

TAFE Community Alliance Launch 22 February, 2013

Thank you Derek and Mark, I would have been paranoid about the microphone and the cameras disappearing except that you got up first.

Let me congratulate you on opening your new offices yesterday Mark and opening the offices the other day. And I hear that Labor is also moving their head office down to just near our building there too. And it just goes to prove that Parramatta is the capital of Western Sydney.

I hope you'd support if we could move Parliament down back into the old Parliament House. I'll fight with you on that one.

Could I just acknowledge Mark Lennon, Jozefa, Mary, my parliamentary colleagues Carmel, John, Derek and ladies and gentlemen, teachers, students, thank you for letting me speak.

I've really come here to listen, and thank you for the reception, you've been very kind. It makes a difference when you can come, and that's what good about it, we can have that dialogue.

Can I just say there is no bigger advocate of education than myself. Can I say that my parents were teachers, my father was a TAFE teacher his whole life, I was a TAFE teacher for some of my life, before working at the University of Western Sydney.

And I agree with Mark that lifelong learning is especially important. Being a Parliamentarian this isn't my first career, I think it's my third career move now and I understand those values of being able to continually allow people to enter and exist the workforce in

different vocations as they see fit, as society changes, and as different industries change.

We do need flexible pathways and delivery methods to do that, and one of my areas of research at University was flexible delivery of online learning, which I think will play a bigger and bigger part of learning, and to facilitate student learning based upon their demand, not what we think they need.

Can I say that working at Liverpool TAFE and the University of Western Sydney, I saw first-hand the value of education, and the way it transforms family lives. And I think that [letter](#) was a great example of TAFE and how it changes – not only do you become more educated, I think it's just one thing getting the little ticket to say I've got a Cert II or a Cert III or a Diploma or whatever – the piece of paper is not as important as the social change you meet. And at university, we always were very proud at the University of Western Sydney, when I was there, to say that 55% of our students are first generation. And all the research actually shows that the first person who gets a degree in the family actually changes the whole family in terms of their aspirations as a whole, all of a sudden the family says "I can do it" and I can get that piece of paper. I've seen many of my students from Liverpool TAFE actually go to University of Western Sydney Rydalmere campus. So you'd see them, one year as a TAFE and the next year I was at University of Western Sydney, it was great.

But can I just say, I've noticed Barbara Perry, the Member for Auburn is up the back, so I thought I'd just acknowledge you Barbara.

Barbara Perry: Thanks

Can I say that, and I don't mean to be political, but a state must live within their means, and that means some difficult decisions. The best way is to make the best use of the resources that we have. And yes, we do make difficult decisions. And whilst we may not agree with the method that we're going about it ... can I say I think we all agree that the most important thing is the student is at the centre of that decision. The end product of the student, to gain those skills, to change their social and be part of society is the most important thing.

Can I just give you some personal views, because these are not obviously sanctioned, these are my own personal views: TAFE is a great asset, and I should know I worked there for a number of years. My dad worked there his whole life. We do need a robust and sustainable system in TAFE.

I think it is a fantastic asset, not only through its geographic disbursement but it's really about the wonderful people that work in TAFE. And it's all about, not only the students but the teachers, and we all know that it's the teachers not the buildings, not the physical asset, but it's the teachers that make the difference. The whole system is reliant on good teachers and I personally think it's important to support those teachers in their continuing education.

Can I say, but also in disagreement maybe to a couple of speakers, I think we need an open and competitive system. I do not agree at all that all private providers compromise on their delivery. I think there are some excellent, many excellent, most of them are excellent private providers. And I think competition in the market is good. I think that we need to have a robust, sustainable system where there is a place for TAFE and a place for private providers.

Audience: If you can afford it.

Audience: There needs to be fair competition.

Absolutely, absolutely, and I don't disagree with you on that.

Audience: [inaudible]

Is it my turn, or is it your turn? You can have a say and you tell me when your finished and I'll have a go then.

Audience: You can tell he's a teacher

[Laughs] Can I say but at the end of the day, whether it's a fair competition, whatever competition, whether it's how much we fund TAFE, how much we don't fund TAFE, how much we look after private providers. At the end of the day, the most important thing is to put the students at the centre of our decision making. Giving them the opportunities to go to TAFE, go to University, go to higher ed, whatever they choose to do, to change their lives we need to give them those opportunities. And I think that's the core to the argument is to put them at the centre of the decision making.

Can I say that I'll always be committed to coming and listening, whenever I'm invited if I can get there and I love to meet ... John I'm sure you will agree that I always listen. And can I say just finally, thank you for listening and being so kind and patient with your kind words Mary and Jozefa, thank you for those kind words and I look forward to seeing how your alliance continues to grow.

Dr Geoff Lee