



House of Assembly

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ADULT LEARNERS' WEEK

Mr PICCOLO (Light) (16:28): I would like to take this opportunity to very briefly talk about, as part of this adjournment debate, something that the Minister for Education spoke about earlier this week: that is, Adult Learners' Week.

My view is that Adult Learners' Week is very important, and there are a number of organisations in my electorate of Light that offer opportunities for adults to learn and progress ongoing or lifelong learning.

We are very fortunate in our electorate to have a TAFE, a university, a regional development association, a number of not-for-profit organisations and the Gawler Community House.

We also have two more organisations, which I would like to talk about in more detail, that

provide a number of programs for adults.

The first organisation I would like to talk about is the University of the Third Age Gawler Branch.

The branch was founded in 1988, and it provides a wide range of low-cost physically and mentally challenging social activities for citizens who are retired or semi-retired.

The health benefits and positive ageing of members accrue through achievement and social engagement. Leaders for all the activities are volunteer members who give their time freely.

They rely almost entirely on funding from members' subscriptions, which cost approximately \$20 per annum.

None of the members receive any payment for their contributions. They rely mainly on grants for purchase of new and replacement of old equipment.

Currently the University of the Third Age Gawler Branch has over 230 members and offers a wide range of about 30 different activities each term, during school hours. These activities range from painting to dancing, language classes and a whole range of other programs.

Some of the groups freely offer their services to the local community, performing regularly at many venues including nursing

homes, Every Generation events, Christmas parties, etc. So, the opportunity to give adults an opportunity to learn is very beneficial, and I congratulate the University of the Third Age Gawler Branch on the range of programs they offer.

That is a very informal program in terms of adult learning.

In relation to a more formal program, I would now like to discuss the success of the Para West Adult Campus, which is a Department for Education and Child Development adult re-entry school in the southern part of my electorate that delivers SACE to students over the age of 16 who live in Adelaide's north and who have been out of formal schooling for six months or more.

Students over the age of 21 may be enrolled, as long as they are undertaking SACE subjects, or VET certificates that are credited within the SACE program.

This year, the campus expects around 31 adult learners to complete their SACE. Alongside the SACE, Para West provides a range of foundation and bridging programs for young people under the age of 21.

Many of these students are enrolled under the Flexible Learning Options program. Many of these students actually would not be in education or training if it was not for the flexible learning options available.

One of the programs which has become quite significant is the Young Mothers program – which is quite appropriate, given the discussion we have just had.

Since changes made to the commonwealth's income support arrangements for women with children who are at least six months old, the number of young mothers (that is, under 24 years) re-engaging with learning at the school has grown from around 40 in 2011 to around 80 in 2012.

It is great to see young mums finalising or improving their education qualifications, and therefore improving their ability not only for work but also in engaging in the community more generally.

I am advised that Para West Adult Campus is very grateful for the state government's support of the proposed relocation of the school to the Elizabeth TAFE site.

They believe this relocation is critical to enable a greater number of adults in Adelaide's north to engage with learning and build a qualifications profile that will enable them to benefit from the economic growth in Adelaide's north.

The school anxiously awaits the outcome of the feasibility study which is now underway.

The objective of the school through the relocation is to build an educational precinct in Elizabeth

that promotes a physically and operationally seamless approach to education and training provisions for adults in Adelaide's north.

The proposal has been based on the premise that TAFE SA North (Elizabeth Campus) and Para West Adult Campus can achieve better qualification outcomes—in other words, get more people to actually finalise the formal programs—for adult students by providing a collaborative response to their education and training needs.

They also advise me that the Skills for All program, along with the Training Guarantee for SACE students, are both very significant and welcome developments in assisting adults to gain work.

Given that this week is Adult Learners' Week, I would just like to congratulate all those organisations who provide opportunities for adults to learn, and also to celebrate their success.

Time expired.