

# Students have new hands-on space to learn technical skills

By **ANDY BENNETT\***

SINCE the end of April, students at Bridgewater High School have been learning about working with wood and metal in a brand new materials, design and technology centre – the first of the new buildings completed under the Bridgewater and Southern Midlands Learning Federation plans.

The centre, which cost \$850,000 to build and came in on time and on budget, will provide a high-quality contemporary hands-on learning space for students.

Just before its opening, I walked around the facility with Cameron Paynter, the high school's MDT teacher, who described plans for some exciting learning projects his students will undertake in the new centre including expanding lessons beyond working with metal and wood to include working with small motors to develop mechanical skills.

He talked about how he could use outdoor spaces

linked to the centre to give students learning experiences in building and construction that would mirror, on a smaller scale, some of the programs to be offered at the new Trade Training Centre (which is expected to be opened in the middle of 2010)

Cameron and I talked about developing learning pathways for students who are interested in working in the trades.

Once all the facilities and educational programs for the federation are up and running, the pathway for a learner who wants to work in construction, for example, could look like this:

- Start to learn basic carpentry skills in the MDT centre while in grades 7 and 8.
- Develop those skills while enrolled in grades 9 and 10 through a program that is school-based but includes significant work experiences.
- Enrol in a Certificate II Construction course at the Polytechnic component of

the Grade 9 to Adult Learning Centre.

- Complete a Certificate III (Apprenticeship) in Construction at the Trade Training Centre after securing a traineeship with a local firm working on building the new transport hub.

Such a personalised pathway is not just for those students interested in trade qualifications.

A pathway can be developed for any learner, no matter whether the preferred destination is employment in trades, retail, office work or further learning at a university.

The courses and programs and associated building to accommodate the multiple learning pathways will be designed and put in place over the next 18 months to two years.

In the meantime the new MDT Centre is a very much needed and exciting first step.

*\*Andy Bennett is manager of the Bridgewater/Brighton Learning Federation*