

**Address of Hon (Mrs.) Leela Devi Dookun-Luchoomun,  
Minister of Education & Human Resources,  
Tertiary Education and Scientific Research  
Launch of Bachelor of Nursing (Top Up) with La Trobe University  
Polytechnics Mauritius (Pamplemousses campus)  
Thursday 4<sup>th</sup> July 2019**

**All protocols observed**

**Ladies and Gentlemen,**

A very good afternoon to you.

It gives me great pleasure to be here today, at Polytechnics Mauritius, Pamplemousses campus. for the Launch of the Bachelor of Nursing (Top Up) with La Trobe University, Australia ,

Not so long ago, last year in fact, I had the pleasure of participating in the Launch of the National Diploma in Nursing at this very campus. That occasion marked the inaugural intake of students at Polytechnics Mauritius. Barely a year and a half down the line, I am given to understand that the campus now hosts 5 cohorts totalling around 300 nursing students. Within that short time since the lift-off of the Nursing programme, we are now in a position to scale it up to the Bachelor level. No one can gainsay the fact that, today, with the launch of the Top Up Bachelor of Nursing with La Trobe University, Polytechnics Mauritius is crossing yet another milestone in elevating nursing education in Mauritius.

There is no denying the fact that this programme will give an opportunity to working nurses to upskill from a Diploma to a degree qualification that is both internationally renowned and of high-quality.

Cherry on the cake: they can now gain credentials from a top tier Australian university while staying in Mauritius.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

Upskilling the population in specific areas of need such as nursing and its areas of specializations, elevating the level and quality of education and training and providing multiple pathways for higher learning encapsulate well the guiding principle behind this Government's determination to set up the Polytechnics.

Hard decisions are never easy to take but more often than not, the dictates of necessity hold supreme sway and carry the day. When this Government took office in 2014, youth unemployment was bulging and the need to reduce the mismatch of skills between supply of talent from educational institutions and the demands of industry was unrelentingly pressing. On the other hand, the country was in dire need of skilled technicians and middle management professionals across numerous fields of activity, including nursing, health sciences and allied health. The context was such that the "school-work-retire" model was -- and remains-- increasingly defunct. The future can only see work and learning blending into one.

Let us face it: Education should not be seen as a tick box exercise that does nothing but allow you to advance to the next stage of your career. Rather, it has to be seen as imparting skills and competencies that are fitting to the purpose. It is our genuine and unremitted conviction that the model of Polytechnics whereby students spend an equal measure

of time in class and internships and clinical placements will aptly prepare them for the real world of work.

From a practice-centred perspective, this most definitely applies to the world of healthcare. As already outlined by my colleague Minister of Health and Quality of Life, the healthcare sector is constantly changing and is confronted to its own challenges. Health problems that we face as a society include diabetes, hypertension and others and these are on the rise. As more people live longer, live more active lives and manage several conditions affecting their health, we need services that support each person and family to remain as well as possible for as long as possible within their own homes and communities.

On the other hand, with increasing complexity impacting on an already stretched healthcare, we must be innovative in maximising the potential of all nurses to meet the population's needs and provide choices for when and where people can access the quality of healthcare they require.

This is a characteristic feature for all domains of work. The fact is that the future of work holds many uncertainties—and *that* pre-supposes the view that productivity gains and innovation cannot be achieved solely on the basis of low skilled work. Hence the necessity to highlight the need for pathways onto higher learning that will facilitate the upskilling of health practitioners to move ahead in their careers.

Besides, the historic announcement of the Free Tertiary Education Scheme by the Hon. Prime Minister on the 1<sup>st</sup> of January 2019 is now making it possible for all families irrespective of income or background

to achieve a tertiary education. Nor should we forget that research-based evidence shows that access to tertiary education yields rich dividends and provides a good foundation in life for future success.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The Budget 2019-2020 spells it out clearly. The Government's massive capital investment in the health sector and decentralization strategy around health care is creating an environment that enables medical practitioners to provide comprehensive care to individuals, families and communities in a range of appropriate settings.

As the health professionals closest to the public, nurses are the lynchpin of effective health teams, playing a crucial role in health promotion, disease prevention and treatment. Hence the need for an ongoing pipeline of well-educated and highly skilled community of nurses.

Interestingly, this has resulted in nursing education moving from an apprenticeship model to a diploma-based programme firmly rooted in higher education. And the wheel is coming full circle as we see nursing education now moving towards a Bachelor setting around the world.

May I parenthetically state that I am very pleased that the Pamplémousses Polytechnic is living up to this challenge.

But also a quick reminder: alongside a good education and training system, it is equally important to build the confidence of nurses to

develop additional competencies, embrace new ways of working and deploy innovative methods of service delivery.

Ladies and Gentlemen,

This is where I see the importance of such collaborations as the one with La Trobe University. I am pleased to note the presence of La Trobe University representatives at this Launch Ceremony. It does attest to its strong commitment in this relationship with Polytechnics Mauritius to share knowledge and expertise of nursing theory and practice in Mauritius.

I believe this University's performance speaks for itself. As the first institution in Australia to launch a nursing programme in 1974, La Trobe University has today come a long way. Its Bachelor of Nursing ranks in the Top 100 of the 2018 QS World University Rankings. Let me congratulate the team for this achievement.

Before ending, let me say that I am filled with a sense of satisfaction and enthusiasm when I stand here today at the Launch of the Bachelor of Nursing programme and witness this collaboration between La Trobe University and Polytechnics Mauritius. I am also deeply appreciative of the fact that this synergises beautifully with the Polytechnics Mauritius in building on the existing partnership with the Ministry of Health and Quality of Life and the Mauritius Institute of Health, to train the next cohort of nurses for the country.

Today, Polytechnics Mauritius has some 700 students on its three campuses. This number is called upon to increase substantially, especially when keeping in view its mandate of providing the country with qualified and skilled human resource at mid-professional level.

I therefore wish Polytechnics Mauritius all the best and encourage them to build more partnerships and programmes in line with areas of needs at this campus and those of Montagne Blanche and Rduit.

I thank you for your attention.