

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**December 9, 2014**

**Tackling youth unemployment in Western Sydney**

The State Government needs to address youth unemployment in Western Sydney or risk a disconnected welfare generation warns President of the Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) Cllr Tony Hadchiti.

“Employment is a critical part of young people’s personal development. It allows financial independence, builds positive social engagement and feelings of self-worth.”

“If unable to find work, young people can lose a sense of hope and purpose. This can result in exclusion from mainstream society and long-term reliance on welfare,” he said.



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“Western Sydney has some of the highest youth unemployment rates in the country, the most extreme being in Parramatta where rates are around 18%,” said Cllr Hadchiti.

“But putting this down to Gen Y apathy is a mistake,” he said.

“Australia’s young people have high aspirations, but feel uncertain how to achieve their goals or fear there won’t be enough opportunities available to them.”

Mission Australia’s 2014 Annual Youth Survey<sup>ii</sup>, released last week, found that over 80 percent of young people see career success as very important, yet only 40 percent believe they are likely to achieve their goals.

“Almost half of respondents are concerned that their career opportunities will be affected by where they live, and in Western Sydney this does seem to be the case,” said Cllr Hadchiti.

“The decline in key local industries such as manufacturing is one part of it. The unskilled jobs that once offered a foothold into the labour market are becoming fewer and farther between.”

“Additionally, the jobs deficit in Western Sydney sees local work snapped up by more experienced candidates; making it difficult to find that first job opportunity,” he said.

“As we approach another state election, the incoming government needs to commit to developing the Western Sydney economy so that there are brighter employment prospects for young people.”

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“WSROC is calling on both parties to develop a plan for tackling youth unemployment. A plan that gives young people the best hope of finding and keeping work.”

“Particularly in areas of disadvantage, where there may not be a history of employment within the family, direct programs can go a long way in breaking the cycle of unemployment.”

WSROC suggests several key actions:

- Build and diversify the Western Sydney economy to create a greater range and quality of job opportunities;
- Commit to a greater focus on job readiness and soft skills in schools to improve employment outcomes for students entering the workforce;
- Increase incentives for employers to hire under 25’s and offer on-the-job training opportunities;
- Encourage school children from years 10 upwards to be actively engaged in examining career choices and taking up work experience;
- Establish programs that target key transition periods between school, tertiary study and first jobs;
- Establish programs that link schools, TAFE and Universities with local businesses - providing stronger pathways for graduates; and
- Maintain an equal focus on all work pathways including on the job training, TAFE or University studies as suits each individual student.

- ENDS -

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**About WSROC:**

Western Sydney Regional Organisation of Councils (WSROC) represents 10 local councils in Western Sydney. WSROC advocates on behalf of its councils and their residents to ensure equity in infrastructure and services, to promote liveability and quality of life. It seeks to deliver value to councils through regional collaboration in coordinated procurement, IP and shared services, and manages a number of regional projects funded jointly by its members or from external sources.

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<sup>i</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence. (2014). *Australian Youth Unemployment 2014: Snapshot*. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1ImGCDv>

<sup>ii</sup> Mission Australia. (2014). *Annual Youth Survey 2014*. Available online: <http://bit.ly/1G5LV6d>