

Community Colleges Australia NSW Parliamentary event 25 September 2019 Speeches by CCA CEO, Chair and Treasurer

The text of the speeches by CCA during this event are below:

- Dr Don Perlgut, CEO
- David Fuller, Chair & CEO of WEA Illawarra
- Theresa Collignon, Treasurer & CEO of Macquarie Community College

Dr DON PERLGUT, CEO

Good morning, everyone. My name is Don Perlgut, and I am the CEO of Community Colleges Australia, which we often refer to by our initials – CCA.

Welcome to today's event, which gives CCA and its members the opportunity to share our achievements with members of the New South Wales Parliament and other honoured guests.

I want to acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. I pay my respects to their Elders past, present and emerging. I also want to acknowledge this morning any participants who are First Australians, and I thank you for attending.

We have an excellent morning planned, featuring a launch of CCA's report by the NSW Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, Dr Geoff Lee: thank you very much Minister, for attending and participating today.

Our room is filled with notable guests, so I am unable to mention everybody. However, with us is David Fuller, the Chair of Community Colleges Australia, and CEO of WEA Illawarra, based in Wollongong. David will speak in a few minutes. We have almost all members of CCA's Board of Directors including our Treasurer, Theresa Collignon, who will speak at the end.

Thank you to the Members of the Legislative Council and the Legislative Assembly for joining us. We are expecting at least 40 parliamentarians



here today with representation from government, the opposition and crossbenches – demonstrating the breadth and depth of support we’re so fortunate and grateful to have.

I also welcome CCA members from around the state, along with the NSW Skills Board, Training Services NSW, TAFE NSW and TAFE Directors Australia.

Now, to our first speaker. Please welcome David Fuller, the Chair of CCA’s Board of Directors.

DAVID FULLER, CCA Chair & CEO of WEA Illawarra

Thank you, Don. I also acknowledge that we are meeting on the traditional lands of the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation, and pay my respects to their Elders, past, present and emerging.

Thank you, Minister Lee, for joining us, in what is CCA’s first NSW Parliamentary event. It’s wonderful to see so many friends in the room.

CCA is the national representative organisation for adult and community education providers, frequently called “community colleges” or ACE providers.

Today we are celebrating our sector’s achievements, especially in funding provided by the New South Wales Government.

There would not be an electorate or a region in the state where one or more of our 35 members deliver some form of educational, community or social service. Our members are particularly important outside of metropolitan Sydney, with two thirds headquartered in regional or rural locations.

In so many ways, community education providers are the quiet overachievers of our sector, providing post-secondary education across the state of NSW to a diverse and often disadvantaged cohort of people. And as this report today clearly demonstrates, our colleges help these people to achieve their aspirations for a better life through education, skilling and the employment opportunities this creates.



In some cases, our members – such as my own and Atwea College, formerly WEA Hunter – have an unbroken history of adult and community education going back more than 100 years, as we were founded in 1913.

This makes us some of the oldest – and most sustainable – post-secondary institutions in Australia.

There is a public perception that most of our activity is providing lifestyle and leisure courses.

And while that was once the case for most of our members, 90 percent of what we do now is in accredited vocational education and training, known as “VET”.

And within VET, we particularly specialise in reaching many of our state’s most vulnerable and disadvantaged communities and groups, including people with a disability, Indigenous Australians, learners from lower socio-economic backgrounds and residents of regional and rural areas, with a real focus on foundation skills.

As well as delivering accredited VET, CCA members offer a range of other learning opportunities, such as an increasing number of independent special assistance secondary schools.

These cater for many of the most disadvantaged students. In my own case, WEA Illawarra operates four separate secondary school campuses – throughout the Illawarra and the Southern Highlands.

As community-based not-for-profit organisations, New South Wales community colleges re-engage “missing” learners, and both create and nurture social and community networks. Our investment continues to reinforce and sustain our communities, our regions and our state at large.

We do this by providing small classes, by focussing on personal support and by working collaboratively together as a sector. We also create connections with other organisations and sectors, the most important of which is the New South Wales Government.

State Government funding, particularly through what is now called the “ACE



Program”, along with the Smart and Skilled program, are the life-blood that supports our work.

On behalf of New South Wales adult and community education providers, Minister, CCA thanks you and your colleagues in the State Government for your support, now and into the future.

I’d also like to thank those Members, in whose electorates our colleges reside, for their ongoing support.

And now, Minister, over to you. CCA has researched the latest government-funded New South Wales data from the National Centre for Vocational Education and Research – known as NCVET. We have published a report on our website, and everyone here has a copy of the summary. The results are outstanding.

Dr Lee, I now hand over to you to do the official launch.

NSW Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education, DR GEOFF LEE MP speaks

THERESA COLLIGNON, CCA Treasurer & CEO, Macquarie Community College

Thank you very much, Minister Lee.

I want to reinforce David Fuller’s remarks about the value and the importance of New South Wales Government funding. CCA estimates that our state government funding is possibly the best targeted in the whole of Australia in reaching the most vulnerable and disadvantaged learners.

As Minister Lee has pointed out and our report details, New South Government support means that our achievements are the envy of other states:

- Almost 13% of government-funded community education students are Indigenous.
- About one-fifth of our students have a disability.

- More than two-thirds of our students live in regional and rural NSW.
- About two-thirds of our students are disadvantaged.
- More than 40 percent of our students are older, age 45-plus, meaning that we cater for older learners better than any sector.
- More than 58 percent of our students are women, meaning that we do more than our part to support national goals to increase female workforce participation.

In addition, more than half of community education students move from being unemployed to being employed after engaging in training, much greater than the New South Wales state average.

We achieve the same results of employment or further study as other VET providers. However, given that community education providers proportionately engage more vulnerable and disadvantaged learners than TAFE or for-profit providers, these outcomes are especially notable.

Community Colleges Australia regards our relationship with the New South Wales Government as one of partnership.

Thank you, Minister, for your work in sustaining that partnership. We also thank the Deputy Premier, John Barilaro, who preceded you in the portfolio, for his support.

And thank you, MLAs and MLCs for attending today.

We have some time now for mingling and a light lunch.

(Ends)