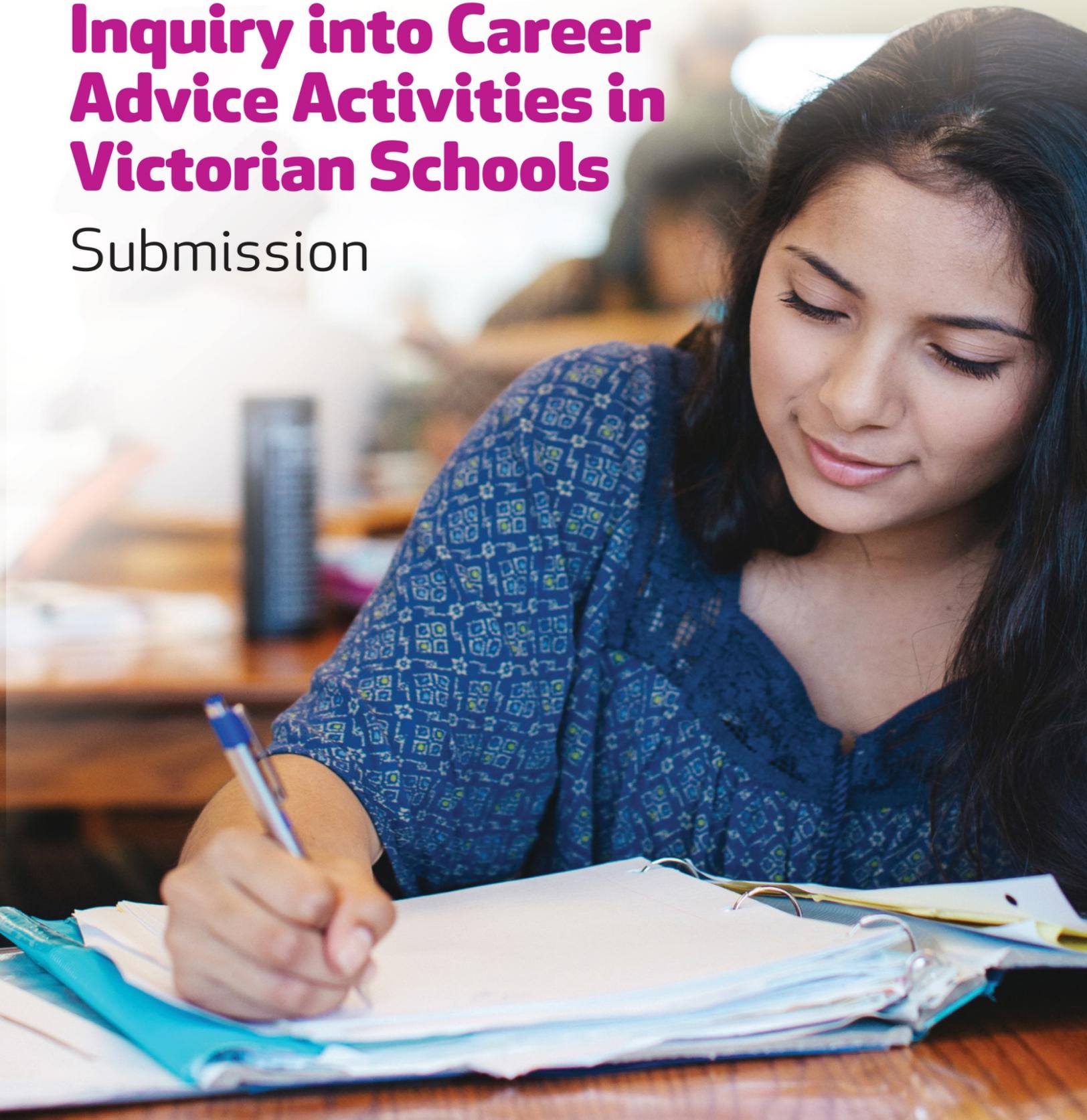


**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools

Submission



Inquiry into Career Advice Activities in Victorian Schools

About Mission Australia

Mission Australia is a national non-denominational Christian organisation that delivers evidence-based, client-centred community services. In the 2016-17 financial year we supported over 140,000 people through 470 programs and services. We work with families and children, young people and people experiencing homelessness and also provide specialist services for mental health, disability and alcohol and drug issues.

Introduction

Mission Australia welcomes the opportunity to provide input into the inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools. We provide a range of services for young people in Victoria including Reconnect, Springboard, Navigator, Pathways to Employment, Synergy Repairs, Changing Gears and Charcoal Lane.

Mission Australia also conducts an annual youth survey targeting young people aged 15-19 years. The survey gathers feedback on a range of issues including concerns of young people, mental health, perceptions about community, and education and employment. Based on the feedback, we produce a number of reports throughout the year. We produced the *Learning the job: Insights into youth education and employment from the Youth Survey 2016* report¹ which looks into young people's perceptions about participation in education and employment, post-school plans and issues of importance.

The *Youth Survey Report 2017* found that close to eight in ten respondents from Victoria planned to go to university after school (77.3%). Many respondents also indicated plans to get a job (29.4%) or travel or go on a gap year (28.7%) after school. Overall, 7.7% of young people from Victoria planned to attend TAFE or college and 5.8% reported plans to undertake an apprenticeship. A small minority of respondents (0.3%) indicated that they felt no choices were available to them after they left school.²

*The impact of family joblessness on the school to work transition: Young people's insights and concerns*³ report in 2014 presents the response of young people from jobless families to Mission Australia's Youth Survey 2013 and compares these responses to those of young people in families with parents working full-time or part-time.

¹ See annexure 1

² Mission Australia, *Youth Survey Report 2017*, p. 134-138, accessible at:

<https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-evaluation/youth-survey>

³ Mission Australia, *The impact of family joblessness on the school to work transition: Young people's insights and concerns*, 2014, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/publications/research/young-people/242-the-impact-of-family-joblessness-on-the-school-to-work-transition-2014/file>

Extent to which career advice activities meet the needs of school leavers

The labour market is rapidly changing for young people and they need the information and resources to be able to pursue their career pathways. Participation in higher education is growing for young people, while vocational education and training and apprenticeships are declining. The transition between full-time education and full-time work is also taking longer and underemployment is a significant issue for young people.⁴

Some young people do not have the information they need about available jobs and pathways to set and meet their post-school goals. In some cases this may be due to a lack of parental support and input or a lack of engagement with career guidance counsellors.⁵

Young people were asked about post schools plans in Mission Australia's 2016 youth survey, the Victorian participants indicated that the top three influences in the decision making process were parents, the internet and family members (84.1%, 73.6% and 71.9% respectively).⁶ Two thirds (66.5%) of respondents indicated that friends helped them make a decision about their post-school plans while around half indicated that their teacher (53.6%), *career advisor* (52.6%) or a career fair or expo (50.5%) were influences on their decision about what they were planning to do after leaving school.⁷

Therefore, a range of avenues should be utilised to disseminate information about career pathways and advice including through parents, peers, schools, sports clubs, youth groups and other similar settings where young people are more likely to receive information.

The majority of young people may have had some exposure to career advisers or information about career pathways and higher education. However, young people who are disengaged from schools or those from disadvantaged backgrounds such as those with history of family violence, experiencing family breakdown, young people or family members who are alcohol or drug dependent, experiencing homelessness, young people in out of home care and others in similar circumstances may have missed these opportunities.

Research indicates that early school leavers are at markedly higher risk of experiencing deep and persistent disadvantage than their peers who have completed Year 12.⁸ In order to prevent this, career advice activities need to be coordinated with other services for young people who are disengaged or at

⁴ Foundation for Young Australians (2015) *How young people are faring in the transition from school to work, report card*, accessed at: <https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/How-young-people-are-faring-report-card-2015-FINAL.pdf>

⁵ Australian Institute of Family Studies. (2017). *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2016*. Melbourne: AIFS. p26

⁶ Mission Australia, *Youth Survey Report 2016*, p. 161-163, accessible at: <https://www.missionaustralia.com.au/what-we-do/research-evaluation/youth-survey>

⁷ *Ibid*

⁸ Dommers, E, Myconos, G, Swain, L, Yung, S & Clarke K, *Engaging young early school leavers in vocational training*, NCVER, Adelaide, 2017, p. 11.

risk of being disengaged from schools. Careers advice while at school also supports young people who do not plan to pursue further education to find pathways into work.⁹

Navigator

Navigator is a Victorian Government initiative that provides support for disengaged young people, aged 12-17 years, to re-engage with an education or training pathway. Navigator services seek out disengaged learners and actively work with them and their support networks, providing the support required for a successful return to education. Mission Australia is the lead provider of this service in Victoria's Bayside Peninsula.

Programs such as Navigator can address disengagement, but there should also be better links between the schools, the service providers and career advisors to maximise the benefits of these programs. Career pathway development should be available to young people when they are prepared to focus on their future.

Empower Youth (Southern Melbourne Empower Youth Partnership)

The SMEYP will create a 'Community of Support' – an environment where young people and youth workers come together via a pro-social drop-in space to engage with peers and positive role models; make connections with services and resources; and develop aspirational plans for community participation. The objective is to create positive developmental pathways and for young people to invest in a competent identity as a valuable social contributor. The SMEYP model provides a platform for truly integrated service responses to vulnerable and at risk young people within the identified priority areas of Dandenong and Casey.

The model will utilise the specialist programs of multiple local youth services to support young people to achieve strong outcomes in all of the Empower Youth service elements of Well-Being, Community Involvement, Career Pathways and Education & Training. This 'Community of Support' will enable disengaged young people to grow and develop in constructive ways and create pro-social pathways for young people to invest in a competent identity as a valuable social contributor.

There are numerous innovative and exciting programs that are available for young people that career advisers may not be aware and often these programs have limited scale and capacity to accept young people.

⁹ Australian Institute of Family Studies, *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2016*. Melbourne: AIFS, 2017, p31.

Charcoal Lane

Charcoal Lane is a social enterprise in Fitzroy that combines a restaurant specialising in native flavours with a comprehensive training program for young people who have experienced vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment. Charcoal Lane enables Aboriginal and other young people to gain both accredited hospitality qualifications and professional experience within a supportive developmental environment. On completing traineeships at the restaurant, young people are well prepared to move into careers in hospitality, or other industries.

Synergy Auto Repairs

Synergy Auto Repairs is a social enterprise based in North Melbourne that offers customers a full suite of smash repair services, while providing a flexible accredited training program and support for young people aged 16-20 with a history of motor vehicle related offences. The program harnesses participants' interest in cars and aims to help them build a career in a field that matches their interests. The social enterprise equips participants with the skills to commence a smash repairs apprenticeship. The initiative is an Australian-first partnership between Mission Australia, the National Motor Vehicle Theft Reduction Council (NMVTRC), Kangan TAFE, and Suncorp Group.

Social Enterprise programs such as Synergy Auto Repairs and Charcoal Lane provide much needed work experience and education to young people who are often excluded from the workforce due to discrimination, long-term unemployment, disengagement from school and intergenerational disadvantage. These programs also result in reducing the risk of engagement with juvenile or criminal justice system.

Case Study

Annie* is a 21 year old young person from Gippsland Victoria who participated in Synergy Auto repairs in 2014. By the time she engaged with the service, she had lost her driving license and had a history of vehicle related offences. She had left school early and was not in employment or pursuing her education. She was initially apprehensive about working in the auto repair industry as she felt that it was out of her comfort zone. She was supported by the staff and other people at Synergy to learn new skills and she was able to learn new skills, obtain work experience and other relevant qualifications.

She was nominated for a State Training Award offered by Kangan TAFE. She was supported by Mission Australia staff to obtain a job at a repair shop in Gippsland. She now works 5 or more days and saving to buy her own house.

*Name has been changed to protect the client's identity.

Career advisers can work with community sector organisations, social enterprises, commercial services and employers to provide young people with insights and exposure to diverse career options available to them. Career expos and other similar events as well as opportunities for young people to meet employers face to face can be useful in encouraging young people to look at different options and better understand the employment market.

Young people, particularly those who are planning to pursue careers in trades that are physically demanding or have unusual working hours may need to better understand the role and work demands before they enter into long-term financial commitments. Certain institutions provide 'try a trade' options where young people are provided with opportunities to have hands on experience over a short period of time.¹⁰ For example, Construction Skills Queensland (CSQ), an independent industry-funded body provides young people with work experience opportunities through their 'Try a Trade' initiative. This initiative is run through schools and aimed at raising the awareness of construction as a viable career option.¹¹ Providing practical opportunities to gain trade skills of this nature coupled with case management, employability skills and appropriate career guidance will assist young people to make long-term decisions about their future careers.

Challenges advisers face helping young Victorians transition from education to the workforce

Career guidance programs aimed at young people at risk of disengaging can help more vulnerable young people improve their outcomes. When these young people are provided with the necessary supports to overcome the challenges they face, they thrive academically and demonstrate an interest in pursuing meaningful careers.

However, the services have also witnessed that some young people feel that the some teachers and family have very low expectations of them, which results in young people opting for low paid and low skilled employment opportunities. It can be arduous for the career advisers to influence and change these attitudes and perceptions. As most young people do talk to their parents about their career plans, parents and family members should be included as participants in career-planning programs and provided with knowledge and support as necessary.¹²

Career advisers may also come across young people who may have additional challenges such as mental health issues, alcohol and drug dependency, family violence or a range of other similar or related issues. Young people with such experiences need supports to address these issues prior to accessing career advice and the career advisers need to be aware of the appropriate referral pathways.

¹⁰ Skill Hire, Three and four day Try-A-Trade programs come at no cost to the student or school, accessible at: <https://www.skillhire.com.au/training/construction-courses/try-a-trade/>

¹¹ Construction Skills Queensland, Try'A Trade, accessible at: <http://www.csq.org.au/for-career-seekers/try-a-trade>

¹² Australian Institute of Family Studies, *The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children Annual Statistical Report 2016*. Melbourne: AIFS, 2017, p30

A considerable proportion of young people that access various Mission Australia services in Victoria have had no or significantly limited exposure to career advisers due to disengagement from school, health or drug and alcohol related issues or other similar barriers. These young people need to be identified by the school system and referred to other early intervention support services to address the challenges they are dealing with prior to addressing training or employment related issues.

It is imperative for the career advisers to build a relationship with young people prior to helping them with the transition from school to work or further study. This includes one-on-one engagement with young people to identify their goals, areas of interest and exploring potential pathways. Therefore, the services of career advisers should begin long before young people leave school to ensure they have access to the right information before they make decisions about future career pathways. The majority of these issues can be addressed by long-term engagement, relationship building and setting career goals to keep young people on track and measuring their progress. This will also provide young people with a sense of achievement.

To be effective schools-based careers guidance must be responsive to both the current labour market and the skill needs of the future. A recent report by Brotherhood of St. Lawrence found that at September 2017, 50,500 young people had been unemployed for at least a year.¹³ A study by Foundation for Young Australians reported that 30% of young people were either unemployed or under-employed.¹⁴

Future work skills include digital literacy, financial literacy, problem solving, creativity, critical thinking, science and maths.¹⁵ It is important that more vulnerable young people are supported into stable career pathways and not into work roles most at risk of automation. Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM) need to be accessible for all young people to prepare them for the future.

Transition to Work (Department of Employment)

The Transition to Work program focuses on young people aged 15-21 who are facing barriers to enter the workforce to pursue employment or further education. Mission Australia delivers this service in South Eastern Melbourne, and Peninsula and Gippsland.

Youth Employment Specialists assist young people in the development of practical skills, connection with education or training providers, engagement with work-experience opportunities and local

¹³ Brotherhood of St. Lawrence, *Reality Bites: Australia's Youth Unemployment in a Millennial Era*, December 2017, Victoria, p. 4, accessible at:

http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/10341/1/BSL_Reality_bites_Australias_youth_unemployment_Dec2017.pdf

¹⁴ Foundation for Young Australians, *How are Young People Faring in the Transition from School to Work?*, 2015, accessible at: <https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/How-young-people-are-faring-report-card-2015-FINAL.pdf>

¹⁵ Foundation for Young Australians (2015) *How young people are faring in the transition from school to work, report card*, accessed at: <https://www.fya.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2015/11/How-young-people-are-faring-report-card-2015-FINAL.pdf>

community services, as well as identifying job opportunities to suit their aspirations and skill set and the needs of the local job market. By intervening early to help young people stay in school, engage in training or find work, we can set them up for a better future. The program offers practical intervention to assist them in finding work including Apprenticeships, Traineeships or education.

Career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and ways to address these needs

The high rates of unemployment in rural and regional areas may limit young people's aspirations and confidence. The availability and the variety of Vocational Education and Training (VET) courses in these areas may also limit the career options for young people. The challenges with staffing issues in some areas may also mean that young people may not have access to career advisers.

Programs that support young people to remain in schools while providing other wrap-around supports should be increased in rural areas. These services must be culturally appropriate and understand the sensitivities of delivering services in rural, regional and remote areas. Where there are staffing issues, government should focus on upskilling and reskilling the youth workers to provide a range of supports including career advice.

Second Step Shepparton

Second Step Shepparton, is an evidence based early intervention program proven to increase children's educational engagement and success, improve peer relationships, and decrease problem behaviours through promoting social, emotional competence and self-regulation. The program builds on cognitive behavioural intervention models integrated with social learning theory, empathy research, and social information-processing research. Second Step is delivered to children in Years 6 and 7 who are identified by their schools as being vulnerable to not making a successful transition from primary to secondary school and be at increased risk of school disengagement and early school leaving.

Conclusion

Careers guidance must provide up-to-date information to young people, include parents in the process and be available to young people at risk of disengaging from education and not planning to pursue further education, as well as the majority of young people intending to go to university. The provision of careers guidance and wrap around supports in regional Victoria also requires further investment

Learning the job:

Insights into youth education and employment from the Youth Survey 2016



**MISSION
AUSTRALIA**

Executive summary

This report explores selected results from Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2016* based on respondents who reported that they were studying at school, TAFE or university. Results surrounding participation in education and employment, post-school plans and issues of importance will be examined according to respondent's current location of study.

Key findings

- Over half (51.2%) of students participating in vocational education and training (VET) at school indicated that their VET course had helped them make a decision about their study/work plans after school. Similarly, (51.8%) of these students indicated that work experience or an internship had influenced their decision.
- More than three times the proportion of VET school students indicated that a traineeship had influenced their post-school plans when compared to school students who had not participated in VET (19.6% compared to 6.2%).
- Overall, school students who indicated VET participation reported a diverse range of post-school plans, covering university study as well as vocational training and employment. Conversely, students without experience of VET at school focused more exclusively on university with very few planning to pursue alternative options.
- Three quarters (74.9%) of school students who did not participate in VET at school indicated plans to attend university, while only one in ten (9.9%) indicated plans to go to TAFE or college and just over one in twenty (6.2%) planned to undertake an apprenticeship.
- More than twice the proportion of students who participated in VET at school indicated plans to go to TAFE (24.0%) and more than three times the proportion indicated plans to undertake an apprenticeship (20.3%) when compared to school students with no experience of VET at school. A greater proportion of students with VET participation also indicated plans to get a job after school (41.6% compared with 30.8% of those without VET participation).
- The majority (50.5%) of TAFE students indicated plans to transition directly into employment after leaving TAFE. Where TAFE students indicated plans to move into further education, a greater proportion planned to undertake an apprenticeship than to pursue university study (29.9% compared with 19.2%).
- More than half (51.0%) of school students engaged in VET placed high importance on getting a job compared to just over a third (35.1%) of school students with no VET involvement, while close to three in ten (28.6%) non-VET students at secondary school were not employed and not looking for work, around twice the proportion of school students who were engaged with VET.
- TAFE students placed a high value on *getting a job* in the largest proportions of any cohort (62.5%).

Introduction

Each year, young people completing secondary education follow a variety of pathways towards further education, training and employment. Regardless of the avenue they choose, young people must be supported to successfully achieve their educational and vocational goals. This means equipping young people with the information, guidance and ability to access relevant training and education systems to support their goals while also ensuring that these systems and structures are flexible, high quality and responsive enough to allow young people to transition into the occupations and careers of the 21st century.

Non-completion of secondary education is a major issue as those who do not reach this milestone are less able to develop the key skills and knowledge required to successfully transition into further education, training or employment. On an individual level, school completion rates are important as those who do not graduate are more likely to experience financial instability, have poorer health outcomes and are more likely to be single parents, while at a national level a more skilled workforce increases national economic development and contributes to improved living conditions.ⁱ

In Australia, school completion rates are slightly less than 74% which means that 81,000 young people each year are not being adequately supported by the education system. Importantly, completion rates are uneven according to gender, economic status and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander status. Males are less likely to complete their education or training, along with families with low socioeconomic status, young people from an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander background and those with a language background other than English.ⁱⁱ

Vocational Education and Training (VET) is an important pathway to build skills and knowledge in young people. The integration of VET into schools needs to be considered as particularly important for those groups who are less likely to complete their education and while it is still unclear if it increases Year 12 attainment and school engagement, the numbers of students participating in these programs continue to increase and state government funding continues to support further development.ⁱⁱⁱ

VET participation at school may also allow young people to continue into higher VET qualifications post-school. Engaging with and increasing participation in higher VET qualifications for young people experiencing low socioeconomic status or intergenerational disadvantage presents complex issues for both VET and social service providers. Challenges such as these raise important questions about how education and training should be viewed. Framing education in purely economic terms changes the focus of how the education system prepares individuals for work both at entry level and throughout career progression. However, when education is viewed as a means of re-engaging disengaged and, as a likely result, disadvantaged young people, this reframes the potentially supportive role that the VET sector can take in addressing disadvantage and enabling social inclusion.

Aspirations and skills

Aspirations that are formed in adolescence towards future employment and education play a critical role in transitioning young people from school into work, training and higher education.^{iv} The development of aspirations is a highly significant process for young people as it has been found to encourage greater engagement with school and stronger transitions into further work and study, which can ultimately aid in the realisation of these aspirations.^v

While the final years of secondary schooling are a crucial transitional period during which post-school plans are finalised, students' post-school aspirations have often begun to be influenced long before this period by factors that are not always explicit. Parents, families, communities and the regions where young people grow and develop can all significantly impact on the aspirations and educational/vocational attainment of young people.^{vi} The aspirations of young people are often drawn from the lives of those surrounding them and the relative advantage or disadvantage of their community; together these influences determine the subjective 'lens' through which their aspirations will be formed and understood.^{vii}

Participation in education can also play a role in the development of study and work goals post-school, including through Vocational Education and Training (VET). Through the provision of workplace skills and accredited training, VET enables students to gain qualifications across a range of careers and industries encompassing trades and business, technology, retail and agriculture. VET providers include Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutes, adult and community education providers, community organisations and private providers, while both universities and secondary schools can also provide VET.

A growing number of Australians are accessing further education and training through both the university and VET sectors and attaining post-school qualifications has become increasingly important in securing employment.^{viii} Despite this, there is a mismatch between skills held and those required across many industries and occupations – particularly for graduates of VET. As the range of post-school options available to young people continues to diversify and employment opportunities in the future continue to demand more technically and professionally advanced skill sets, it will be important to ensure that young people are provided with the relevant skills and experience throughout school and further education to allow them to find fulfilling and ongoing employment. This is of particular importance for young people from disadvantaged backgrounds who may face multiple barriers in developing and achieving their educational and employment goals.

The VET in Schools initiative, introduced in the 1990's, was designed with the aim of retaining students at school who were at-risk of disengagement or interested to pursue employment options immediately post-school. The intention of VET in Schools was to assist these students to achieve their educational potential through completing secondary education and improving labour market opportunities through completion of low level VET qualifications (Certificate I and II). Importantly, research has shown that VET in schools does not always enable strong or consistent transitions into the labour market, further education through VET or higher education at university.^{ix} This challenge may be addressed through strengthening the capacity of VET to build aspirations while students are still at school. Encouraging the components of VET in schools which assist students to make informed decisions about future education or occupational choices may assist in this undertaking,

particularly where students involved in VET in schools are enabled and encouraged to access higher VET qualifications – either at school or afterwards.

While many young people pursue tertiary study through university, this cannot be the only pathway into employment. VET has the potential to bridge the domains of education and employment by providing broad training which enables people to work in multiple jobs across varying industries throughout increasingly unpredictable economic conditions. Currently however, VET often equips students with competency-based skill sets which are specific to the context of particular workplace environments rather than developing knowledge and skills relevant across a broader vocational group.^x In order to support the many young people who continue to access VET, it will be important to ensure the VET sector continues to be developed and strengthened to meet the needs of all young people and the needs of an ever changing labour market.

Barriers to further education and employment

While many young people successfully navigate their journey into independence, not all school-leavers face a smooth transition out of secondary school into further education or the security of meaningful, ongoing employment. Young people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander backgrounds, new migrants and refugees or young people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds face specific challenges when negotiating their transition out of school.^{xi} Vulnerable groups also include those from low socioeconomic backgrounds, young people with a disability or long-term physical or mental health issue, young people involved with child protection and youth justice and young people experiencing homelessness. Additionally, issues such as financial instability, limited support networks, geographic isolation, limited access to education and employment (including poor public transport) along with limited employment prospects in certain regions can all contribute to a difficult transition out of secondary school and into further education and employment.

Considering the important role of aspiration building for young people at risk of disengagement, it is especially concerning that young people from a background of intergenerational disadvantage who are those most at-risk of disengagement – are least likely to have exposure to educational and vocational role models at home.^{xii} Developing and maintaining aspirations early is often influenced by parent’s own experiences in the labour market and their educational history. As a result, parents with low levels of educational experience, fewer instances of employment and little knowledge of post-school options face challenges when guiding their children’s transition out of secondary education.^{xiii} Young people in this environment may require additional career guidance and mentoring to facilitate the development of vocational aspirations and increase access to further education and employment.

Overall, disadvantaged young people have been found to experience lower rates of course completion in VET, particularly when they experience multiple forms of disadvantage.^{xiv} Australian VET completion rates remain low by international standards and the system can be difficult to navigate for young people facing multiple barriers to engagement.^{xv} Over the decade 2006-2016 there has been a decrease in the number of commencements and completions for apprenticeships and traineeships^{xvi} and recent trend estimates show six consecutive quarters of decline in trade-based apprenticeships and trainee commencements.^{xvii} While broader labour market shifts away

from trade-focused industries such as manufacturing account for some of this decline, completion rates are more often impacted by rightness-of-fit in the work environment and access to favourable learning conditions throughout the apprenticeship or traineeship.^{xviii} However, the provision of career advice, pre-apprenticeships and workplace mentoring can assist employers with retention of apprentices and trainees.^{xix}

Research has shown that young people beginning apprenticeships often enter with low levels of academic achievement in mathematics and reading.^{xx} Developing essential literacy and numeracy skills for all graduates is essential, particularly for young people who may have experienced previous disengagement from education. Those who have experienced disengagement from employment face different barriers. Studies have shown that limited employment participation prior to entering post-school qualifications can result in experience gaps in employment after study – ultimately leading to poorer employment outcomes longer-term.^{xxi} Taken together, these findings suggest that young people who have disengaged from education and employment may require additional skill-building before entering VET or further education and additional support to assist with employment skills and early career preparation once post-school qualifications are completed. However, these forms of support may become increasingly limited in some sections of the VET sector. The growth in private providers of VET has the potential to place more vulnerable young people with additional support needs at a disadvantage as the type of individualised person-centred supports these young people may require are unlikely to take priority within a competitive market environment. Ensuring that access and equity standards are upheld through ongoing application of the Federal Government's VET Quality Framework will go some way to addressing these concerns.

Additionally, informed career guidance and educational or vocational mentoring can both have a strong impact in supporting disadvantaged young people through their transition from secondary school into further education and employment. However, additional support services which address issues outside the domains of education and employment may also be required to address the often complex and persistent barriers faced by some young people. Such support services should be considered in funding models within the education and employment sectors and should cross sectoral boundaries, linking community services, health, infrastructure and education and employment to deliver real solutions.^{xxii}

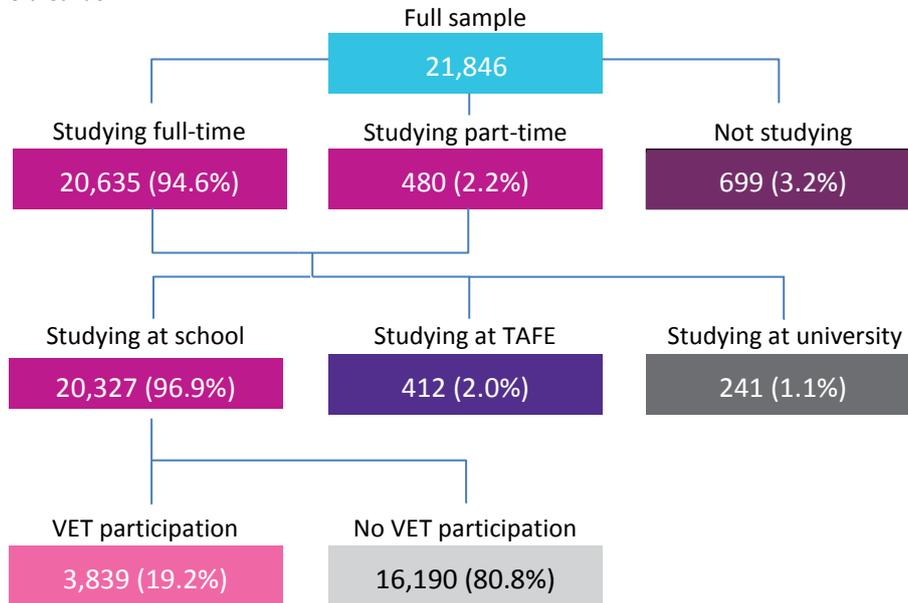
Mission Australia's Youth Survey

This report presents findings from Mission Australia's *Youth Survey 2016*. Each year, following ethics approval from State and Territory and Catholic Education Departments, Mission Australia approaches secondary school principals across Australia with information about our *Youth Survey* with an electronic link to the online version of the survey. Information is also distributed to Mission Australia services, other community and youth service providers, Commonwealth Government departments and agencies, State/Territory and local government departments, youth organisations and peak bodies. The survey period typically runs from April to August each year.

This report explores results of respondents with a focus on the transition from secondary education into further education, training and employment. The sample of this report includes only respondents who indicated that they were studying full-time or part-time. The sample has been disaggregated according to whether respondents indicated that they were studying at university,

TAFE or equivalent and school or equivalent. School students were further disaggregated into those who indicated that they were currently participating or had previously participated in vocational education and training (VET) and those who had never participated in VET. Figure 1 below describes the sample breakdown in greater detail.

Figure 1: Sample breakdown



Throughout this report, results will be displayed comparing respondents studying at school who are currently or have previously participated in VET, respondents studying at school who have never participated in VET, respondents studying at TAFE and respondents studying at university. Demographic characteristics for each cohort have been described in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Demographic characteristics by cohort

	School (VET) %	School (no VET) %	TAFE %	University %
Female	53.6	55.9	46.3	67.8
Male	46.4	44.1	53.7	32.2
Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander	8.2	4.6	14.4	9.2
Country of birth (other)	12.4	14.3	8.5	18.8
Language other than English (spoken at home)	15.7	18.9	9.2	24.3

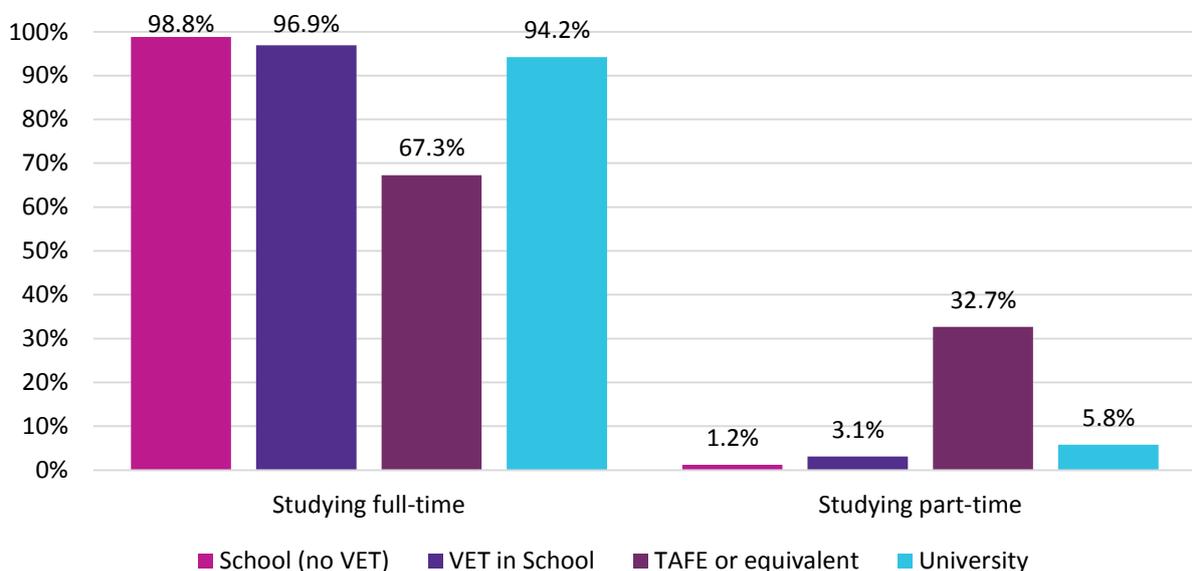
Participation in education and employment

For the first time in 2016, Mission Australia's *Youth Survey* asked respondents to indicate whether they were currently participating or had previously participated in VET. Around one in five (19.2%) respondents at school indicated VET participation. Also for the first time in 2016, the *Youth Survey* asked respondents to identify whether they were studying at school or equivalent, in TAFE or

equivalent or at university. Due to current recruitment strategies, a significant majority of respondents to Mission Australia's *Youth Survey* are studying in secondary education. However, in 2016, 412 respondents indicated that they were studying exclusively at a TAFE or equivalent training provider and 241 respondents indicated that they were currently studying at a university.

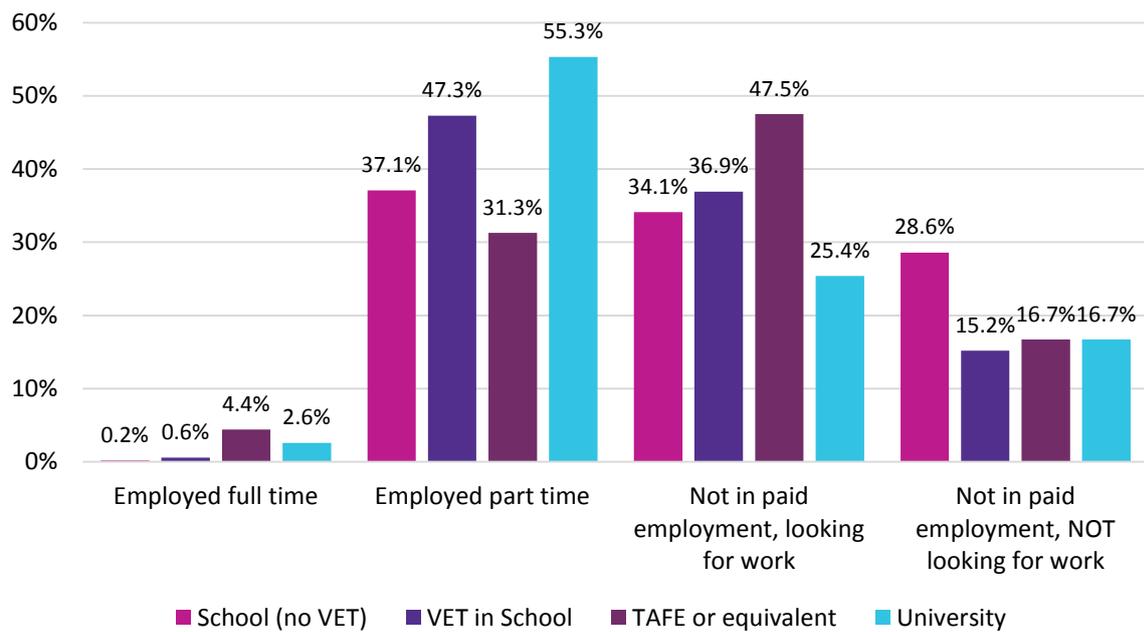
Respondents were asked whether they were studying full-time, part-time or not studying. As shown below in Figure 2, the vast majority of students who reported that they were still in school indicated that they were studying full-time. A significant majority of students at university also indicated full-time participation in education. Slightly lower proportions of those attending TAFE indicated that they were studying full-time, with around a third of these respondents indicating that they were studying part-time. This likely reflects the different structure of TAFE education with many Certificates and courses offered on a part-time basis.

Figure 2: Participation in education



Respondents were also asked whether they currently had paid work. Those who indicated that they had paid employment were asked to specify how many hours they worked per week, on average. Figure 3 below shows that rates of full-time work, though relatively low overall, are highest for students at TAFE (4.4%). This is hardly surprising, given the considerable proportion of students outside of TAFE who reported studying full-time. Over half (55.3%) of university students were employed part-time, with a higher proportion of VET in school students engaged in part-time employment when compared to school students not participating in VET (47.3% compared with 37.1% respectively).

Figure 3: Participation in paid employment



Although TAFE students indicated relatively lower rates of participation in education, a higher proportion of TAFE students indicated that they were not in paid employment and looking for work compared to respondents studying at school or university, with three in ten (31.3%) TAFE students employed part-time. Close to three in ten (28.6%) non-VET students at secondary school were not employed and not looking for work, around twice the proportion of school students who were engaged with VET. Obviously, for those in full time education there may be less opportunity to be employed.

Participation in employment has benefits beyond income generation and independence, providing students with the opportunity to gain real-world work experience and to develop employment skills while still at school, potentially leading to improved employment prospects post-school. Although full-time school attendance is a priority for students while at school, participation in part-time work can help young people achieve positive employment outcomes in the future and it is worth noting that almost half (47.3%) of students engaged with VET in school reported current part-time employment.

Respondents to the Youth Survey 2016 were asked to rate how important a range of items were in their life over the past year on a scale from 1 to 5 with 1 being 'not at all important' and 5 being 'extremely important'. The proportion of those who rated each item either 'very' or 'extremely' important across each cohort of students has been displayed below in Table 2.

Table 2: What young people value, summing together 'very' and 'extremely' important for each item

	School (no VET) %	VET in school %	TAFE %	University %
Family relationships	81.3	81.3	74.2	75.4
Friendships (other than family)	82.3	79.2	68.6	78.3
Physical and mental health	73.0	72.4	70.4	72.7
School or study satisfaction	75.3	68.3	62.5	73.9
Getting a job	35.1	51.0	62.5	50.8
Financial security	43.9	50.5	54.7	62.4

Note: Items are listed in order of frequency for respondents who participated in 'VET in school'

Family relationships and *friendships* featured in the top three most valued items for all cohorts, emphasising the importance of these close family and peer networks for all young people. *School or study satisfaction* was the top third item for students at school with no VET participation and students at university, while *physical and mental health* was the third most valued item for TAFE students and students who participated in VET. Interestingly, TAFE students placed a high value on *getting a job* in the largest proportions of any cohort (62.5%), followed by school students participating in VET (51.0%), while the lowest proportion of respondents to highly value this item were school students with no experience of VET (35.1%). Conversely, around six in ten (62.4%) university students highly valued *financial security*, compared to 43.9% of school students with no VET participation.

Considering that around half (47.5%) of TAFE students indicated that they were not in paid employment and looking for work while only three in ten (31.3%) reported part-time employment, the level of importance placed on gaining employment is unsurprising. Conversely, over half (55.3%) of university students reported part-time employment and the high levels of importance placed on financial security may reflect concerns around maintaining work or longer-term employment prospects post-study.

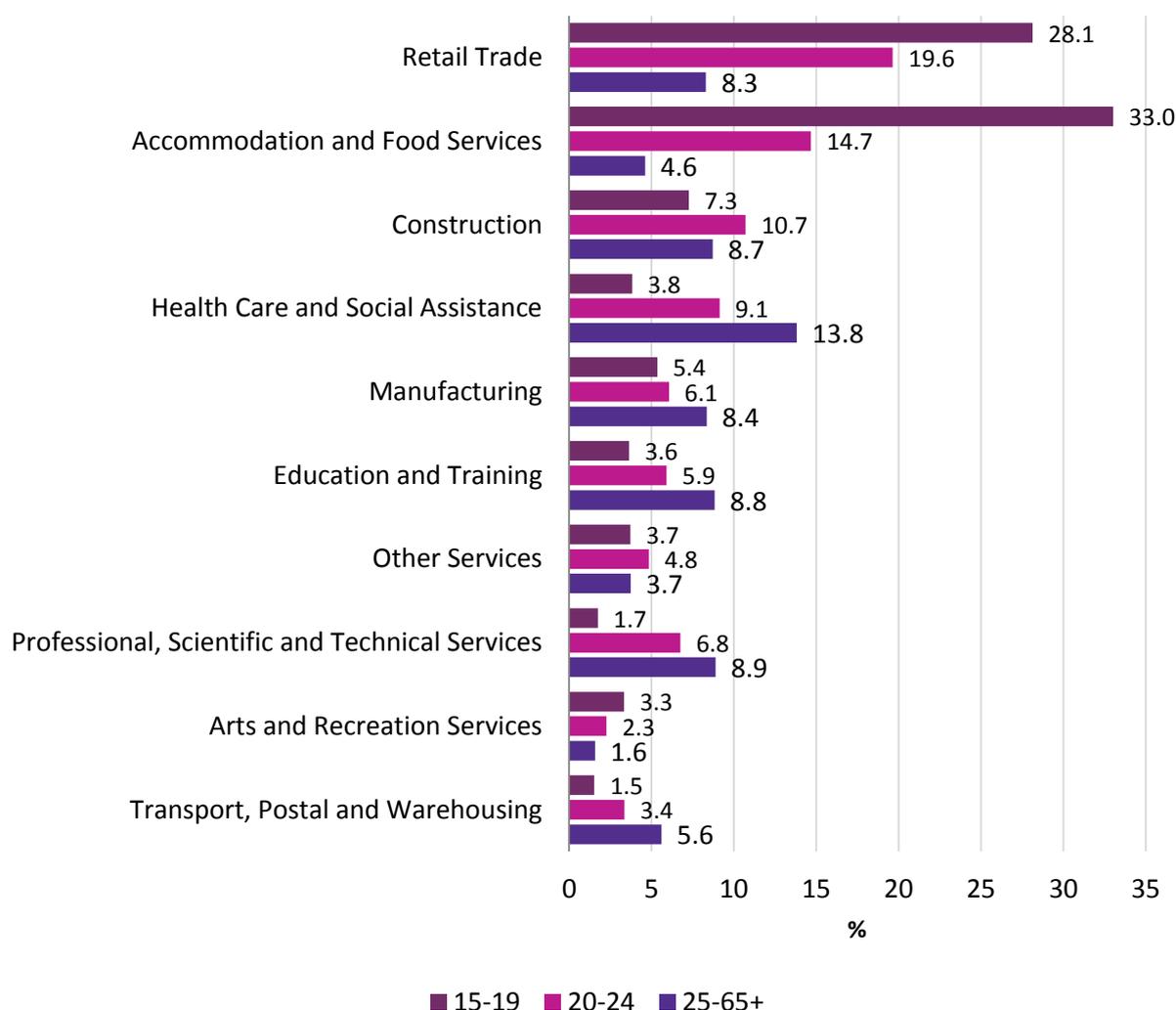
While VET does play a role in bridging the gap between education and employment, the heightened importance placed on getting a job by both TAFE students and school students engaged in VET may also indicate a greater awareness, and potential concern, around future employment. That more than half of school students engaged in VET placed high importance on getting a job compared to just over a third of school students with no VET involvement highlights the different degree of awareness shown by each cohort about this issue.

Recent Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) labour force statistics reveal a high proportion of young people aged 15-19 and 20-24 currently accessing employment through the services sector, alongside more trade-based industries of construction and manufacturing – as shown in Figure 4. As of November 2016, the majority of young people aged 15-19 and 20-24 were either employed in retail trade or accommodation and food services. As young people in these age ranges are likely accessing

employment in these industries while still engaged in education, the high demand for casual and part-time roles within these industries likely drives many young workers towards these fields.

While the *Youth Survey 2016* did not include questions requesting the industry of employment, results from the *Youth Survey 2013* revealed that the two dominant industries of young people in paid employment were *retail and consumer products* and *hospitality and tourism* (41.2% and 39.8% respectively). While it is likely that some shifts have occurred in the labour market over the period 2013-16, Figure 4 suggests that many young people continue to access employment within these industries.

Figure 4: Industry division of main job – ABS Labour Force Survey Nov 2016



Note: Figures presented include only the top ten industries. Items are ranked by summing together data from both the 15-19 and 20-24 age ranges.

Recent analysis from the Department of Employment reveals that the services industry has contributed substantially to employment growth over the five years to 2016, with particularly high growth in health care and social assistance and professional, scientific and technical services.^{xxiii} This growth is anticipated to continue, with the services sector projected to provide close to two thirds of employment growth to November 2020. Within this sector, notable growth was projected for

industries including health care and social assistance, professional, scientific and technical services, education and training and retail trade. Conversely, traditional trade industries overall are projected to decline. Notable declines in employment are projected for manufacturing and below average growth has been projected for technicians and trades workers, with overall declines in the employment level of labourers projected during the five years to November 2020.

Significantly, the majority of occupations projected to decline are those which require lower skilled qualifications. Of the lowest growth occupations, seven out of ten occupations have a skill level equivalent to a Certificate III or lower. In recent decades, Australia's labour market has consistently moved towards higher skilled occupations with those holding higher qualifications experiencing lower rates of unemployment and employment in high skilled occupations continuing to grow. Current projections indicate that those holding a Diploma or higher qualification will experience the strongest employment growth to November 2020.

Low educational attainment has been shown to be one of the most important drivers of disengagement from further education, training and employment and young people with less education are more likely to be disengaged from employment and training for longer periods of time. In order to ensure that young people successfully transition into employment, young people currently engaged in secondary education who do not plan to enter university must be given opportunities to access higher qualifications through TAFE or equivalent training providers and supported to complete these qualifications. At the same time, young people need to develop skills which are in-demand in order to compete in an increasingly competitive labour market. Connecting young people with projected growth industries in their region at a skill level commensurate with anticipated employment demand will be important in ensuring young people have the opportunity to achieve strong employment outcomes.

Young people not in education, employment or training (NEET) have been found to be at increased risk of long-term social and economic disadvantage as NEET status is linked with future unemployment, lower incomes and employment insecurity.^{xxiv} Census data has shown that young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, young people with low levels of spoken English and young people experiencing disability are all over-represented in 15-24 year old NEET cohort^{xxv}. Young people from regional and remote areas are also over-represented in this group. While the unemployment rate among 15-24 year olds is consistently higher than average unemployment across both metropolitan and regional areas, young people in regional Australia are more likely than those in major cities to focus their post-school plans on work or VET. This is likely due to availability and access as regional area with university campuses show increased rates of young people pursuing university post-school.^{xxvi}

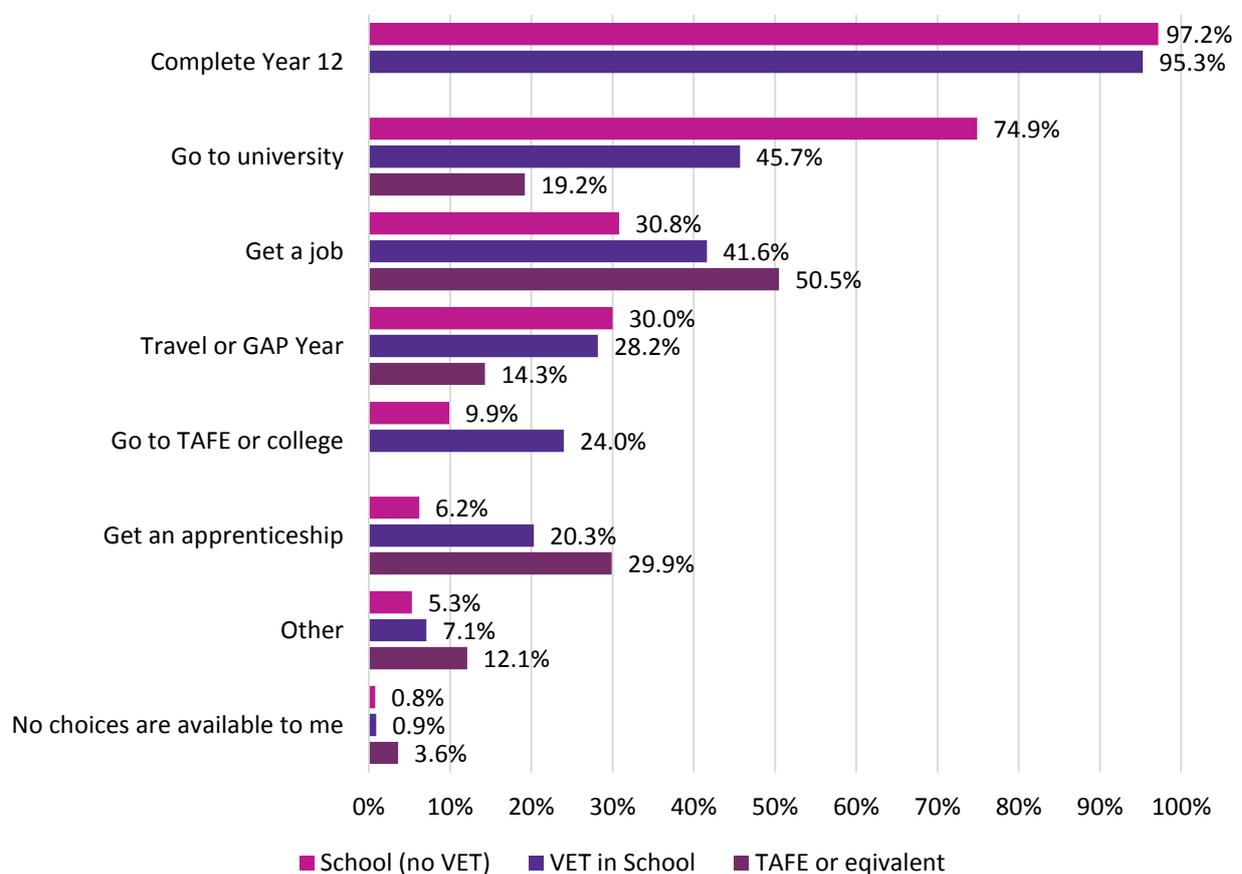
Post-school plans

Ensuring that all young people have the opportunity to work towards a future which matches their goals is vitally important for education and training providers. Building aspirations for higher education, training and employment is key when supporting young people in their transition into adulthood. Building strong vocational and educational aspirations can help address disengagement from education and employment while career guidance and mentoring can assist young people to access information about future pathways.

Currently, a number of factors have privileged the university pathway for secondary school students. Research from both Mission Australia’s *Youth Survey* and the *Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth* (LSAY) reveals that young people continue to indicate university as their preferred post-school study option with greater proportions of young people indicating plans to attend university compared to those indicating plans to undertake vocational education and training^{xxvii}.

Respondents to the *Youth Survey 2016* who were still at school were asked whether they intended to complete Year 12 and were asked to indicate from a list of options what they were planning to do after they left school. Students at TAFE were asked to indicate from the same list of options what they were planning to do after finishing TAFE, excluding ‘Go to TAFE or college’. TAFE students were not prompted to answer whether they planned to complete Year 12. Results for respondents studying at school that did and did not participate in VET at school (both currently and previously), and results from TAFE students are presented below in Figure 5.

Figure 5 – Planning to complete Year 12 and post-school plans



As seen in Figure 5, the majority (50.5%) of TAFE students indicated plans to transition directly into employment after leaving TAFE. Where TAFE students indicated plans to move into further education, a greater proportion planned to undertake an apprenticeship than to pursue university study (29.9% compared with 19.2%).

While the significant majority of students both with and without participation in VET planned to finish Year 12, the post-school plans of each cohort differed substantially. Three quarters (74.9%) of school students who did not participate in VET at school indicated plans to attend university, while

only one in ten (9.9%) indicated plans to go to TAFE or college and just over one in twenty (6.2%) planned to undertake an apprenticeship. Unsurprisingly, more than twice the proportion of students who participated in VET at school indicated plans to go to TAFE (24.0%) and more than three times the proportion indicated plans to undertake an apprenticeship (20.3%) when compared to school students with no experience of VET at school. A greater proportion of students with VET participation also indicated plans to get a job after school (41.6% compared with 30.8% of those without VET participation).

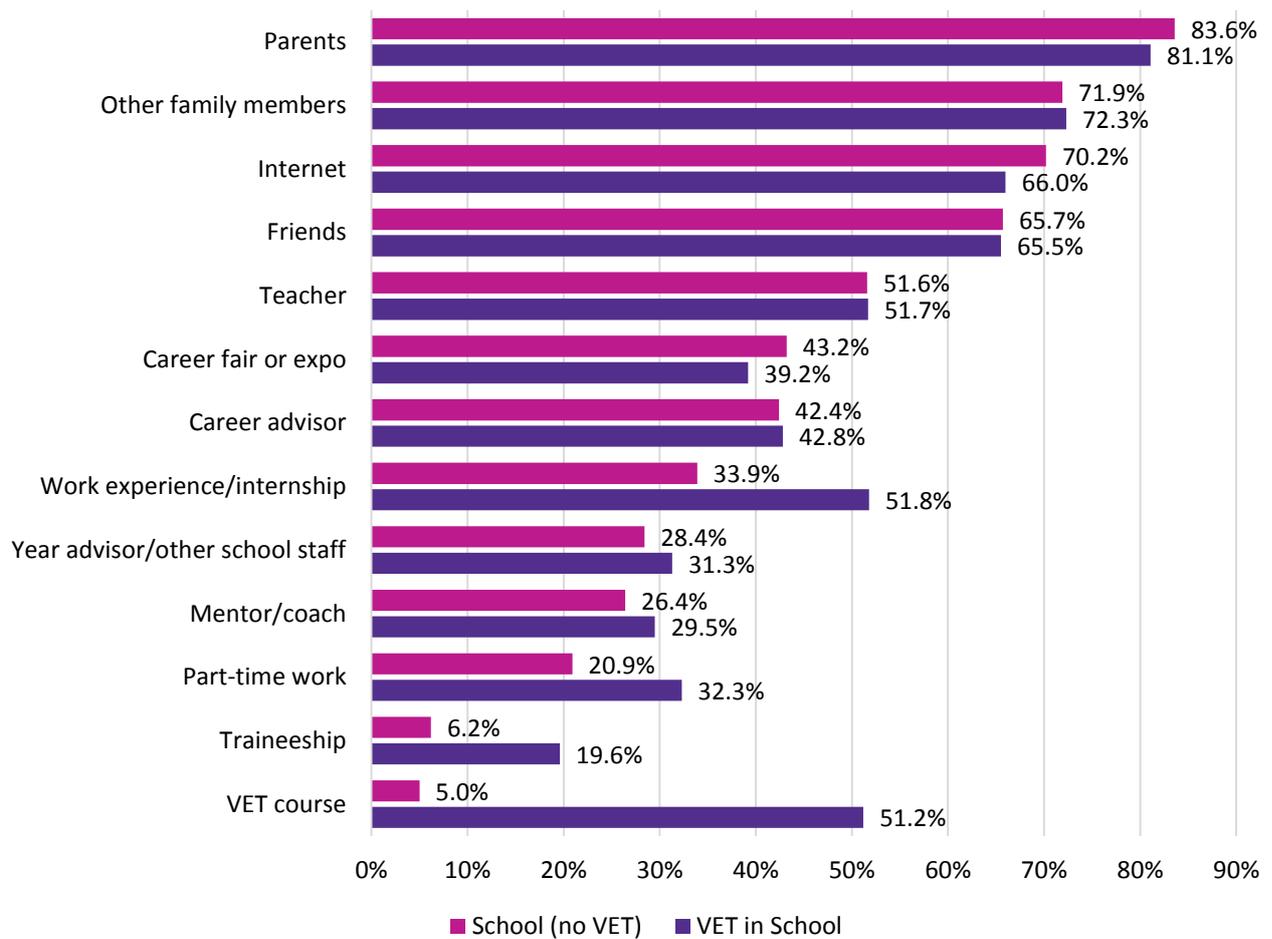
Overall, school students who indicated some VET participation reported a diverse range of post-school plans, covering university study as well as vocational training and employment. Conversely, students without experience of VET at school focused more exclusively on university with very few planning to pursue alternative options.

While an academic pathway through the university system may be a strong option for some students, university study may not be the most relevant or accessible pathway into employment for all young people. Results from the LSAY show that although around two thirds of 15 year olds indicate university as their preferred post-school study option, by the age of 24 only around one third of young people have completed a post-school qualification at university.^{xxviii} High quality vocational education with practical training can offer a positive alternative for young people who may be at-risk of disengaging from a more academically focused pathway and provide valuable pre-employment skills.

Influences on post-school plans

Respondents who were still at school were asked to indicate from a number of items which had helped them to make a decision about what they were planning to do after leaving school. Figure 6 shows the percentage of school students who indicated each item as being an influence according to whether they participated in VET.

Figure 6 – Influences on post-school plans



Although research has suggested that participation in VET at school does not necessarily promote strong transitions between secondary education and higher education^{xxix}, findings from the *Youth Survey 2016* suggest that participation in VET does have an influence on student’s choice of post-school plans. As seen in Figure 6, over half (51.2%) of students participating in VET at school indicated that their VET course had helped them make a decision about their study/work plans after school. A similar proportion (51.8%) of these students indicated that work experience or an internship had influenced their decision, perhaps indicative of activities undertaken during their VET course.

Additionally, and unsurprisingly, more than three times the proportion of VET school students indicated that a traineeship had influenced their post-school plans when compared to school students who had not participated in VET (19.6% compared to 6.2%). As it is likely that many young trainees plan to find employment in the industry of their traineeship, it will be important to ensure that traineeships undertaken match with locally in-demand industries and occupations.

A greater proportion of VET school students also indicated that part-time work was an influence (32.3% compared to 20.9%), perhaps suggesting that these young people planned to remain in the same or similar industry as that in which they were employed part-time or that their choice of part-time work was already influenced by their VET course – potentially through increased experience and skill development.

Parents and other family members were the top two influences on post-school plans for young people both with and without VET participation. We know that young people from disadvantaged backgrounds are more likely to disengage with education and employment as well as facing challenges in the realisation of their future study and work goals as these young people often they lack the role models and mentors to help them make this transition. Considering the strong influence of parents and families on young people's post-school plans, young people whose close family have little educational and vocational experience can face significant challenges. It is important to ensure that these young people are supported with relevant guidance and information to help them make informed choices around further study and employment. Supporting the development of aspirations in young people beginning in the early years of secondary school is especially key for disadvantaged young people to ensure they remain engaged in education, continue to develop the critical skills required for further education and employment and build their confidence as they navigate their transition into independence.

Conclusion

VET can play a major role in the decisions young people make around their post-school plans. As this report reveals, school students participating in VET display greater participation in employment while placing stronger importance on getting a job compared to students with no VET involvement. VET needs to play a role in not only providing education and training but also in helping young people gain employment skills following their qualifications.

To ensure that all young people are able to achieve their goals, VET must provide training and skill development alongside additional supports for young people facing barriers to engagement in education and employment. Young students engaged with VET must receive both vocational and academic skills, including literacy and numeracy skills, alongside non-cognitive skills such as problem solving. At the same time, young people who may need supports such as career guidance or mentoring must also be assisted throughout their VET qualification. Integration of both the development of critical skills and access to required supports will mean that young people from all backgrounds will be able to achieve better education and employment outcomes.

In order to support this, the VET sector needs to be responsive to market forces and build relationships with local growth industries to ensure employment outcomes can be achieved. In an environment where entry level jobs are increasingly difficult for young people to access, gaining employment skills whilst still at school is of critical importance.

i Mitchell Institute (2015) Educational opportunity in Australia 2015, Fact Sheet 4, Senior school years: school completion uneven across Australia. Accessed 10 February 2017: <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/fact-sheets/senior-school-years-school-completion-uneven-across-australia/>

ii Mitchell Institute (2015) Educational opportunity in Australia 2015, Fact Sheet 1, Socio-economic disadvantage and educational opportunity persistently linked. Accessed 10 February 2017: <http://www.mitchellinstitute.org.au/fact-sheets/socio-economic-disadvantage-and-educational-opportunity-persistently-linked/>

iii <https://www.ncver.edu.au/about/news-and-events/opinion-pieces/the-impact-of-vet-in-schools-on-young-peoples-intentions-and-achievements>

-
- ^{iv} Khoo, S.T. & Ainley, J. (2005). Attitudes, intentions and participation. Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report No. 41, Australian Council for Educational Research, Canberra: Department of Education, Science and Training.
- ^v Homel, J. & Ryan, C. (2014). Educational outcomes: the impact of aspirations and the role of student background characteristics, LSAY research report no. 65. NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{vi} Irvin, M. J., Meece, J. L., Byun, S., Farmer, T. W., & Hutchins, B. C. (2011). Relationship of school context to rural youth's educational achievement and aspirations. *Journal of Youth and Adolescence*, 40 (9), pp. 1225-1242.
- ^{vii} Gutman, L. M. & Akerman, R. (2008). Determinants of aspirations, Centre for Research on the Wider Benefits of Learning, Research Report no. 27, Institute of Education, University of London.
- ^{viii} Australian Bureau of Statistics (2012) 4102.0 Australian Social Trends, Sep 2012, Canberra.
- ^{ix} Clarke, K. (2014) Entry to vocations: building the foundations for successful transitions, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^x Beddie, F., O'Connor, L. & Curtin, P. [eds] (2013) Structures in tertiary education and training: a kaleidoscope or merely fragments? Research readings, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xi} Anlezark, A., Karmel, T. & Ong, K. (2006), Have school vocational education and training programs been successful? NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xii} Redmond, G., Wong, M., Bradbury, B. & Katz, I. (2014) Intergenerational mobility: new evidence from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xiii} Redmond, G., Wong, M., Bradbury, B. & Katz, I. (2014) Intergenerational mobility: new evidence from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xiv} McVicar, D. & Tabasso, D. (2016) The impact of disadvantage on VET completion and employment gaps, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xv} Lamb, S, Jackson, J, Walstab, A & Huo, S (2015), Educational opportunity in Australia 2015: Who succeeds and who misses out, Centre for International Research on Education Systems, Victoria University, for the Mitchell Institute, Melbourne: Mitchell Institute.
- ^{xvi} NCVET (2015) Australian vocational education and training statistics: apprentices and trainees 2015 — annual, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xvii} NCVET (2016) Australian vocational education and training statistics: apprentices and trainees 2016 — June quarter, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xviii} Bednarz, A, (2014) Understanding the non-completion of apprentices, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xix} Smith, E., Walker, A. & Brennan Kemmis, R. (2011) Understanding the psychological contract in apprenticeships and traineeships to improve retention, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xx} Karmel, T., Roberts, D. & Lim, P. (2014) The impact of increasing university participation on the pool of apprentices, LSAY research report no. 67, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xxi} McVicar, D. & Tabasso, D. (2016) The impact of disadvantage on VET completion and employment gaps, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xxii} Griffin, T. & Beddie, F. [eds] (2011), Older workers: research readings, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xxiii} Department of Employment (2016) Employment Outlook to November 2020: Based on the Department of Employment's 2016 employment projections, Australian Government, Canberra.
- ^{xxiv} Pech, J., McNevin, A. & Nelms, L. (2009) Young people with poor labour force attachment: a survey of concepts, data and previous research. Research report no. 11/09. Canberra: Australian Fair Pay Commission.
- ^{xxv} Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2015) Australia's welfare 2015. Australia's welfare no. 12. Cat. no. AUS 189. Canberra: AIHW.
- ^{xxvi} Rowe, F., Corcoran, J. and Bell, M. (2014) Determinants of post-school choices of young people: The workforce, university or vocational studies? prepared for the Department of Planning and Community development, University of Queensland, Brisbane, Australia
- ^{xxvii} NCVET (2013) Youth transitions in Australia: a moving picture, Highlights from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) annual report 2013, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xxviii} NCVET (2014) Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth annual report 2013, NCVET, Adelaide.
- ^{xxix} Clarke, K. (2014) Entry to vocations: building the foundations for successful transitions, NCVET, Adelaide.

Mission Australia helps people regain their independence - by standing together with Australians in need, until they can stand for themselves.

Contact us

For further information please contact our **Research & Evaluation** team on:



02 9219 2022



researchandpolicy@missionaustralia.com.au



missionaustralia.com.au



[@MissionAust](https://twitter.com/MissionAust)



facebook.com/MissionAust