

TAFE Community Alliance Launch

Thank you – it is an honour for Western Sydney community forum to be asked to host & speak at the launch of this important TAFE Community Alliance.

Western Sydney Community Forum is a partner with TRI Community Exchange and WESTIR leading a coalition - Stronger Voice for Greater Western Sydney. WSCF has over 200 member organisations which together connect with over 500,000 people across Greater Western Sydney (GWS).

We have a population of over 2 million residents in Greater Western Sydney, with many dealing with difficult social problems of poverty, social exclusion, housing stress / homelessness and unemployment. We also have great assets in our people and the TAFE & the community sector are both skilled at developing innovative projects that build on individuals and community strengths to enable people to lead fuller, more engaged lives.

I don't need to tell you that the TAFE system plays an important role in the lives of a great many people in GWS and makes a significant contribution to strengthening resilience our local communities.

TAFE provides pathways to higher qualifications such as TAFE Diplomas or University degrees for many people who would not otherwise have opportunities to gain these skills. TAFE is well known as the major provider of 'second chance' education opportunities for those who may not have enjoyed successful educational experiences previously. People like *Kylie Clarke* who has just graduated as a social worker and winning the University medal, now working for Health. It was doing the welfare diploma at TAFE and the support & encouragement of TAFE teachers that gave her the confidence to do this.

TAFE is the biggest provider of affordable, accessible training in key skills for our communities, especially for people on income support or low incomes and poor transport options; *people like Shona Stelling—single parent, determined that she would be working by the time her child got to school. She did the Community Welfare course, joined management committees of two key agencies and began a career in public speaking including launching the 'Your Rights at Work' campaign in the BM. She gained a Union internship and the rest is history.*

TAFE provides training which is valued by local employers in key industries in our region, such as community welfare, trades, hospitality, tourism, environmental skills; courses such as the *Outdoor*

Adventure training in the BM, tailored to the local market but attracting students from all over the world

TAFE Colleges contribute in many ways to local industries in our community - students and teaching sections participate in workplace or community projects as part of their training activities; TAFE Colleges contribute to local community development and social inclusion goals through equity programs and course embedded within local communities. *Courses such as run at The WASH House in Mt Druitt, Bungarabbe in Hazelbrook, Food for Life market in Warwick Farm*

In particular, TAFE Outreach is well known for its contribution significant generational changes for individuals and communities, as profiled by GWS ZEST Awards winners:

- *Food for Life Market* in Warwick Farm;
- *EmploYourself* in Claymore and
- *Peppers Place Café*
(<http://www.zestawards.com.au/>)

Can I just tell you a little about these projects- *Peppers Place* is a community cafe – TAFE Outreach provided. barista training, small business skills we heard comments such as 'this place saved my life; I hadn't worked since I was 20 and I never thought I would again - my children are so proud of me & that means the world!

TAFE offers many services and facilities for students which are not offered by private providers, such as programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander and culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) students, careers and course counselling, excellent library services, support for students with disabilities.

The TAFE Community Alliance is an important part of us working together to make a difference to people's lives – and that is what our work is all about – giving people the tools to have big lives.

Last night we were part of the UNSW launch of their Parramatta base - through the Sydney Alliance we are working with unions, faith based groups and community organisations for the common good of Sydney – we'd love to have you involved too! It makes sense for us all to be combining our energies to be most effective.

Mary Waterford