as being able to visit many different countries.

**WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES?** There are obviously times when you miss family and friends but I always knew that I would be coming home to live and work in the south west as it has so much to offer.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CAREER ASPIRATIONS?** To continue to build on my experience in senior project management and expand the Deakin at Your Doorstep initiative across regional Australia.

**WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?** A pilot and I will achieve this objective one day but not as a career.

### BART GANE



**CURRENT POSITION:** Regional co-ordinator wind energy facilities, Department of Planning and Community Development.

**WHEN AND WHAT DID YOU STUDY?** 1992 Advanced Certificate in Visual Art and Design, South West TAFE. 1994-1998 Trade Certificate, Nurseryman, WestVic Group Training, Northern Melbourne TAFE. 1999-2001 Bachelor of Applied Science (Horticulture), University of Melbourne. 2002-2004 Master of Social Science (Environment and Planning), RMIT University. 2006-2009 Master of Cultural Heritage, Deakin University.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT COURSE?**

Master of Cultural Heritage: to understand the cultural influences on society and the theories of conservation practice, as an extra qualification.

**DID YOU CONSIDER STUDYING LOCALLY?** Yes. Those decisions depended on the availability of courses and my capacity to relocate for study. My last qualification was by online learning.

**WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES OF MOVING TO ANOTHER AREA?** To develop personal independence and to be surrounded by people and experiences that were motivating.

**WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES?** Traffic, living in polluted places, shopping malls and suburbia. No surf.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CAREER ASPIRATIONS?** To establish and lead a regional government policy unit in south-west Victoria that shapes and improves our quality of life and the quality of our environment.

**WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?** A landscape designer, illustrator, infantryman, farmer.

### MARY PENDERGAST



**CURRENT POSITION:** Principal, Warrnambool College

**WHEN AND WHAT DID YOU STUDY?** 1974-1978 Physical Education and Literature at the State College of Victoria, Rusden.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT COURSE?** I loved sport and reading and writing. I also chose it because it attracted a studentship. We were off the farm and coming off a bad drought so it was important that I have some financial independence. That's why I remain so passionate about youth allowance. I think the investment the government made in me paid off.

**DID YOU CONSIDER STUDYING LOCALLY?** No suitable courses were available at the time

**WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES OF MOVING TO ANOTHER AREA?**

It broadened my life experience. I grew to love Melbourne and I met a range of people from different backgrounds and cultures. I think you come back to regional cities like Warrnambool as a much more rounded person

**WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES?** I was the only person from Warrnambool in my course. Initially it was lonely. Public transport was also a problem.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CAREER ASPIRATIONS?** To do a good job as principal at Warrnambool College.

**WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?** Journalist but I took the teaching course instead because it had a studentship. I rarely regret it - I love my job.

### AUDRINA MITCHELL



**CURRENT POSITION:** Primary health care co-ordinator at the Terang & Mortlake Health Service, managing the Allied Health, Health Promotion and HACC Day Centre programs.

**WHEN AND WHAT DID YOU STUDY?** Bachelor of Fine Arts at Ballarat Uni in 1985 (deferred). Bachelor of Applied Science (Occupational Therapy) at Lincoln (which became La Trobe University) in 1987-92. Certificate IV in Assessment & Workplace training at SEAL Warrnambool in 2000. Diploma of Vocational Education 2005, SWTAFE Warrnambool. Advanced Diploma of Business Management (Health) through South West Healthcare and Gordon TAFE. Short courses in health promotion were taken in Melbourne at Monash University and VicHealth from 2007-2009 as they were offered. Advanced Diploma of Human Resources also through South West Healthcare and Gordon TAFE 2010.

**WHY DID YOU CHOOSE THAT COURSE?** The courses supported where I wanted to take my career at the time and fit with my lifestyle.

**DID YOU CONSIDER STUDYING LOCALLY?** Once I had returned to live in Warrnambool and had a family, local study was the easiest option.

**WHAT WERE THE ADVANTAGES OF MOVING TO ANOTHER AREA?** Broader life experiences.

**WHAT WERE THE DISADVANTAGES?** I missed my family and friends, the close-knit community and the ocean.

**WHAT ARE YOUR CURRENT CAREER ASPIRATIONS?** Consolidate my management skills and look at doing my Masters in Public Health & Management.

**WHAT DID YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU WERE GROWING UP?** I wanted to be a teacher when I was little, then an artist.

**MORE INFORMATION:** To find out more locally contact 1300degree or visit [www.deakin.edu.au](http://www.deakin.edu.au); [reception@swllen.net.au](mailto:reception@swllen.net.au); or [www.swtafe.vic.edu.au](http://www.swtafe.vic.edu.au)