

TAFE Community Alliance Launch – 22nd February, 2013

I just want to make one particular point from our perspective as a union movement. It has been made by the previous speakers, but clearly the way of the future is the knowledge society.

Education is all. And if you are going to tamper with the resources of the nation, well, yes we understand that, but not in education. That is an essential resource for this country going forward. And one of the issues that was touched on, so eloquently, was the question of lifetime learning. One of the things ... is the whole changing nature of the workforce, and the fact that people are going to change jobs six times during their career, the fact that they are going to need to keep accessing the education system.

In particular at the present time, in areas such as manufacturing which impacts adversely on middle-aged men, we are at the risk of losing a whole generation if they can't access ongoing training through the TAFE system.

And also it comes back to the question here of communities. As you've heard we're very much engaged with the community alliances, Mary outlined that. And we're very pleased to be able to re-launch our presence here in Parramatta with our office over in Wentworth Ave. I thank Mary who actually opened the office.

In essence we say that we need to keep TAFE strong in our community. While I say that you can't have a strong community if you don't have a TAFE. Communities are a mixture of a number of things: people, families, individuals. But also at the heart of it of course, key public institutions: law and order, community services, transport, health and

public education. Unless you've got TAFE, and a strong TAFE, then you don't have a strong community, and that's why I think this is so important.

And I think if you're going to focus on particular courses to be supported, vouchers of whatever the new system is the government has outlined, I think they are a very narrow thing because in a knowledge society you need the most creative workforce you can find. To do that you have to ensure every possible opportunity for people to learn, not just the technical skills, but the creative cognitive skills. I think that trying to focus on particular areas ... that are in demand, is really not looking to the long term future of the nation.

So it is with great pleasure that Unions NSW is happy to be here today and give our full support to the TAFE Community Alliance.

Mark Lennon