

Submission to the Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper (2023) on behalf of Independent Schools Tasmania

Principles of the Youth Jobs Strategy

Are these principles right or are there other best-practice principles that we should consider in our approach to this Strategy?

The principles are skewed toward that part of the youth cohort that face a range of barriers for a successful transition from school to work and further education and training. Many students, more particularly many from independent schools, enjoy a level of support already that makes this transition a more positive experience. Yet they too experience barriers so the best-practice principles need to include:

1. The provision of much better pathway support services including dedicated officers in schools across all sectors to directly support and provide clear employment and career advice and information.
2. A much greater focus particularly from years 9 and 10 on literacy, numeracy and information and communication technology (digital skills) that directly support modern workplace requirements.
3. Much better access to career planning information and support based on better information about the world of work, the new and emerging skills needs and the importance of school completion.
4. Making Vocational Education and Training (VET) a mandatory component of Years 9-12 education to ensure all students are exposed to real workplaces and authentic work and training experiences.
5. Making exposure to notions of the world of work a part of every child's experience from the beginning of schooling.

Effective Youth Pathways Practice

Do the common elements and phases in the table make sense? Are any one or two more important than others?

Phase 1 - Guidance and Exploration - There is a lot of information, much of it research based, that identifies how young people find out about careers. Parents, significant adults/relatives, peers and the media now provide such information and should be recognized as such.

Career teachers can have an impact if they are properly trained and are genuine about the careers that exist that do not require a university degree. The Years 9-12 project has probably had a major impact on shifting views about VET to a more favourable position.

Some recent examples/case studies demonstrated that a trade apprentice and a university student beginning at the same time saw the apprentice finish 4 years with \$200K earned while the university student has incurred a \$40K debt!

The shift toward more user-friendly online career information - see myfutures growing range of career support materials for example - suggests young people are using this more, particularly that which is interactive.

Phase 2 - Work Preparation - This needs to be addressed earlier in the education cycle in primary school, even earlier with practical information about the world of work, supporting exploration of different types of work and being exposed to real stories and real people talking about work.

There is still a place for Work Experience as part of work preparation though the wide range of models developed from immersion to virtual work experience.

Phase 3 Workplace Opportunities - Business and Industry is becoming far more proactive in engaging with schools as a strategy for recruiting apprentices and trainees in particular in a way never previously experienced. Komatsu Australia runs extensive programs through its STEMPunk robotic design program with year 9 students, extensive school visits to talk up automotive and engineering training possibilities with the country and engaging in wide ranging social media campaigns. Aged Care and Allied Health Care providers (like ANMEC in SA) are developing school-based training programs to recruit future trainees. The key model here is for schools to offer VET programs with a sizeable workplacement component (2-4 weeks not 5 days).

Phase 4 - Post-Placement Support - Any notion of placement be it a Work Experience session or a School-based Apprenticeship model should have a built-in component that leads directly to the student's career information and planning initiatives. This is why a pathway planning approach is so important because it can progressively build an informed knowledge base around career interests and options. It gives students control over their career preferences and a big say in what knowledge, information and skills they need to follow. It should also build in a notion that you are entitled to explore career options and that choices may change over time.

How can government, community, business, schools and industry support better connection and continuity of support across these elements?

The challenges facing young people in making decisions about career aspirations and how they will be achieved is compounded by a fragmented career and work information landscape. There

is a wealth of online information that varies from very informative and engaging to poor and out-of-date. There is also an array of information provided by stakeholders that is often contradictory, difficult to follow, confusing and complex. That is why early decisions about work often come about through family discussions, an interesting television show, the online discussions through social media, and the work-related experiences of siblings.

No mention is made of the impact on career decision making of part-time work yet somewhere between 50%-70% of 15-19 year olds hold part-time jobs. McDonalds, for example, provides very good entry-level training in food-handling, customer service and workplace health and safety, skills which can be transferred to many other settings. For many young people this is their first genuine experience of the world of work.

Running a dedicated VET program in schools can work to bring together the stakeholders whose support is vital. The best VETiS programs will have, amongst other things, a VET Management Committee comprising school, industry, training (RTO) providers, government agencies like employment and apprenticeship support, parent and often student trainee representatives. This is likely to lead to more informed decision making, a far more collaborative approach and greater commitment. It also means new information on policies, funding and regional emerging skills needs can be easily shared.

The pathway from school to ‘whatever comes next’ looks different for everyone – we need a system that recognises and supports diverse experience and need.

What is the one thing that you believe could have the most positive impact on a young person’s transition pathway from school to further study, training or employment?

The opportunity to engage in a quality work-based training experience over a substantial time period is without doubt the single most important experience a young person can have in supporting career-focussed transition. This can include university bound students to disengaged youth, and young people facing mental and physical challenges to refugees.

Examples I have seen directly over 30 years of working in the VETiS space include:

- A year 12 medicine-bound student who was completing 3 VET qualifications as well as the physics, chemistry and maths requirements for medicine talk about how her VET program in hospitality, Christian mission and business would complement a future career in medicine.
- The year 12 independent school student currently completing her commercial helicopter pilots' licence while finishing year 12

- The year 11 student at a regional Victorian Catholic school who went from drop-out to top Certificate III Cookery student on the basis of TAFE and on-the-job experience.
- The female national apprentice of the year who went from university bound to completing a roof plumbing apprenticeship and going on to become a national advocate for women in trades.
- Students in a VET designated agricultural college in WA completing from 4-8 VET qualifications along with their WACE over two years living in and running a \$1.6m cropping, livestock and poultry production operation.
- The young aboriginal students in years 11 and 12 building flat-bottomed boats for taking tourists fishing on the Fitzroy River WA via a Certificate II in Construction.

Young people in our regions don't always have access to the same support, services and options as their metropolitan peers.

How can we improve access to services and support for young people in our regions?

There are many examples of innovative efforts to support young people into employment and training in regional and remote areas. For example:

- Circular Head Christian School based in Smithton TAS provides a complete VET program for all students involving Certificate I - III in Hospitality, Agriculture, IT, Business delivered through a range of RTOs, with enterprise-based training in IT and aquaculture (have held oyster leases in the past), School-based Apprenticeships. Strong business community partnerships, collaboration with other school-VET-TAFE providers and individual training programs built on student interest and aspiration have made this a national training award winner of the School Pathways to VET Award in 2020.
- Group Training Companies can provide direct assistance through recruitment and placement of young apprentices, including School-based Apprenticeships (ASbA), based on good regional skills needs knowledge, excellent business and industry networks and flexibility.
- Brilliant examples of remote communities engaging in training can be seen through programs being run in the remote APY Lands in SA where TAFE SA works with community councils to recruit and train local people (primarily indigenous) to support and maintain local services - like airport, waste water and building maintenance, child care services and the like.
- Jobs Hubs in regional areas are already doing a powerful job as brokers of work and skills needs and opportunities and schools need to take more advantage of their services to support young people, particularly those at risk.

What type of support do our young people outside larger metro areas need to succeed?

- Local schools providing vocational learning and VETiS programs using innovative methods like virtual work experience (now being developed by myfutures); subject-based courses like the Australian Curriculum's vocational course for year 9 students and the range of TASC related VET and VL programs.
- Support for work placement for VET programs for isolated students in urban areas - this needs to be a funded option.
- Support for delivery of RTO training services being delivered in remote and regional areas, including online services.
- Support to attend major Career events like career expos, Try-A-Trade and similar events.

The barriers for young people are complex and can't be resolved in isolation.

How can the service systems better connect and respond to the complex needs of young people?

- Establishing a whole-community response to supporting young people is the best solution, involving local government, local Chamber of Commerce, local education providers, local TAFE outpost, Health and disability support, Jobs Hub.
- The Circular Head region established itself as a 'Learning Community' over 20 years ago which brought these stakeholders together which has culminated in good transition experiences for young people in this region.
- There are many other examples where community wide responses have led to good employment and training support for young people - The Gladstone QLD school-industry collaboration provides a strong example of communities co-ordinating programs to specifically meet the skills needs of the region and head-off fly in-fly out' employment.
- A number of Tasmanian independent schools already provide extensive support for young people who, for a multitude of reasons, experience difficulty in completing schooling, including students with mental health issues, physical and intellectual difficulties, those coming from migrant and refugee families as well as those with LGBTQIA marginalized from full school community experience. The recently established Indie Schools are achieving this through providing a strongly supportive culture, individualized learning programs, strong focus on developing work-ready skills and transition support (including re-entering the main-stream school system).

Some young people, such as those with disability or with caring responsibilities, need additional, targeted support to participate in the workforce.

What would unlock the ability for young Tasmanians with different needs to participate in work, education and training?

- There is at least one independent school, Giant Steps at Deloraine, which is developing a program which will potentially adopt both VETiS and ASbA programs to place students experiencing autism with employers.
- This is a reasonably complex operation and has been strongly and actively supported by IST's VET Consultant providing information on VET requirements as well as industry and NDIS support.
- The funding support to IST by the Tasmanian Government for VETiS and Vocational Learning (VL) has ceased since 2019 and without this the support for schools, like Giant Steps, will be seriously reduced or cease.
- There is significant evidence to show that NDIS is already supporting and funding individual VET students but the services seem buried in mystery, are inconsistent in the interpretation of rules, and can be generally hard to access.
- VET leaders and coordinators in schools need to be familiarized with the NDIS services that are relevant to supporting young people requiring targeted support.

How do young people get into work or training if they can't get to work or training?

What are some innovative approaches to address transport issues for young people that keep safety as the highest priority?

- The previous Driving for Jobs Program had the potential to improve access to training and employment for young people by guiding them through the attainment of a Provisional Driving License while still at school.
- This should be expanded to provide access to independent schools, like the Indie Schools, to driver training particularly for those likely to experience barriers to employment.

Young people don't know what they don't know or what they should know.

Where do young people currently get information from to support them to make decisions or connect to employment and training opportunities?

- There is considerable evidence to suggest that young people obtain information about employment and training leading to future careers from parents, siblings, peers, significant adults and social media - not from Career Advisors or career websites.
- Part-time employment provides direct experience of the world of work for between 50%-70% of young people aged 15-19 (see NCVER research) providing strong work readiness skills and information about career possibilities (not necessarily in the

workplace) - it needs to be recognised for this role and barriers around participation lifted.

- There is evidence that new and more sophisticated online career information services are being used by young people to virtually experience careers and make more informed decisions.
- There remains a strong parent and community-based view that the only valid pathways remain to university - this needs to be addressed more rigorously through career publications and resources and key people dealing with career counselling.
- Young people coming from disadvantaged backgrounds often lack exposure to good employment-based role models, particularly where they are surrounded by unemployed adults.
- Young people marginalised by poverty, disability, gender issues, and ethnicity and race often give up on even trying to get a job long before they leave school - those who succeed often do so via supportive school programs and strong and influential adults in their lives.

What does it take to be 'job-ready'?

- Being motivated to go to work and adopting positive attitudes to employment and the world of work - career motivation is a focus for research currently (see myfuture).
- Having the chance to undertake real workplace experience through work experience or preferable work placement in a VET program.
- Knowledge of the industry and its skills requirements.
- Knowledge of career opportunities and pathways
- Comparative knowledge of VET-based training versus Higher Education.

What can employers do to help build those work-readiness skills? Can you share any examples of best practice?

- Employers are now engaging with schools in an unprecedented way as a strategy for workforce recruitment and meeting their skills needs.
- These are strongest in the traditional trades areas in construction, electrotechnology, plumbing, automotive, metals and engineering, fabrication where the labour market is showing highest demand.
- Employers are also choosing schools to deliver specialist training in, for example, drone pilot training.
- Employers adopt a wide range of methods from traditional career expos to school-industry partnerships that deliver VETiS and ASbA programs and are showing increasing innovation to arouse interest in the industry.

- School-Industry partnerships have already developed extensive programs for engaging with students from offering work-shadowing opportunities, mentoring, site visits, to employment and training offers and support for prize giving and other forms of recognition.
- Employers taking proactive responsibility for the development of ‘job-ready / soft skills’ is essential to the sustained engagement of young people in the workforce. Young people need to be given sufficient and appropriate support and opportunity to practice and develop these skills. Young people often comment they are not given the time or support to develop the skills they need.

Try before you buy

What do (or should) quality work exposure activities look like for young people? What are some examples of this being done well?

- Circular Head Christian School using its Trade Training Centre to deliver industry-standard hospitality through catering for local community functions and events, at one point operating an oyster lease and processing and selling oysters, and continuing to operate an IT support enterprise providing services in particular to local schools and training providers.
- Scotch-Oakburn College providing drone pilot training in association with UVAIR
- TasTAFE delivering automotive training to Scotch Oakburn students as a class on-site at TAFE
- Cluster arrangements like St Patricks College in association with local independent schools to deliver aquaculture, hospitality and other quality programs.
- VETiS programs being delivered by senior secondary colleges like Rosny College with 15 qualifications delivered from Certificate I - IV
- Smaller independent schools taking up ASbAs particularly for young people now required to stay at school or be in training until age 18.
- New approaches to traditional Work Experience are emerging – work exposure, work immersion, virtual work experience, work simulations and competitions like Business Week all can play a significant role in informing younger people.

A first job might only be the first step – young people need ongoing support and opportunities for continuous learning and development to maintain decent, meaningful work.

How do we balance and support work and learning for young people?

- There is an increasing focus on providing young people with transferable skills that can be used in new work settings as they migrate through 4 or 5 careers across a lifetime.

- For example, a young person whose first experience of work might be at McDonalds can use the basic customer service skills acquired in a range of settings and workplaces involving social interaction, decision-making, leadership and management.
- Allowing VETiS programs to provide career exploration opportunities - Completing a Certificate 1 in Hospitality might confirm that this is not the best career choice but still provides exposure to workplace culture.
- Make sure young people are grounded in the employability skills - communication, team work, problem solving, initiative etc before seeking employment.
- Ensure induction programs are in place with employers when young people undertake a work placement, begin an ASbA or apprenticeship or start a job.
- Establish mechanisms to keep track of young people's progress beyond school particularly those going directly into employment or via a VET/TAFE program.

Industry and employers want young people to be part of their workforce – but they need help to make the connection.

How could your business or industry be better supported to provide opportunities for young people?

- Establish school-industry partnerships that actively involve industry, training, government and community support stakeholders in all aspects of school-to-work programs.
- Brooks High School at one stage had an extensive partnership with a local engineering firm (which no longer exists - ACL Bearings) where a whole range of work-related activities took place from industry visits, adopt-a-class, work placement, apprenticeship recruitment and celebratory events (like prize nights) occurred.
- Gladstone QLD and Kwinana WA have well established industry-driven VETiS programs in place where they frequently provide industry space for VET-related activities.
- Many national TAFE providers actively sponsor VETiS and ASbA's hosting onsite delivery and on-the-job training and engaging with ASbA programs as the RTO.
- Group Training Organisations have also worked with schools Australia wide in supporting ASbA programs and ensuring effective transition from school to work.
- Even industries like automotive sales and service providers are working with schools to engage potential trainees and apprentices for future employment.
- Having available personnel to talk potential school-industry partners through the process of setting this up and providing ongoing support and information - a role like the current VET Consultant provides for independent Tasmanian schools.

What information or resources are needed to make Tasmania's training system more accessible and streamlined?

- For many young people the training system remains something of a mystery, something that is not always addressed through the final years of schooling in any systematic way which partly explains why university remains the default option for further study.
- The Years 9-12 Project with a major focus on career education has supported the training of career educators across the government schools and colleges extending reduced cost offerings to independent and catholic schools. This needs to be supported so that all schools across all sectors with year 9-12 programs have at least one dedicated and qualified Careers teacher with a Graduate Certificate in Career Education.
- Independent schools need support in accessing RTO services - other states provide their own RTO, Tasmania Government schools and colleges have their own RTO and Catholic Education has its Trade Training Centre functioning as an RTO for schools.
- Independent schools need support in upskilling staff to Certificate IV in Training and Assessment to allow them to better deliver training services on site - currently these cost around \$4k for local provider NDA to \$1500-\$2500 for inferior online TAE training.
- The Jobs Hubs have had a serious impact on linking employment opportunities and skills needs with real people in regional and urban settings. I have seen this firsthand as an Advisory Board member of the Southcentral Workforce Network and if resourced properly could make a major impact as employment and training brokers for particular areas where skills are needed but where engagement has not been good.
- Making TasTAFE more affordable and accessible for VETiS programs is essential - student knowledge and awareness of TAFE opportunities have never been great.
- The Years 9-12 Project, commenced under the former Department of Education, was an attempt to rethink the options and methods by which young people are prepared for the workforce whilst still engaged in the schooling system. Keeping young people engaged in learning is crucial to their long-term prospects. To do this requires continued work and reimagining to ensure education and training remains relevant and accessible to all young Tasmanians

Is there anything else that you would like to share with us?

Feel free to share anything else

There are two critical elements necessary to substantially improve student school-to-work transition:

- Strong VET VL presence in schools with strong and visible VET programs and visible leaders and VET champions, in particular, at least one VET VL Careers Co-Ordinator to ensure a single, informed voice is established.
- Strong, identifiable and stable agency voices who are informed of policy, implementation strategies and real Tasmanian skills needs.
- The need for a strong, identifiable voice representing the VET VL Career programs and their needs in independent and catholic schools is just as apparent and should be supported as a matter of course.
- Tasmanian independent schools are making steady progress toward establish VET VL and Career programs in their schools well supported by information on policy, best-practice and evidence of how successful school-to-work transition can be achieved.
- However, it needs direct funding support in maintaining Independent Schools Tasmania's role in nurturing, informing, and providing necessary professional learning opportunities to schools to continue.

Youth Jobs Strategy Discussion Paper available at www.youthjobsstrategy.tas.gov.au

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