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**Title:**

Speech opening South East Community College, Mount Gambier

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SPEECH BY THE PREMIER, DON DUNSTAN, OPENING SOUTH EAST COMMUNITY COLLEGE,  
MOUNT GAMBIER.

5.11.76

Mr. Roughana, Mr. Hill, Members of the College Council, Your Worship the Mayor of Mount Gambier and the Chairman of the District Council, Senator Davidson, My Parliamentary Colleagues Mr. Allison and Dr. Cornwall, Ladies and Gentlemen :

I've been to Mount Gambier quite a few times this year, but one visit was especially satisfying, and that was when I was shown over this beautiful campus, which was then called the South East College of Further Education.

I was taken around by the College Council, one thing impressed me even more than the new buildings, the excellent teaching facilities and the wide range of courses available - and that was the great pride and enthusiasm of the College Council.

I'm sure they won't mind my saying that they have a tremendous sales pitch for the college, and on my subsequent visits to the Mount I've found that their attachment to the college is shared by almost everyone in the district.

Long before the name was changed, this was a real community college because the people of Mount Gambier and the South East saw this campus as an important part of their working and social environment. The local community saw the college not just as a well equipped education centre, but as an active part of the city's life.

The strong community interest and involvement in the College carries on a tradition in Mount Gambier. From the earliest days of what we now call further education, when a public committee founded the Mount Gambier School of Mines and Industries back in 1904, local people have worked to give their college - whatever its name at the time - additional equipment, buildings and courses. They provided a great deal from local resources and they didn't hesitate to let the various governments over the years know what was wanted, either.

I can still remember Alan Burdon coming to see me many times about education facilities in Mount Gambier and the needs of the college were always on the list. I'm pretty sure it was Alan who wore out the carpet in Hugh Hudson's office.

The result of this community support is a superb college, which offers the people of the South East much more than just vocational and recreational courses - it offers the community a focal point for a far wider range of social, cultural, educational and civic activities.

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A Community College should be - and the South East Community College certainly is - a responsive and flexible organisation which provides facilities needed by local people and which stimulates new groups and activities within the community.

It should be a vital and challenging part of the district's lifestyle.

The most effective way of getting that vitality is to involve the local community in the organisation of the college. Only by talking to the local people who know the conditions around them and know how priorities should be set for the district can we get the most effective use of the community's physical resources and human talents.

This need for local involvement isn't confined only to education : it has been a major thrust of my Government's activities since we took office. We thought it was wrong to have every decision of Government made in Adelaide and we set about decentralising our Departments and authorities and giving local people a greater say in policy making in a whole range of areas.

Just to take a simple example. Previously when you wanted to renew your car registration or licence, it had to be sent off to Adelaide, processed and then sent back to you in Mount Gambier, Port Lincoln, Coober Pedy, or wherever. We've changed that, by taking the Motor Registration Department out to many country centres, so that people can get things done quickly and on the spot.

The Government has set up Community Development Councils to advise our Departments on the community welfare and other needs of local areas, and in our schools and colleges we have given local people an important voice in deciding how their school or college can best meet the needs of the community it serves.

This College would not be anywhere near as effective if the people of the South East did not take such an active interest in its development and direction. That is no reflection on the teaching and support staff, because I'm sure Mr. Hill and his colleagues would agree with me.

The courses which have been developed to cater specially for the industries of the South East typify the way in which local knowledge can be used to improve the whole district. The setting up of the Rural Studies annexe in Wireless Road and the specialised courses in the timber industry have come about because the South East's agricultural and manufacturing diversity make the district special and give its special needs.

As the report of the Steering Committee has shown, that regional specialisation can be developed much further to make Mount Gambier a National Training Centre for the timber industry.

While such vocationally oriented courses are a major part of the College's work, we no longer expect our educational institutions to confine themselves within such narrow limits.

Further Education is a much wider concept and involves learning more than trade skills or commercial proficiency. Further education involves the individual and the community learning from each other and learning from day to day experiences; and the very broad range of non-vocational courses available at the College shows the way our educational facilities can be used to bring enrichment to many more people.

Without the range of arts, crafts, language and performing arts available in the college, life would be less interesting for many people in the South East, and the district would not be as socially or culturally diverse or imaginative.

The South East Community College adds to experiences of a wide range of individuals and through that adds to the social wealth of the district. It will become, I'm sure, the standard for other community colleges.

It will be able to earn that reputation because it draws support from the community, and, in turn reciprocates that support by providing facilities and opportunities not otherwise available.

The Government wants your College to become even more involved with the people of the South East and to be a showpiece of your community.

We are confident that those objectives will be realised, because during all the planning for this College, and that planning has taken many years, the people of Mount Gambier and the South East have always looked further ahead than just the immediate project.

While we are opening this College, which cost almost \$2 million, the Government and the local community of Mount Gambier are looking at some exciting proposals which will bring new resources and development to the city.

A performing arts complex, civic centre, library and art gallery is one, and new offices for Government Departments and the South Australian Government Insurance Commission is another. They are both ambitious projects and have been in the discussion stages for some time - since 1973 - but when completed they will give Mount Gambier and the whole of the South East, further impetus and growth.

Large developments like these don't happen overnight - they require patience and discussion between the State Government and the community to ensure that the facilities which are provided fully meet the needs of the local community.

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This college is proof that the combination of local enthusiasm and easy access to the Government can bring tremendous benefits to Mount Gambier and the South East.

This college is a tremendous addition to the city and to the South East, and is another example of the community and the Government working together to give people in country areas of the State facilities as good or better than those in Adelaide.

It's been a great pleasure to be with you today and to share Mount Gambier's pride in this complex. I have great pleasure in declaring the South East Community College open.

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