



# 'Bridge TAFE cuts

By **Claire Campbell**

JOB losses and program cuts at Murray Bridge TAFE may affect local training opportunities, including an education precinct planned for the city.

A quarter of the staff at the Murray Bridge TAFE campus have taken voluntary redundancies since July 2013 and The Standard understands there are likely to be five more jobs out of 23 lost in the near future.

Many programs previously offered onsite, like retail and business, are now offered externally and third year automotive apprentices must move to Adelaide's Regency campus to complete their training.

Member for Hammond Adrian Pederick said he was concerned the Murray Bridge automotive program and TAFE campus were at risk of closure.

"Cuts are happening behind closed doors," he said.

"All the services are being diluted and next thing we don't have a TAFE

at all."

TAFE SA executive director education Jen Rodger confirmed the eight redundancies but said there was no plan to close the automotive program.

"Changes to the delivery in the program are the result of decreased demand for Training Guarantee for SACE students and low apprentice numbers," she said.

"The ongoing review will position the organisation to better service regional communities and ensure the training needs in Murray Bridge are understood and the right training solutions are delivered."

According to Mr Pederick, there had been staff cuts in the retail, community services, education, business, IT, automotive training and aged care programs, raising questions about the future of tertiary education in the Murraylands.

"I would like to see locals educated locally," he said.

"People who are keen to build the education precinct may get the wrong impression that there's no need for

these services."

But Regional Development Australia chief executive Brenton Lewis, a strategic partner in the education precinct, said TAFE cuts would not affect the plans.

"Any cut back in TAFE is a loss ... but TAFE in Murray Bridge is not the be all and end all of the education precinct," he said.

"What we've tried to do is build upon TAFE ... we're constantly working on that - lots of meetings with universities have been had."

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But Murray Bridge council chief executive officer Peter Bond said virtual education experiences, where students connect online with learning institutes, were an alternative possibility for the precinct.

“We’re still collecting data in support of the demand for education and vocation and train-

ing, and looking into virtual education experiences,” he said.

“Infrastructure-based facility demand seems to be waning but it’s still our focus.”

Yet Mr Bond said TAFE cuts would tighten up the ability to create the education precinct at the former Murray Bridge High School site on Beatty Terrace.