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**DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION, EMPLOYMENT AND  
WORKPLACE RELATIONS**

**Unfolding opportunities: a baseline study  
of school-business relationships in  
Australia**

***Final Report***

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## *Abbreviations and acronyms*

ATTP	Accelerated Teacher Training Program
ABCN	Australian Business Community Network
ABW	Australian Business Week
ACCI	Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
ACER	Australian Council for Educational Research
AIG	Australian Industry Group
ASX	Australian Stock Exchange
ASTF	Australian Student Traineeship Foundation
BSL	Brotherhood of St Laurence
BCA	Business Council of Australia
CCC	Center for Corporate Citizenship
CCIQ	Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Queensland
CTEC	Coalfields Training Excellence Centre
COSBOA	Council of Small Business of Australia
DTLAB	Dare to Lead for Business
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development – Victoria
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
EST	Emergency Services Training
ECEF	Enterprise and Career Education Foundation
GOALS	Growing Opportunities and Learning Skills
HWM	Headspace Western Melbourne
LOTE	Language other than English
LEEP	Leading Enterprise Education Partnership
LCPs	Local Community Partnerships

LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
NICS	National Industry Career Specialists
NACYS	Northern Areas Community and Youth Services Inc
RICAs	Regional Industry Career Advisers
SFYS	School Focused Youth Service
SCIPS	Supporting Children in Primary Schools
TIPS	Teacher Industry Placement Scheme
TRIP	Teacher Release to Industry Program
VMC	Victor Medical Centre
WEP	Work Experience Program

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## Executive summary

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School business relationships have the potential to make a valuable contribution to the educational outcomes for students in schools across Australia. The baseline of evidence compiled in this report indicates that school-business relationships are already enhancing educational programs in many settings across Australia. However, it is also apparent that there is considerable variation in the types of relationships, the depth of activity, and the extent to which schools are able to become involved.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) engaged PhillipsKPA to examine the nature and extent of existing school business relationships currently operating in Australia, and to provide a baseline of activities for future monitoring and trend analysis. The scoping study was conducted from May 2009 – February 2010. The project was completed with three key elements to the methodology:

- A review of national and international literature;
- Stakeholder consultations to scope the nature of activity and gather inputs into the design and coverage of the project survey; and
- An online survey of over 500 schools and 200 businesses throughout Australia.

Internationally, there is growing recognition among schools that they can address the many and complex needs of their students more effectively with support from a wide range of partnership arrangements, including those with businesses. This is particularly the case for schools with significant numbers of students from disadvantaged backgrounds. There is also a strong trend towards business taking a broader view of its potential contribution to schools and their students beyond the traditional activities concerned with improving student employability and providing corporate sponsorship of school activities.

The findings from the consultations and surveys suggest that Australian school-business relationships are generally less complex or as deeply interwoven with core functions in schools as those evident for some time in countries such as the United States, Canada and the United Kingdom. However, it is clear that many schools and businesses in Australia have established relationships of some kind, and that there is substantial breadth and depth in the reported activities. Relationships with business are found in all types of schools, although secondary schools clearly dominate. The businesses cover a diverse range of industries: some of the most active and substantial are from the manufacturing, mining and health and community sectors.

Across the sample of schools surveyed in this project, the forms of relationship most commonly found are those centred on:

- Supporting 'school to work' programs and activities;

- Providing additional infrastructure, resources and income streams;
- Enhancing school leadership and staff development;
- Enhancing student engagement with industry and business; and,
- Supporting student aspirations and achievement.

There are notable differences in the nature and extent of school-business relationships across the schools. Secondary schools are engaged in a more comprehensive suite of activities than primary schools. These largely involve business in activity to support student transitions from school to work. However, a closer analysis of projects and programs also shows a trend towards more businesses providing significant resources to support the design and delivery of literacy and numeracy programs, at both primary and secondary school levels.

From the perspective of the schools surveyed, the major benefits of the relationships cover a wide range of outcomes for the students, schools and teachers, in particular:

- Enhanced career aspirations, work readiness, and skills development for students;
- Increased resources and funding to enhance school facilities;
- Benefits from business expertise in leadership and strategic management;
- New and distinctive opportunities for staff development; and,
- Systematic and collaborative efforts across whole communities to improve opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds.

Some of the key benefits from the perspective of the businesses surveyed include:

- Contributing more broadly to the development of young people in the national interest;
- Enhancing the reputation of the business by engaging in community capacity building – especially in areas of disadvantage;
- Providing business with the opportunity to recruit and develop potential employees; and
- Improving worker morale and the community profile of the business, particularly through volunteer activity in schools.

Promotion and brand exposure is also regarded as a benefit by the businesses. However, amongst those surveyed, it is generally considered of relatively minor importance. This is confirmed by the schools: for the most part they saw the promotion of business, through signage and other profile raising activities, as secondary benefits.

There are major differences between those schools that describe their relationships with business as significant – defined as a ‘sustained investment of time and resources – and those that do not. About one-third of the schools surveyed considered they had significant relationships with business. These relationships



generally result in more in-kind learning resources from business, higher levels of volunteer activity, greater infrastructure support and enhancement of school facilities.

There are some major gaps in the level of activity in some schools despite their clear interest in developing relationships with business. Most activity occurs in secondary schools located in metropolitan areas. The businesses involved in these instances were generally large and connected with only one or two schools. Many of the schools surveyed from regional and remote locations are keen to develop relationships with business. Aside from those located in resource rich areas that attract mining, energy companies and allied industries, schools in regional and remote areas do not have a sufficient critical mass of industry to call on for support. Similarly, though less obvious, some schools in metropolitan areas such as dormitory suburbs reported a lack of opportunity to engage with business at the local level.

External brokering organisations can play a pivotal role in the formation of such relationships and there was evidence of a growing influence of their role, particularly in facilitating business connections with schools. Government funded bodies (both National and State) generally provide supporting infrastructure largely focused on school to work activity but, in the case of the recently established School Business Community Partnership Brokers, these roles extend into capacity building to foster strategic and sustainable partnerships between key stakeholders. In other instances, brokers from not for profit organisations, such as the Australian Business Community Network or the Beacon Foundation, or corporate sponsored programs such as the NAB Schools First program, enable schools and businesses to work together to achieve mutually beneficial outcomes.

Two distinct conclusions arise from the baseline study. Firstly, school-business relationships have multiple and overlapping purposes and objectives. The interaction of a number of activities leads to a range of other activities that may not have been envisaged when the relationship was established. This suggests that policy should recognise, and indeed foster, the diverse forms of relationships based within a framework of core criteria for success. Secondly, the analysis of successful school-business relationships from this report, as well as from international evidence, makes it clear that the relationships should be of mutual benefit. The relationships should reflect and support the core values of schools and at the same time respond to the increasing desire of business to play a greater role in public education for the broader good.

Relationships with businesses do not of themselves undermine the core values and operations of schools. The potential benefits of effective school-business relationships far outweigh any threats to educational values and outcomes. The challenge centres on establishing the appropriate policy context to enable 'considered and collaborative' school-business relationships to develop and flourish.

# 1 Introduction

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## 1.1 *Context*

School-business relationships exist across a range of settings and for multiple purposes. In the last 30 years, one of the most significant drivers of school-business relationships has related to supporting student transition to post school destinations – either through direct pathways into employment or through additional training or education pathways to facilitate a career trajectory.

It is within this context that the project has been established. Although it may be noted that the project has examined the broad spectrum of school-business relationships which currently exist in Australia, it is nevertheless important to highlight that the project has operated within the same timeframe of significant reforms in the infrastructure which supports school-business relationships, most notably in the area of school to work.

### 1.1.1 **Partnership brokers**

In April 2009, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recognised the need to support young people to improve their employment and career prospects. The Australian, State and Territory Governments agreed to a Compact with Young Australians to support them to stay in, or return to, an education or training pathway.

The Compact is now supported by all Governments in the form of a National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions. As of 1 January 2010, existing youth, transitions and career programs have been consolidated into two new programs: School Business Community Partnership Brokers (Partnership Brokers), and Youth Connections.

Under the new arrangements, partnership brokers will aim to create and improve partnerships between community, business and industry, and schools. Their primary objectives are to extend learning beyond the classroom, increase student engagement, lift attainment and improve educational outcomes.

To achieve national coverage, 114 Youth Attainment and Transitions Service Regions (Service Regions) have been established. It is important to note that there are different requirements for Partnership Brokers in each State and Territory to ensure that their operation remains complementary to the transition support arrangements which may exist in each jurisdiction.

## 1.2 *Purpose and scope of the project*

This project has its origins in the 2020 Summit held in Canberra in May 2008. One of the outputs of the summit was a proposal for a coordinated partnership program between schools and business, specifically targeting the top 200 Australian Stock Exchange (ASX) companies for increased involvement in education.

While it is generally recognised that the last decade has seen substantial growth in school relationships with business entities, there is limited systematic information about the nature and extent of these activities, the factors that motivate schools and business to form and sustain relationships, the means by which such relationships are established, and the benefits that accrue to both schools and business.

The Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) engaged PhillipsKPA to draw together a body of baseline evidence to provide an overview of the current nature and extent of school-business relationships across Australia. The purpose of the research project is to inform policy development by:

- Establishing baseline evidence on:
  - current school-business relationships across Australia;
  - the supporting infrastructure for school-business relationships – policies, programs and tools;
- Developing a measure of ‘success’ for school-business relationships; and
- Undertaking a gap analysis to identify potential areas for further development.

In the context of the global financial crisis, and consequent pressures on business, it was considered important to explore how this might impact on the capacity or willingness of businesses to invest in relationships with schools.

This report examines the nature and extent of existing relationships referenced against an analytical framework which has evolved from a detailed analysis of relevant Australian and international literature. There appears to be very little independent scholarly research directly on the subject of school-business relationships. The area has not attracted substantial interest from Australian educational and policy researchers, even in recent times. Most of the research cited in this report, including that conducted for the various national bodies, leans towards interviews and focus groups with a heavy reliance on surveys of opinion, reports of current practice, and self-reported evaluations. While many of these are very useful, in some instances, there is little indication of the nature of the research undertaken or the sources of data, and it is not uncommon for reports to refer to research without attribution.

While it covers a substantial and generally representative sample of schools, the report does not provide a comprehensive audit of school-business relationships across Australia. Indeed, one of the key findings arising from the project, most particularly the consultations, is that there is considerable diversity in the nature, extent, and importance attached to school-business relationships – from minimal ‘transaction’ based interactions between some schools and businesses to multiple layers of activity arising from significant relationships with businesses.

The report also provides an account of school-business relationships from the perspective of a sample of businesses surveyed. While these 66 businesses are not necessarily representative of all businesses, the high level of consistency in

responses on many issues provides a strong indication of the preferred activities, motives and outlooks of the business sector.

### **1.2.1 A note on key terms**

In both the national and international literature, the term ‘partnerships’ is the most commonly used term to describe a range of relationships involving schools and business. It is generally understood that the term ‘partnership’ implies a higher order and more formal relationship between a school and a business. For the purposes of this project, and for the survey in particular, it was critical to ensure that the participating schools reported the many possible forms of relationship, and that none were excluded on the grounds that the relationships were not formally recognised as partnerships.

The recent ‘Partnership Brokers’ policy initiatives underscore the importance of distinguishing the many layers of school-business interactions from those specifically targeted by the National Partnership.

In this report, we generally use the term ‘relationship’ and confine our use of ‘partnership’ to formalised relationships or where we refer to or quote from the literature on policy and development.

## **1.3 Report overview**

The remainder of this report features a detailed overview of the findings arising from the national survey of schools and businesses. Where relevant, the commentary on the survey findings is augmented by insights derived from the literature review and the consultations.

Key sections of the report include:

- An outline of the project design which incorporates the following elements - a review of national and international literature, stakeholder consultations and a national survey of schools and businesses;
- A brief overview of the national and international trends emerging from the literature review;
- A summary of the perspectives of business representatives including a profile of the businesses that responded to the survey, an outline of the activities featured in the relationships with schools and discussion of the challenges and opportunities which have emerged from the relationships;
- An overview of the nature and extent of school-business relationships encompassing key statistic related to the characteristics of school business relationships, an outline of the reported experience of schools in rural and remote settings and further discussion of issues and opportunities arising from relationships from the perspective of school;
- Commentary on the features of significant school-business relationships;

- Commentary on the elements of successful relationships including the role of supporting infrastructure;
- Gap analysis, particularly in relation to location issues, experience of primary schools and a range of other gaps as identified through the project survey and stakeholder consultations; and
- Concluding remarks which include consideration of the implications of the project findings.

Appendices to the report include a list of references identified in the body of the report and a list of organisations consulted during the course of the project. A separate set of documentation features the comprehensive review of relevant national and international literature, selected tables presenting key data arising from the survey analysis and examples of school business relationships which were identified by stakeholders through the consultations as detailed below.

Appendix one	References
Appendix two	Stakeholder organisations consulted
Appendix three	Literature review
Appendix four	Business survey
Appendix five	Schools' survey
Appendix six	Examples of school business relationships

## **2 Project design**

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The project brief specified that research should cover the perspectives of schools, businesses (small, medium and large), and other stakeholders, such as education departments, brokerage networks, intermediary organisations and peak education and industry bodies.

To achieve this outcome, the brief further specified that a mix of quantitative and qualitative methodologies would be required, including (but not limited to):

- A review of Australian and international literature;
- A representative survey of government, non-government and independent primary and secondary schools in Australia; and
- A representative survey of Australian businesses.

The brief expected a methodology to deliver a baseline of evidence on extent and outcomes, against which the impact of any future initiatives may be evaluated. The text which follows provides a summary of the project design agreed with DEEWR.

### **2.1.1 Literature review**

The focus of the literature centred on examining materials from both Australian and international sources, particularly from the United States, Canada, the United Kingdom and New Zealand. The review was focused on:

- Scoping the nature and extent of school-business relationships;
- Informing the development of a framework for survey design and analysis;
- Identifying examples of international practice, including government policies, effective practices and evidence of program outcomes; and
- Providing contextual information for the discussion in this project report and the overall conclusions.

We have drawn selectively from the literature to provide contextual information in this report. The complete text of the literature review and full bibliography, inclusive of website resources, is included as Appendix 3.

### **2.1.2 Consultations**

PhillipsKPA completed consultations with more than 70 representatives of education authorities, representative bodies such as the Association of Independent Schools, principals' associations, the Business Council of Australia (BCA), the Australian Industry Group (AIG), the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) and its affiliate organisations and the Council of Small Business of Australia (COSBOA).

The consultations were completed with a threefold purpose:

- Gathering insights additional to the literature review into the nature and extent of existing school-business relationships;
- Specifically exploring the features of supporting infrastructure which has been developed to guide school-business relationships; and
- Gaining support for the implementation of the project survey, both in terms of advocacy to constituent elements but also to seek assistance with contact details to enable samples of schools and businesses to be achieved.

The consultations focused on peak bodies at a national level and authorities and organisations within the following jurisdictions as being representative of a national perspective: Western Australia, Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and the ACT.

A complete list of organisations consulted is included at Appendix 2.

### **2.1.3 Survey design**

Drawing on the insights gained through the literature review and consultations, two online survey instruments were developed to gather perspectives from schools and businesses about the nature and extent of school-business relationships, supporting infrastructure and the features of significant relationships that may exist between businesses and schools.

The primary objective of the surveys was to develop a body of baseline data on the current nature and extent of school-business relationships across Australia. The survey items were designed to collect a mix of factual information about the relationships, as well as the perspectives, of key stakeholders on a range of issues.

The framework for the survey design and item formulation was developed from the review of literature and the initial consultations. It was refined in consultation with DEEWR. The main themes of the framework that evolved through the discussions, and were reflected in the survey design, were:

- Transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students;
- Enhancing school leadership and staff development;
- Supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas);
- Providing additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools; and
- Enhancing student engagement with industry-business.

The major areas of data gathering for the surveys concerned:

- Organisation profiles;
- Origins and focus of relationships and partnerships;

- Current forms of relationships;
- Future plans and prospects;
- Impact and benefits; and
- Opportunities and obstacles.

Final versions of the two survey instruments are included at Appendix 4 and 5.

#### **2.1.4 Survey of schools: sampling, distribution and response rates**

A representative sample of 511 schools (based on State/Territory, geographical location, school sector, school type, and school size) was drawn with the help of DEEWR's Data Service Unit.

The core sample of 511 schools mirrored the proportional characteristics of school education in Australia with one exception. This exception is based on the knowledge arising from the consultations – indicating the propensity for relationships with industry to be concentrated in secondary schools. The sample was therefore, slightly biased towards secondary schools to the extent that the proportion of primary schools was 39 per cent against secondary schools (including senior secondary and Australian Technical Colleges) with 38 per cent, and the remainder being K-12 schools and schools in special settings.

Prior to the launch of the school survey, the survey link was sent to 27 pilot schools to gather input into the clarity of instructions, functionality of the survey instrument, and ease of navigation.

The survey was completed by: Principals and Assistant Principals (78 per cent); Business and other Managers (8 per cent); and Pathways Coordinators and a range of other staff (14 per cent).

To improve the overall coverage of schools actively involved with business and industry, it was decided to include an additional 200 schools with known formal relationships nominated through the consultations. This expanded the sample to a total of 711 schools (inclusive of pilot schools). Valid responses were received from 203 schools providing a response rate of 29 per cent.

Within this overall coverage, 145 responses were received from the sample schools. Although this equates to a response rate of only 28 per cent, confidence in the analysis is assured through the close correlation achieved between the characteristics of the stratified sample and the characteristics of the schools that completed the survey. The exception to this conclusion centres on an over representation of schools in non metropolitan settings (regional and remote), and the potential for bias is therefore taken into account in our analysis.

#### ***Characteristics of nominated and sample schools***

Nominated schools comprised 58 of the 203 schools in the data set; that is, 29 per cent of those providing valid responses. The inclusion of the 58 nominated schools raised the question as to whether there were any noteworthy differences between



their survey responses and those of the 145 sample schools. The simple answer was yes. Although the response rates of sample schools and nominated were similar (28 per cent and 29 per cent respectively), there were major differences in their profiles as follows:

- The nominated schools were concentrated in Victoria and Western Australia (79 per cent), whereas the sample schools were spread more evenly across the States with 40 per cent from Victoria and Western Australia.
- The nominated schools were largely secondary/K-12 (83 per cent) with only a few primary schools (16 per cent). In contrast, the sample schools were more balanced with 58 per cent secondary/K-12 schools and 40 per cent primary schools.
- Sixty-two per cent of the nominated responding schools had enrolments of more than 500 students, whereas 51 per cent of sample schools had enrolments of less than 300 students.
- Sixty per cent of nominated schools were government sector compared with 37 per cent of the sample schools.
- Fifty-two per cent of nominated schools had significant relationships with business compared with half as many (25 per cent) among the sample schools.
- It is noteworthy that, while 53 per cent of the nominated schools rated the current significant relationship as 'highly successful', 69 per cent of the sample schools also rated their relationship as 'highly successful'.

These differences were amplified in a number of key areas. For example, 91 per cent of the nominated schools were involved in programs supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas), a much higher proportion than the sample schools (72 per cent). Likewise, higher proportions of nominated schools were involved with business in enhancing student engagement with industry/business (90 per cent) as against the sample schools (75 per cent).

The discussions and conclusions that follow take the impact of this bias in the data set towards large government secondary schools into account. Our observations and conclusions are qualified as appropriate.

### **2.1.5 Survey of business: sampling, distribution and response rates**

A similar exercise was completed for the business survey with the instrument tested by representatives of NAB and AIG.

A link to the online survey was sent to approximately 200 businesses. Prior to the launch of the business survey, a link to the business survey was provided to three organisations that volunteered to review the items and assess the overall appropriateness and functionality of the survey instrument. The three organisations, NAB, the AIG and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry,

Queensland (CCIQ), provided valuable insights into fine tuning the survey instrument and gave assurance to the estimated 20 minute timeframe for completing the survey.

The sample of 200 businesses was achieved through a two-step process:

- The identification of a small number of businesses with known relationships with schools as identified through the scoping consultations; and
- The assistance of the Australian Business Community Network (ABCN) and industry representative bodies such as: the Business Council of Australia, AIG, affiliates of the ACCL, most particularly the Victorian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the New South Wales Business Chamber, the Tasmanian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, Business South Australia, Chamber of Commerce and Industry Western Australia, the Chamber of Commerce Northern Territory and to ensure that the sample included representation from small business, the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia.

Within the second process, representative organisations were requested to ensure that a range of industries was represented within the sample as well as businesses located in metropolitan, regional and rural settings.

The breakdown of businesses within the sample by States and Territories is as follows:

New South Wales	64
Victoria	52
Queensland	40
South Australia	15
Western Australia	21
Tasmania	4
Northern Territory	3
Australian Capital Territory	3
<b>Total</b>	<b>202</b>

Wherever the businesses were currently involved in significant school-business relationships, the respondents were requested to describe up to three significant relationships in detail.

The survey remained live from 19 October to 13 November 2009.

More than half (60 per cent) of the individuals completing the survey were managers, mainly in the areas of Human Resource and Community Programs. Thirty-one per cent were Departmental Heads, Managing Directors, and Chief Executives of the company and nine per cent identified themselves as administration and other staff.

Of the 202 businesses invited to participate, valid responses were received from 66 businesses – a response rate of 33 per cent. The number of responses to individual

survey items varied considerably. As a result, where the rate of response was low, the analysis was presented in raw numbers with percentages only being used in instances where higher rates of response enable valid comparisons to be made.

## 3 National and international developments

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The literature review (Appendix 3) provides an overview of the origins and trends in school-business relationships from the United States, the United Kingdom and Canada. In this chapter, we summarise this diverse and increasingly complex range of contexts, motives and objectives of stakeholders as the backdrop to current forms of school-business relationships in Australia and recent policy developments. As we noted in the introduction, the international literature commonly uses the term ‘partnerships’ and we follow that usage in this section.

### 3.1 *United States*

In 1992, more than 200,000 businesses in the United States had partnerships with over 40,000 elementary and secondary schools. These relationships had emerged as a response to the growing realisation that increasing demands on schools to do more to prepare students for the world of work could not be met by schools acting alone. Most school-business partnerships in the United States were at that time characterised essentially as one of two types:

- **Focus on employability and career awareness.** Partnerships focusing on students as future workers and covering a wide spectrum of activities such as mentoring and workplace learning.
- **Focus on corporate sponsorship.** Known more commonly in the United States from the 1990s as ‘adopt-a-school’ programs, these partnerships typically focused on the student as a consumer. They involved commercial activities that provided schools with money, goods or services in exchange for the opportunity to advertise or sell products to students and their families. (ERIC 2001, p. 6)

Schools were aware that they could not meet growing challenges on many fronts with their limited and declining resources. They turned to businesses for resources; ‘from cash and computers, to educational materials and career mentorships’. In return, businesses received direct commercial benefits such as vending machine rights and advertising space. They also saw mutual advantages in creating skilled labour resources (ERIC 2001, p. 5).

By 2000, United States corporate involvement in schools had expanded at a ‘phenomenal rate’ with an estimated 95 per cent of schools involved in some kind of partnership or activity with business and 43 per cent engaged in joint activities with corporate foundations (CCSP 2001). However, the arrangements were increasingly complex and raised significant management issues:

*Schools need the outside to get the job done. These external forces, however, do not come in helpful packages; they are an amalgam of complex and uncoordinated phenomena. The work of the school is to figure out how to make its relationship with them a productive one’. (Fullan 2000, p. 20 in Black 2008)*

In the last few years, partnerships have attracted intensified interest as governments and corporations have grappled with global challenges and the perceived declining profile and performance of the United States:

*The idea of business-school relationships is not new. However, the confluence of several powerful currents – corporate advocacy on education policy, cash-strapped public schools, privatization of public schools, and the pervasiveness of marketing geared toward young children – has made it a hot-button issue. (Werstein Hann 2008)*

To this can be added other pressures commonly identified in policy documents such as global competition for skilled labour and the need to improve national productivity. A 2007 Ernst & Young 'White Paper' describes the situation as 'challenging', drawing attention to the United States ranking 24<sup>th</sup> out of 29 in mathematics scores among developed countries, and noting that 30 per cent of students do not finish high school – higher in the case of minority students. In 2007, the US Chamber of Commerce called for action: 'America is at risk of being left behind if it doesn't improve its education system. There are warning signs everywhere...' (Ernst & Young 2007, p. 2).

The new forms of partnerships emerging in the United States were extremely diverse in form and scope covering almost every kind of activity concerned with social and economic improvement and community development. A key difference with the other Anglophone countries is that: 'In the US, the trend in government approach to not-for-profits has been to encourage social enterprise and innovation but with little direct intervention by the state' (CCPA 2008, p. 14).

### **3.2 United Kingdom**

Early initiatives in school-business partnerships in the United Kingdom were not sustained in the same ways as in the United States. For example, one study in Scotland reported that, despite an 'enormous amount of time, money, and energy' spent on developing education-business links in the 1980s, the initiatives were ultimately high profile but short-term (Turner 1994). One of a number of patterns of partnership development observed from the mid-1970s, when these schemes first burgeoned, was that cycles of economic optimism and pessimism influence policy and lead to either long-term or short-term reforms. It was argued that education-business links have greater impact when they are part of long-term reforms.

Caldwell (2007) reported that England has advanced considerably in comparison to Australia in terms of business partnerships in education. In England, business partnerships with schools in conjunction with government funding, enabled 2,700 state secondary schools to change from standard comprehensive schools to a specialist schools model. In Caldwell's view:

*...there is clear evidence that specialist schools outperform non-specialist schools and the impact becomes stronger the longer a school remains in the program. This is one of the most significant developments in secondary education in any country (Caldwell 2007, p. 1).*

### 3.3 *Canada*

In the late 1990s, partnerships between the business and education sectors were a growing phenomenon in Canada. The contributing factors for the dramatic increase included the continuing decline in government funding for education, and a contention that schools should focus on preparing students for the world of work. The Conference Board of Canada estimated then that there were as many as 15,000 to 20,000 such initiatives and that provincial and territorial governments made partnerships a priority.

Canadian partnerships took on diverse forms, from school-to-work programs to private companies running schools on a for-profit basis.

Notwithstanding the early involvement and debate reported above, the level of activities and research in Canada appeared at the time as somewhat limited at a national level. A key sponsor of business-education partnerships was the Conference Board of Canada, an independent, not-for-profit applied research organisation. It aimed broadly to build national leadership capacity by creating and sharing insights on economic trends, public policy and organisational performance.

In 1990, the Conference Board of Canada established the National Business and Education Centre, now known simply as Education and Learning. Education and Learning expanded its focus to cover the full range of education and learning that affects individuals and organisations in Canada. The website notes that the Education and Learning group has grown to include strategic research in public education, employability skills, innovation through learning and workplace learning outcomes. The Board has worked with the Business-Education Partnerships Forum to provide guidelines identifying the benefits of employee involvement in partnerships. The guidelines also include a matrix identifying the kinds of skills developed by a partnership activity as well as operating principles for business-education partnerships.

### 3.4 *Australia*

The relationship between schools and the business sector in Australia has until recently been somewhat narrow. Exceptions have centred on major companies providing curriculum resources and kits for schools, providing opportunities for students to undertake excursions into industry and schools tapping into local business predominately to support fundraising activities. Moreover, while some schools, particularly high profile independent schools, have long been the beneficiaries of more substantial relationships through private bequests, in many other instances, it is voluntary community services organisations that have the longest history of established partnership and support arrangements with schools.

The emergence of the business sector in the formation of broader relationships with schools has been a more recent phenomenon. Its development has been fostered by the convergence of four trends:

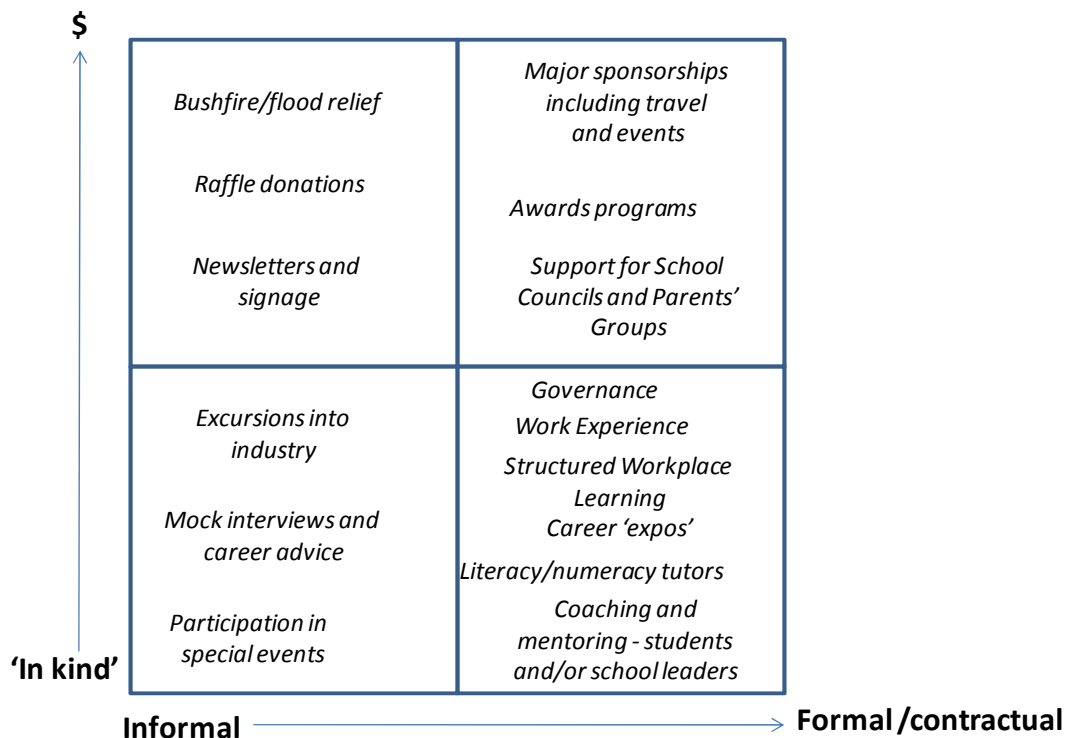
- Increasing sophistication in marketing in businesses. The full spectrum of activity is brought into play to expose new products to key market

segments, from philanthropy to ‘product placement’ through donations or discounted sales;

- The rapidly increasing infrastructure and operating costs of education, often beyond the level of resourcing provided by governments, to meet rising community expectations of schools. This is combined with the emergence of schooling as its own market place where individual schools increasingly seek to establish a competitive edge over other schools;
- The emergence of school based management as a structural form of systemic organisation now gives greater autonomy at the local level and therefore provides fertile ground for business relationships to be formed out of mutual interest; and
- The school-work reform agenda which has been driven by a number of emerging trends, most particularly the need to address skill shortages and the desire to enhance Australia’s international competitiveness.

Figure 1 provides a diagrammatical representation of the depth and breadth of school-business relationships in recent years. It shows four quadrants that characterise the forms of school-business relationships in Australia. The figure indicates financial inputs on one scale, from in-kind support to donations and direct funding, and the level to which relationships are formalised on the other scale. Figure 1 also reflects the emergence of activity related to supporting students’ transitions from school to work which has become a key driver of school-business relationships over the last 20 years.

**Figure 1: School-business relationships in Australia**



## 4 Business activities and perspectives

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Although the business survey did not provide the same level of response as that received from schools, the responses that were received nevertheless provided a useful overview of the nature and extent of relationships from a business perspective. This chapter therefore provides an overview of the findings arising from the business survey analysis as a precursor to the more detailed analysis of the perspectives sourced from schools which are outlined in Chapters 5, 6 and 7.

### 4.1 Profile of the businesses

As we noted in Chapter 2, the 66 respondents worked with schools in a variety of ways in both formal and informal or ad hoc programs. The responses of the 31 of the 66 businesses in the data set that currently have significant relationships with one or more schools were particularly relevant.

More than half (37) of the data set are large businesses with 200 or more employees, 19 were medium size businesses with 20-199 employees, and only five were small businesses. Likewise, the data set is biased towards international and national companies with only seven local businesses in the respondent sample.

Businesses operating internationally made up 41 per cent of all responses, followed by those working at the national level (27 per cent). A small percentage (21 per cent) of the business respondents had their operation area limited to one or more regions and only 11 per cent of participating businesses were local.

The businesses were distributed across a variety of industries, with no particular group dominating. They included: manufacturing (17 per cent); mining (11 per cent); health and community services (11 per cent); property and business services (8 per cent); transport and storage (8 per cent); and finance and insurance (8 per cent). However, when contrasted with the proportional mix of Australian businesses as a whole, manufacturing, mining and health and community services were clearly over represented in the proportion of respondents and property. This information is shown in Table 4.1 which also indicates that the level of response from the area of property and business services was under-represented in the survey responses.

**Table 4.1: Business respondents by industry**

Industry	Survey respondents %	Australian businesses (2007)
Manufacturing	17%	5%
Mining	11%	0.4%
Health & Community Services	11%	5%
Transport & Storage	9%	6%
Property and Business Services	8%	25%
Finance and Insurance	8%	7%



Industry	Survey respondents %	Australian businesses (2007)
Communication Services	6%	1%
Construction	6%	16%
Electricity, Gas, & Water Supply	4%	0.1%
Banking & Other Services	4%	3%
Retail Trade	4%	11%
Accommodation, Cafes, Restaurants	3%	3%
Agriculture, Forestry & Fishing	3%	11%
Government/Education	3%	1%
Cultural and recreational services	3%	2%
Wholesale Trade	0%	4%
<b>Total</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>100%</b>

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics, *Count of Australian Businesses, 2003-2007*. Cat. No. 8165.0

## 4.2 *Business activities with schools*

The 31 businesses involved in significant relationships with schools were generally:

- Mostly large organisations;
- Spread across a range of industries;
- Involved with just one or two schools;
- Working with large government secondary schools from metropolitan areas; or
- Not engaged with primary schools.

About half of these 31 relationships have been in place for between 1-4 years and slightly more than half were of a formal or contractual nature. Only one in this group was formalised through a broker.

### 4.2.1 Major activities and programs of business

In this section, we provide an overview of the major activities of all the businesses that responded to the survey, whether the relationships are significant or ad hoc. These are outlined in Table 4.2. As with schools, the survey on activities provided the opportunity for multiple responses.

Almost all of the 66 businesses were involved in programs concerned with transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students. In addition, a clear majority of the businesses, more than 70 per cent, were involved in each of the other activities with the exception of school leadership and development, which was included by 58 per cent of the group. Notwithstanding the small size of the business sample, it is worth noting that this is a point of difference in focus with the school profile in Table 5.1, where 83 per cent of schools were involved with business in staff development activities.

**Table 4.2: Business: current forms of relationships with schools**

Activities / programs	N=66	%
Transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students	62	97%
Enhancing student engagement with industry/business	49	74%
Providing additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools	48	73%
Supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas)	47	71%
Enhancing school leadership and staff development	38	58%

More detailed responses are provided in Tables 1.3.1-1.3.5 in Appendix 4. The major patterns of activity can be summarised as follows:

- Most of the business involvement with transition from school to work was centred on providing work experience for students (77 per cent) and career information (70 per cent). About half of the businesses were involved in industry awareness programs.
- It is noteworthy that a substantial minority of this sample of businesses were involved in mentoring and coaching (41 per cent), school-based apprenticeships and traineeships (38 per cent), and work placements linked to VET and training programs (38 per cent).
- Activities focused on enhancing student engagement with industry/business largely involved raising awareness of business operations (78 per cent) and excursions into industry (72 per cent). Around one-quarter of the businesses were involved in providing expertise to support curriculum design and/or teaching programs; industry/business experience for teaching staff; and professional development for teachers in specific subjects.
- About half of the businesses provided additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools in the form of support of school-fund-raising activities (53 per cent) and ‘in kind’ donations, e.g. use of facilities (51 per cent).
- A substantial minority of the businesses provided learning resources and materials (41 per cent), engaged in volunteer programs (41 per cent) and/or contributed to school infrastructure with equipment and services (33 per cent). Only two of the 66 businesses were involved in community loyalty programs where a percentage of income goes to the school.
- Of the 47 businesses involved in programs to support student aspirations and achievement, around two-thirds were focused on mentoring and coaching programs for students (64 per cent) and industry awareness programs (62 per cent). About 40 per cent contributed by way of literacy and numeracy programs, leadership and life skills development, and school-based scholarships and grants.

- The broad area of enhancing school leadership and staff development showed the least activity for the business respondents. Of the activities of the 39 businesses, about half were involved in professional development for teachers or other staff. The other key activities included mentoring and coaching programs for school leaders, teachers or other staff (46 per cent); providing expert advice (44 per cent), and providing industry experience for staff (44 per cent).

We have made the point that caution is needed in drawing conclusions about business activities from this limited sample; for that reason, we have provided this separate account of the nature of the business involvement. While it is not appropriate to generalise, or to directly compare the school and business responses, the business responses provide some useful insights, including points of difference in outlooks and motives that might inform understanding.

Almost half of businesses were involved in what they consider to be a significant relationship. In most instances, this is confined to just one or two schools. These were commonly large, government secondary schools from metropolitan areas. There was little engagement with primary schools.

About half of the significant relationships have been active for less than four years. In six cases, the relationships have been sustained for more than four years, including one that has been operating for more than 10 years.

From the responses of 17 businesses, relationships were initiated by:

- Direct approach from the business to a school partner (7);
- Direct contact between the business and a broker organisation (7); or
- Direct contact from a not-for-profit philanthropic organisation (3).

In this data set, few employees were directly involved in working with schools. Most estimated that less than five per cent of their employees were involved in the program.

#### **4.2.2 Motivating factors**

The literature review found that in the US and Canada, business has traditionally been motivated to enter into partnerships with schools to improve commercial opportunities through marketing activity, to sell services and products directly to students and their families. More recently, 'cause-related' marketing associated with the work of not-for-profit organisations has emerged as an important sense of reputation building in relation to sensitive issues such as environmental sustainability. A more holistic approach from business is evident in the most recent US survey reports. The findings suggest that the involvement of business in education is increasingly motivated by concerns about the declining academic performance of school students.

In this survey, more than half (18) of the 31 businesses nominated corporate social responsibility policy as having some importance in motivating their relationships. Indeed, the responses suggested a broader set of motives beyond the short term financial benefits to business and industry:

*[The company] sees a core area of differentiation being a company that is holistically focused on employee development. In addition to this [the company] recognises that it has an obligation to promote the construction industry and available careers within it (Labourers/ apprentices/ plant operators/ supervisors/ Engineers etc). Establishing relationships with schools enhances all of these objectives plus allows us to give something back to the community (both indigenous and non-indigenous).*

This mix of sustaining the future of the industry in general and addressing local issues is common amongst the businesses, typified by the following comment:

*... encourage students to consider banking as a career specifically. More broadly educate students by showing them that there are jobs in the region and they do not have to leave the region at the conclusion of school to find employment.*

In other instances, companies took a more generic view of their role, for example:

*To bring real life examples and experiences to the classroom to see the human side of business; to encourage students to think outside the square and be aware of risks in running a business; to encourage businesses to take a proactive approach in the future of their industries by opening their businesses to the students.*

More specific motivating factors driving these relationships include:

- Enhancing the career options and employability of students;
- Recruitment of students into particular industries;
- Assisting disadvantaged students/schools;
- Driving capability within the community;
- Engaging staff in the community;
- Improving the reputation of the business; and
- Giving back to the community where employees work and live.

Elaborating on these in the open responses, businesses emphasised the recruitment and development of young people into specific industries, and the opportunity to give back to the community. Improvement of education standards was also raised as a motivating force:

*Development of an industry based curriculum and school. Access to future recruits from Maintenance Engineers and Cabin Crew to pilots.*

*To help build a vibrant and sustainable community; to level the playing field and ensure access to education and opportunity is not restricted; to give back to our local community;*

*Improvement of education standards and quality of young people entering the workforce. Involvement of staff personally in helping to improve education levels and associated leadership and relationship improvement.*

### **4.2.3 Management of the relationship**

In half of the businesses, the relationships were formal or contractual partnerships, with either a memorandum of understanding or formal contract. All of these formalised relationships were controlled and managed centrally by the business, as distinct from being devolved to branches of the company. Most of the 31 businesses had a nominated employee with designated responsibility for the relationship. In most cases, the school partner had a nominated staff member for the liaison of the relationship, mostly the school principal, assistant principal, or the school's career advisor.

Only three of the 31 businesses were represented on the governance body of the school with which they currently have a relationship.

### **4.2.4 Supporting infrastructure**

Independent brokers, government funded, and not-for-profit organisations were involved in supporting 14 of the 31 relationships. Tool kits and guidelines from government authorities were cited by only two businesses as supporting 'infrastructure'.

## **4.3 *Focus areas, challenges and opportunities***

### **4.3.1 Focus areas**

Slightly more than half of the businesses indicated that their current relationship with schools is 'highly successful'. There was no particular program that stands out as successful. Indeed, as *Exhibit 1* illustrates, they range from large scale initiatives, such as the Karratha Education Initiative Project involving 28 diverse smaller projects, to the donation of out of warranty IT equipment.

*Exhibit 1: Examples of major areas of focus and activities*

**ABCN Partners in Learning**

As part of our commitment to ABCN, our CEO mentors the Head of a large school in an underprivileged area. We also provide leadership training for the teachers.

Matching a business executive with a Principal or teacher to explore leadership challenges together.

**Ad hoc support**

Using the skills of the people in our marketing and graphics team to help develop collateral for the school.

**Adopt a school**

Demonstrating careers in technology.

**Aviation Industry**

Providing industry expertise and equipment to Aviation High for the development of meaningful curriculum for students who want a career in Aviation.

**Global Day of Service**

We got staff to volunteer and go out to the school to help paint classrooms.

**Improving literacy**

Literacy buddies involving employee volunteers working with one local school.

**IT Equipment**

Donate out of warranty IT equipment such as laptops, monitors, keyboards, etc.

**Karratha Education Initiative**

Project involves 28 smaller projects - academic programs, personal growth, leadership, teacher development, university scholarships etc.

**Kicking Goals**

Players and staff attend Hedland and Newman SHS to deliver messages around life style and education.

**Literacy Rescue**

Provision of materials in remote region; provision of professional development; support of role models into region; employees support with coaching and mentoring adults/parents teaching them to read.

**Spark Reading Program**

Reading programs through the Australian Business & Community Network with disadvantaged students in Mascot and Alexandria.

**TTIMs Program**

Providing access to industry relevant current technology training platform & resources.

**Wiluna Literacy Rescue Project**

\$85,000 per annum towards improving teaching skills, working with parents, creating value for education in Wiluna.

The factors most commonly cited as contributing to the success of the relationships were:

- A shared sense of ownership of the relationship (22);
- Good communication between the school and the business partner (22);
- A clear vision of what the relationship wants to achieve and how to achieve it (20);
- Specific and achievable goals that all stakeholders understand and support (19);
- Strong leadership and management (18);
- A strong relationship culture among the stakeholders (17); and
- A school that is well connected to the community, other educators and business (15).

***Benefits for business***

Opportunities to contribute to the development of young people and enhancing the reputation of the business by engaging in community capacity building were the most prominent benefits identified by the business respondents. Table 4.3 emphasises the point made elsewhere that business first and foremost takes a broad view of their involvement as contributing to the development of young people. A substantial proportion also rated the enhancement of company reputation as a major benefit.

**Table 4.3: Benefits derived by businesses from relationships with schools**

<b>Benefit</b>	<b>Number</b>	<b>%</b>
Opportunities to contribute to the development of young people	42	84%
Enhancing the reputation of the business by engaging in community capacity building	35	70%
Exposure of industry/business to potential recruits	33	66%
Opportunities to interact with potential recruits	32	64%
Opportunities for developing their staff through volunteer activity	23	46%
Promotion of business through signage and/or school newsletters	19	38%
Exposure of products or brands	17	34%
Opportunities for teachers to gain industry/business experience	12	24%

The businesses reported only a minor amount of product placement and branding. This largely involved recognition in school newsletters, on uniforms of presenters, promotion materials and on resources left with schools.

### *Business perceptions of benefits for schools*

The businesses also identified benefits for the schools they worked with. From their perspective, the areas in which the relationships have provided notable gains to schools appeared to be:

- Supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas);
- Transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students;
- Enhancing student engagement with industry/business;
- Enhancing school leadership and staff development;
- Building capacity and social capital of communities and individuals; and
- Providing additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools.

From their review of the research, Bullen & Onyx (ACER 2008, p. 8) identified several characteristics of social capital including: networks based on 'voluntary and equal' associations; reciprocity and trust; social norms that provide a form of informal social control; pooled/collective resources; and the active and willing engagement of individuals and groups.

When asked to provide examples of specific gains made as a result of the relationship, there was reference to good outcomes for 'at risk' students involved in community-based relationships, with, for example, improved exam results and retention.

*One school has had more positive results than the other. Significant improved academic results. 31 local families changed their mind to leave the community as a direct result of the program.*

*Significantly improved exam results – less truancy and less violence*

*Improved retention, attendance and literacy levels; higher student numbers transitioning to high school; (and) retention of teachers.*

In other instances, the significant benefits to schools and businesses may arise through 'in kind' support, which may be attributed to:

- Proximity – *the primary school to adjacent to the 'Gabba, illustrates a great win-win situation. The school makes regular use of facilities particularly during the off season and cricket and football administrators have access to the school grounds as a carpark for matches which occur out of school hours; or*
- Donations of good – *the Computer Technologies for Schools project (coordinated by the Commonwealth Government) facilitates donations of surplus computers and information and communication technologies (ICT) equipment for use in schools throughout Australia. Australian school students and their teachers gain greater access to and a better understanding of computer technologies enabling*



*them to participate in the information age and businesses gain recognition for their support of Australian schools.*

#### **4.3.2 Challenges**

##### ***Obstacles***

On the basis of their past experience, the businesses identified what they saw as potential obstacles to relationships in the future. Time and the impact on productivity are typically cited, as they are by schools:

- *Time for staff of both credit union and the schools. Needs motivation from both sides to make the relationship work.*
- *As a micro business any time spent "off the tools" is time spent not earning an income. Whilst I am prepared to support schools where and whenever possible I do not have the resources to establish "significant" relationships with schools.*
- *Volunteered so much in the past, all our time, our cost, our efforts, little return apart from warm and fuzzy and hope. Hard to draw a business line of benefit of being so involved.*

The business perspectives also included a range of other specific issues such as those related to the need for effective coordination of activity at the school level, the need for dialogue with education authorities to ensure that policy directives are supportive of school-business relationships and the importance of school careers advisors engaging with industry for the benefit of secondary students.

At the same time, some business representatives are not convinced that the formation of relationships with schools is at all worthwhile:

- *While we are very happy to assist the development of local schools, there is no concrete benefit to the business. We stand ready to assist if requested.*
- *We don't see any benefits.*

##### ***Impact of the Global Financial Crisis***

For most businesses that responded to the survey, the Global Financial Crisis has had no impact on the nature and extent of their relationships, and most do not expect it to impact on their relationship in the future. The few exceptions pointed to the need to be cautious rather than withdrawing from relationships altogether:

*In 2009 we managed 5 traineeships (of which all completed the program and were offered employment). We planned a 2nd intake from Thornlie SHS in October of 2009 but this was deferred to return of the school year 2010 and at this stage we are still undecided of the number of students for this intake.*

#### **4.3.3 Opportunities**

When invited to suggest how relationships with schools could be improved, businesses referred to more resources: money, time and staff. Government and

departmental support and endorsement of the relationships to involve more schools and to guide processes were also mentioned.

*We would welcome support/endorsement from DEEWR to help us get traction in regions that we are not well known.*

*Improving government departmental policy. For example, a simple process for industry to work with the Department of Education and Training. [It is] easy to work with the schools but needs to be supported from the system.*

A number of businesses indicated that their future plans concerning their involvement in school-business relationships would be to expand relationships to include more schools. Some also referred to consolidating and strengthening existing relationships as well a desire to expand connections into educational bureaucracies.

*We will hopefully have more coverage of schools in 2010.*

*[We wish to] increase the number of programs and include regional offices as well as more schools.*

## 5 Nature and extent of school-business relationships in Australia

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This chapter provides the core of the baseline evidence from the survey of schools on the nature and extent of school-business relations in Australia. It profiles the 203 schools that responded to the survey, and provides an overview of the nature and extent of their activities. Chapters 5 and 7 examine the schools data set in more detail.

The survey distinguishes between those schools currently involved in what they consider to be a 'significant' relationship, and those that do not. The questionnaire defined 'significant' as:

*...sustained investment of time and resources (human and/or financial or 'in kind') by the school and business to foster a program or range of activities which delivers tangible benefits to both the school and the business involved. The relationship may be governed by a contract, memorandum of understanding or other form of written agreement although this may not necessarily be a feature of all significant relationships.*

In this chapter, we include an overview of the profiles and activities of both sub-sets of the data set, that is, all schools responding to the survey.

### 5.1 Profile of the schools

Of the 203 schools responding to the survey, 202 nominated activities involving some form of relationship with business – 66 per cent with relationships they do not consider significant in the terms above, and 33 per cent who identified significant relationships with business.

As noted previously, the data set is weighted towards secondary and K-12 schools (40 per cent and 25 per cent respectively), with primary (33 per cent) and special schools (2 per cent) in the minority. Over one-third of the schools (36 per cent) had enrolments of more than 500, 19 per cent had between 301 -500, 33 per cent between 101 and 300, and the balance (12 per cent) was made of up of small schools with less than 100 students. Schools in the government sector accounted for 44 per cent of the data set followed by 30 per cent from the independent sector, and 26 per cent Catholic. Almost half were metropolitan schools (46 per cent) followed by those in regional (40 per cent) and remote (13 per cent) areas.

All States and Territories were represented in the schools data set. However, the majority of the responses were received from four states: Victorian (33 per cent), New South Wales (21 per cent), Western Australia (18 per cent), and Queensland (16 per cent).

Of the school respondents, school principals and assistant principals made the majority of contributions to the survey (79 per cent of respondents) with other responses being received from business managers and teachers/program coordinators.

## 5.2 *Motivations in forming relationships*

While motivations for forming relationships may vary from school to school, the survey analysis provides some recurring themes that fall into the following major categories:

- The provision of funding or additional resources – *Raising revenue and school profile ... the establishment of our programs [incorporating business relationships] has grown from severe and long term financial hardship combined with a strong community desire to support and nurture the concept.*
- Responding to industry needs and fostering improved pathways for students into employment – *A perception that the local education opportunities were not equivalent to those in city schools. The desire of the major resource companies to attract and retain quality staff by enhancing the education opportunities for their children.*
- Creating opportunities for mutual benefits – *The development of an e-learning tool that is used both by industry and our students.*
- Recognising the potential for relationships with business to add value to the school in areas which might otherwise be unfulfilled – *Opportunities for students. This is how we have always worked. We see that the school can only provide some of the learning opportunities/contexts for our students. Working beyond the school is natural;*
- Leveraging stronger relationships into the future – *Opportunity to develop a strategic partnership with an internationally recognized consulting group. This has provided an opportunity to be exposed to another layer of possible business partners through networking.*

In many respects, the motivating factors listed above were consistent with the findings from the literature review which highlighted factors such as careers information/employment, additional resources and the fostering of mutual benefits as being key motivators for schools to become involved in relationships with business in other settings.

## 5.3 *School reports of activities with business*

### 5.3.1 **Major activities and programs of schools involving business**

The major activities in Table 5.1 are the responses of schools to the question ‘Which of the following activities and programs in your school involve some form of relationship with business?’ As the rank order of responses shows, most schools engaged with business as a means of providing additional support in the form of infrastructure, resources or income.

The exception to this finding relates to the nature of school-business relationships in secondary schools where supporting students transition from school to work is the predominant reason for secondary schools to form relationships with business. As illustrated in Table 5.1, 98 per cent of schools with secondary students (secondary/high schools, K-12 schools, ATCs and senior secondary colleges) have

established relationships with businesses which focus on supporting students in the transition from school to work.

**Table 5.1: Schools – Overall current forms of relationships with business**

Activities / programs (All schools)	N=203	%
Providing additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools	183	90%
Enhancing school leadership and staff development	168	83%
Enhancing student engagement with industry/business	161	79%
Supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas)	159	78%
Schools with secondary students	N=136	%
Transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students	133	98%

The survey asked schools to identify the specific nature of their involvement under the major headings. The detailed breakdowns of activities under each heading are shown in Tables 1.3.1-1.3.5 provided in Appendix 5. They provide a picture of the considerable breadth and depth of current activities involving business across all schools. The major patterns of activity can be summarised as follows:

- Two-thirds of schools (66 per cent) received support from business for fund-raising activities such as fairs, and 40 per cent were provided with ‘in kind’ donations such as the use of facilities.
- The secondary school programs concerned with transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students mostly involved businesses in providing work experience for students (93 per cent) and careers information (86 per cent). Eighty per cent of the schools worked with business in structured workplace learning (linked to VET programs).
- Enhancing student engagement with industry/business most commonly involved class excursions into the workplace (66 per cent). The other main activities included raising awareness of business operations (40 per cent), professional development for teachers in specific subjects (35 per cent), and provision of expertise to support curriculum design and delivery (30 per cent).
- Sixty-six per cent of schools involved business in the professional development of staff. A substantial proportion of schools received expert advice at the senior level from business (42 per cent), and/or drew on business for advisory/consulting services (41 per cent) as well as staff development primarily in the form of mentoring and coaching programs.
- The three most common activities targeted at supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas) were concerned with leadership and life skill

development (55 per cent), literacy and numeracy programs (47 per cent), and industry awareness programs (42 per cent).

### 5.3.2 Variations in the focus of relationships by school level

There are notable differences between primary and secondary schools in the patterns of responses, as shown in Table 5.2, most obviously in transition to work programs that did not involve primary schools.

**Table 5.2: Schools: Current forms of activities by level**

Activities / programs	Secondary schools (N =82)	%	Primary schools (N=67)	%
Transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students	82	100%	n/a	n/a
Enhancing student engagement with industry/business	77	94%	39	58%
Supporting student aspirations and achievement (including students at risk and students in disadvantaged areas)	76	93%	40	60%
Providing additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools	73	89%	61	91%
Enhancing school leadership and staff development	72	88%	52	78%

The major points of interest with respect to the nature of engagement by schools with business were that:

- The secondary schools had a stronger suite of activities involving business: all five of the listed activities were nominated by more than 88 per cent of the respondents.
- All the secondary schools were involved with business in activities to enhance student employability.
- Enhancing student engagement with industry/business was clearly a major focus for secondary schools (94 per cent) but not so for primary schools (58 per cent).
- While almost the same proportion of primary and secondary schools were involved with business to attract material support of various kinds, for primary schools, this was by far the most common area of engagement.
- Most schools were involved with business in activities to enhance school leadership and staff development. However, this was slightly more common in secondary schools (88 per cent) than primary schools (78 per cent).

- The involvement of business in activities targeted at supporting student aspirations and achievement—including students at risk—was considerably higher in secondary schools (93 per cent) than in primary schools (60 per cent).
- Thirty-three schools (15 per cent) were involved in community loyalty programs where a percentage of income goes to the school.

For the sake of clarity in comparisons, the table above does not include K-12 and Special schools. Table 1.3.6 in Appendix 5 provides details for all types of schools. These schools basically match all other schools in the number receiving material support from business, and business involvement in school leadership and staff development. However, the K-12 schools and special schools tend to be more like secondary schools with respect to the other areas of activity involving business.

#### **5.4 Specific experience in rural and remote locations**

As a general level, schools in non metropolitan locations are just as likely to form relationships with businesses as schools in metropolitan settings. However, within this broad generalisation, there are a number of findings which relate to the specific experience of schools located in non metropolitan settings.<sup>1</sup>

For example, feedback from the stakeholder consultations indicates that, in many instances, closer personal relationships which may exist in non metropolitan settings make it easier for schools and businesses to work more closely together.

*In smaller communities people know each other better – it makes it easier to connect and help each other out. This is the same for schools and businesses.*

This view is balanced by the response of other stakeholders (through both the survey and consultations) that point to specific challenges in non metropolitan settings around the absence of large companies in some settings and decline in rural industries in others.

*The locality of our school limits the proximity of available businesses.*

*Rural decline, drought, recession, [limits the] capacity of local business to contribute more than they are doing now.*

The exception is the reported experience of schools, particularly remote schools, forming relationships with businesses in the mining, energy sectors and related sectors (for example major construction companies working in mining areas).

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<sup>1</sup> In undertaking the analysis, definitions were in the hands of the respondents in that schools were required a response to a compulsory question about geographic location and were given the choice of 'metropolitan', 'regional' or 'remote'. As such, 'remoteness' is self identified leading to inconsistencies between jurisdictions and misalignment with the Australian Bureau of Statistics, Australian Standard Geographic Classification (ASGC) Remoteness Structure. Nevertheless, the perception of remoteness is still a useful variable for analytical purposes, and a number of responses were received from schools that would be classified as remote according to any criteria.

For example, of the 10 self identified remote schools with significant relationships, six had relationships with mining or energy companies with two having multiple relationships with such companies as Xstrata, Newlands Coal, BHP, Woodside Petroleum Limited, Thiess, Shell and Leighton Holdings. At the same time, six of the 31 businesses with significant relationships in the business survey operated in the same sectors – which accounted for the largest rate of response across all sectors.

Further evidence of the correlation between remote schools the mining and energy sectors was evidenced in the recent program of Awards completed by Schools First. Of the relationships acknowledged in the program, those related to remote schools invariably featured a connection with a mining or energy company.

As with all other relationships, the connections between schools and businesses in remote settings have a particular focus on supporting the transition of school to work. Furthermore, within the overarching finding, a major driver of relationships was reported to centre on addressing local skills shortages. For example, as a recent recipient of a Schools First Award, the Moranbah State High School/Coalfields Training Excellence Centre (CTEC) relationship centres on providing local solutions to local skills shortages through an expansion in the range of VET certificates and accredited courses available to secondary students.

As a result, school based apprenticeships, work experience, industry awareness programs and work shadowing opportunities were prominent features of localised relationships between remote schools with secondary students and major international corporations. The success of such relationships centres on the reported contribution to the employment pathways for students and continuity for businesses. At the same time, positive outcomes arising from relationships were reported to provide a mechanism to garner support for broader continuation of relationship activity within the local community.

*Students have developed a better understanding of employers requirements, have matured with the program. Employers have a better understanding of students and requirements of the school. [The] community is on board and active in promoting [the relationship].*

In drawing together the commentary arising from the project survey and feedback received during the stakeholder consultations, it is apparent that, from a business perspective, there were both head office and local drivers which influenced the formation of these relationships. The head office influence may take a direct form by a given company seeking to implement a targeted recruitment program or industry awareness activity in one or more settings in which it has operational activity. Less direct influence centres on local managers receiving the imprimatur to undertake school-business activity as a means to connect with the community in which the company is operating.

At the same time, the location of mining operations invariably intersects with significant educational challenges related to the educational outcomes of Indigenous Australians living in remote communities where students are least likely to be learning at levels which correlate with the national benchmarks for literacy and numeracy. As a result, there is also an element of corporate social responsibility



driving the formation of the relationships between schools and businesses in remote settings.

*Engagement, understanding and providing support to Indigenous communities near to our operations is a key part of commitment..... working together to ensure Indigenous children have the same life opportunities as other children.(Woodside 2009)*

*..... many Indigenous people and communities do not share the same opportunities as non-Indigenous people in terms of capital wealth, employment, education, health, housing and general wellbeing. As a company, we are committed to increasing Indigenous participation in our business through meaningful partnerships with indigenous communities, government, our clients and the public.(Transfield 2007)*

*Overall, we seek to provide sustainable and tangible benefits from our operations and to leave communities in a better position at the end of mine life ..... Much of our efforts are directed to education, training and employment. We believe that it is in these areas that as a resources company we can make the greatest contribution. Locally, we have education and training programs at all levels, however our major efforts are channelled into senior secondary initiatives and traineeships/cadetship programs. We have programs aimed at creating opportunities for Indigenous people to work for us directly and also to contract to us.(BHP Billiton 2008)*

The third common element of the relationships between schools and mining/energy businesses which were evident in remote settings centre on activity derived from the two preceding elements. That is, where school to work activity was combined with a desire to demonstrate corporate social responsibility, a third area of activity emerged where businesses work in partnership with a school, training providers and other organisations to achieve outcomes which were not necessarily directly beneficial to either organisation. Examples include establishing environment projects or pathways to employment in industries not related to the business of the mining company (such as aged care or wildlife officers).

While remoteness can paradoxically provide some schools with opportunities to form relationships with major corporations, it is also clearly a barrier to the formation of relationships where mining is not evident as a local industry. Indeed, the survey responses indicated that it was the most likely obstacle to the formation of significant relationships between business and schools. However, the survey responses also revealed two other potential obstacles to the formation of relationships between remote schools and businesses. Firstly, the high turnover of teachers and principals in remote schools make it difficult to initiate relationships and sustain relationships between organisations when key personnel move on to other locations.

Secondly, there was a degree of concern evident in a small number of responses regarding the potential for a small entity such as a school to be overwhelmed by a large corporation which is expressed as, “.....a concern about the expectations which businesses may have as a *quid pro quo*” or where the emergence of local employment opportunities may blind students to other equally valid career alternatives, “.....[it

*is] important to communicate needs and expectations, but we need to remain separate to the very large Mining companies near us so that we can highlight to students variable pathways."*

## **5.5 Outcomes, opportunities and challenges**

### **5.5.1 Impact and benefits**

The project survey gave schools the opportunity to elaborate on the impact of the relationship and to outline benefits which were evident as a result. Analysis of the responses indicated that there ere three broad categories of benefits which accrued to schools. The categories and a sample of responses that follow refer to benefits for schools, teachers and students:

- For schools - *Lifted the profile of the school and the course; increased cultural awareness. Increased revenue from business venture, providing significant acquisition of smart technology that in turn is engaging student learning; ability to develop clear strategic plans for the school around improvement and marketing; the number of students leaving to attend boarding school has decreased significantly; availability of additional support and availability 24/7 especially during the Bushfire Crisis; enhanced reputation of the school within the local community, and development of networking opportunities.*
- For teachers - *Experience for staff, improved school resource..*
- For students - *Year 9 students are much more definite about the kinds of careers or jobs that they wish to pursue in their futures, and those jobs they have no interest in. This flows on to their subject selections for Year 10 and beyond; students are more work-ready; Identifying high level graduates for employment; fitter, healthier children across all levels of ability; improved ICT skills of students; the number of students gaining entry to University has increased by a factor of five in just three years; Students more focused on their studies. A decrease in student management issues.*

It may also be noted that, while product placement and opportunities for raising brand awareness were reported to be inherent features of many relationships, these factors were not regarded as major benefits for businesses in the formation of the reported relationships. From the schools' perspective, the major benefit for business centred on opportunities to interact with potential recruits (rated at 82 per cent by respondents from schools with secondary student enrolments). This was followed by exposure of the industry/business to potential recruits (rated by 71 per cent of schools with secondary student enrolments)<sup>2</sup> and opportunities for promoting the business through signage or in school newsletters (rated at 69 per cent) as secondary benefits for businesses. At a lower level of importance, exposure of products or brands was identified as a benefit by 40 per cent of respondents.

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<sup>2</sup> The level of response to these two items again reinforces the primacy of supporting the transition from school to work as the main force behind the formation of school-business relationships.

Respondents were also given the opportunity to identify any unintended or consequential outcomes arising from the relationship. The responses are listed as follows:

- *Excellent response to our students from industry – great reality check and tremendous advantage to the students who gained insight into large industry.*
- *Students have developed a better understanding of employers' requirements, have matured with the program. Employers have a better understanding of students and requirements of the school. Community on board and active in promoting.*
- *Our school taking on the regional co-ordination role for this program due to all schools within our region expressing interest in taking part in this program.*
- *Greater insight of business personnel in the education process.*
- *Greater adherence to Department protocols and requirements by industry.*
- *The interest and energy invested by business in the concept. It is dynamic and in some ways leading the College into new and unchartered territory. Concepts which would not have been considered previously.*
- *Spin-off professional development opportunities and scholarships for staff.*

The unintended responses are noteworthy in two respects. Firstly, whilst not necessarily being 'earth shattering', the responses highlighted the potential for school-business relationships to flourish and deliver outcomes beyond original expectations. Secondly, the reported unintended outcomes highlighted the potential for school-business relationships to grow tangentially into new activity as the relationship matures. This feature of school-business relationships is particularly evident in the latter two responses.

## **5.5.2 Challenges and obstacles**

### *Global financial crisis*

Given the timing of the project, the survey included a question on the impact (if any) of the global financial crisis on establishing or sustaining school-business relationships. While the overall analysis suggested that the impact of the financial crisis had been marginal, some respondents nevertheless identified some changes or challenges which might have been attributed to the global financial crisis.

The survey findings were consistent with the feedback received during the consultations where stakeholders reported examples of some minor impact but generally concluded that, for the most part, relationships continued despite the financial downturn. Where examples of the impact were cited, they generally related to reduced resources or a withdrawal from program activity, particularly in the area of school to work programs.

*Funding has dried up from mining companies.*

*There seems to be fewer opportunities for school based apprenticeships.*

*We have found it more difficult to involve businesses in our career breakfasts – employers are reluctant to stand up and speak about their company or their industry when everyone in the town knows that they are laying-off workers.*

### **Other obstacles to establishing school-business relationships**

Small, rural primary schools reported that their size and location militated against the formation of relationships with business “... businesses regard our school as too small and the community not wealthy enough to provide much scope for advancing their business goals within such a relationship.” Other schools identified internal organisational issues, such as the turnover of staff, the reluctance of staff to take on additional responsibilities, as a result of existing highly demanding roles or the ‘tyranny’ of the timetable (with little space or flexibility to take on additional activity) are major barriers to the formation of relationships.

For other schools, obstacles to the formation of relationships mirror the organisational issues listed above but are based on the perceived issues for business.

*A lot of these ventures rely on personal relationships. The turnover of staff on both sides of the partnership can be a major issue.*

*Some of these activities will require significant time commitment from businesses that are under pressure.*

*The limited pool of appropriate business operations in the region.*

However, for other schools, the main obstacle appeared to be the lack of wherewithal or a brokering organisation to make connections. These schools do not know where to start or are unable to identify a connection with business which would deliver benefits to both parties.

*Finding on-going mutual benefits which will sustain the practical relationship.*

*Lack of expertise in approaching businesses and ideas that they may be interested in sponsoring or supporting.*

*The main obstacle would be knowledge in relation to what a significant relationship involves.*

### **5.5.3 Future plans and prospects**

A number of schools recognised the potential for school-business relationships to expand into other areas of school operations. Responses to the project survey show an eclectic array of future prospects for expansion of existing relationships or the establishment of new relationships.

Notably, only one response centred on the future prospect of delivering more funding or resources to the school.

*Currently a Trade Centre is being established at the school and we are looking forward to support from local employers with regards to some equipment.*

Of the other responses, the propensity to build on existing school to work activity was evident as is an interest in expanding into professional development for

teachers, mentoring for principals, school governance and consulting/advisory services.

*Expansion of program into non-industrial sectors.*

*We are in the process of developing a Sustainability program in the school. Partnerships with other businesses in this area may be of benefit to the school.*

*Every domain area can benefit from involvement in such partnerships. Our school is working towards this aim though it will be a long term project.*

*Management strategies, problem solving strategies, forward thinking.*

*Principal mentoring, expansion of school into internships for all students will require more mentors, etc. Opportunities for staff to work in industry not fully explored yet.*

*School governance could be helped with support from small businesses.*

*Supporting the school in infrastructure, supporting staff access to professional development and training opportunities in large centres.*

*All aspects of school life would benefit. This area is wide and possibilities are endless.*

## **6 Insights into significant relationships**

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The project survey sought to explore the characteristics of the school-business relationships which either or both parties to the relationship described as ‘significant’.

About one-third of the schools currently have what they consider to be a significant relationship with business as defined in the previous chapter. The key elements of the definition are a ‘sustained investment of time and resources’ and, in most cases, some formalised agreement. This chapter provides an analysis of the profiles and relationships of this group of 66 schools. The chapter concludes with a brief overview of the reported experience of schools not involved in significant relationships.

### **6.1 Profile**

The analysis of the survey responses revealed that such relationships exist in all schools irrespective of size, sector, type or location. After allowing for the bias towards secondary schools which was implemented in the sampling process, there was no significant variation in the overall proportion of schools (by sector, type or location) with significant relationships with businesses from what might be expected through sampling of the total population of Australian schools as a whole.

However, within this overall finding, the analysis revealed a propensity for the significant relationships to be less evident in primary schools in metropolitan settings and for a slightly higher concentration of significant relationships among government secondary schools in non metropolitan settings.

As noted in Chapter 4, the analysis of the survey responses from a business perspective points to a concentration of significant relationships in the area school to work linkages with secondary schools.

The analysis of the responses to the business survey (Chapter 4) contrasted with this finding in that a large proportion of the responses centred on significant relationships with secondary schools with the majority of the relationships, which formed the basis of the nomination, focusing on school to work linkages.

As with the school experience, significant school-business relationships feature in an equally diverse range of business characteristics based on the size of businesses (from ASX top 200 to small micro businesses), location and industry areas.

### **6.2 Origins**

The survey analysis revealed three main mechanisms which were reported to be the initiators of the relationships. Foremost of these was the direct approach by the principal or other school representative to the business (27 per cent of respondents). A further 21 per cent of respondents reported the reverse with businesses owners/managers approaching the school to initiate a relationship. The third main mechanism for initiating the relationship as reported through the survey centred on

a pre-existing personal contact that provided the context for the relationship to emerge.

Other mechanisms, such as the role of broker organisations or community initiatives, were reported to play a minor role in the formation of school-business relationships.

### **6.3 Focus and motivations**

In relation to the focus of the relationships, the pattern of response for significant relationships aligned with the overall pattern of response to project survey in that, for schools with secondary students, supporting the transition from school to work and developing the employability skills of students is the predominant driver of the significant school-business relationships. However, within this overall pattern of consistent response, two additional findings may be noted. First is the propensity for other forms of relationship to exist in parallel with the school to work activity within significant relationships. That is, whilst the relationships may have their origins in schools and businesses seeking to enhance school to work programs for students, the spread of other ‘connections’ into ‘enhancing school leadership and staff development’, ‘providing additional infrastructure’ and ‘enhancing students’ engagement with industry through specific areas of the school curriculum’ are highly apparent in the significant relationships between schools and businesses.

From the perspective of businesses that have provided information about significant relationships, transition from school to work is also a key motivating factor in forming relationships with schools as a means to either directly recruit new employees or, alternatively, provide exposure of the company or the industry sector to potential recruits. Nevertheless, sitting alongside ‘*recruiting to specific profession*’, ‘*bringing the industry to the forefront of career choices*’, ‘*enhancing the work readiness and employability of young people*’ and ‘*encouraging school leavers to come and work with us*’ is a range of other equally strong motivating factors which give some insights into what constitutes a significant relationship.

Foremost in these other motivating factors is the notion of the relationship providing the opportunity for the business to invest in the community in which it operates. Commentary related to ‘*... supporting Australian communities, community capacity building, building healthy communities and to give back to the community where our employees work and live...*’ is consistently reported as a motivating factor which drives significant relationships.

Less prominent, but equally valid, motivating factors from a business perspective centre on enhancing the work lives of existing employees through relationships with schools - “*... to provide employees with rich experiences which broaden their horizons...*”

Secondly, while supporting student transitions from school to work is clearly the most influential factor in the formation of school-business relationships for schools with secondary students at a general level and remains the key driver in the formation of significant relationships, it is not the only means by which relationships with schools and businesses may be formed. In this regard, the

analysis of the small number of significant relationships that centred on primary schools and businesses provided some insights into additional influences in the formation of school-business relationships.

### **6.3.1 Primary schools with significant relationships with business**

As with the broader sample of schools with significant relationships, these relationships were evenly spread over school characteristics, with the mix of government and non government schools located in metropolitan, regional and remote settings. School size was also mixed, although it was notable that no primary schools of less than 100 students reported a significant relationship with business.

The reported significant relationships span a diverse range of focus areas, from fostering international student exchanges to health promotion for students and coaching school leaders in marketing and promotion of the school. The motivation in forming the significant relationships was also mixed and included responding to identified needs, entrepreneurial activity originating from the school or business or as a logical extension of an existing relationship.

The responses from the 12 primary schools with significant business relationships revealed a depth and breadth of activity which was consistent with the broader finding related to significant relationships. That is, schools with significant relationships interact with businesses at multiple layers of activity, and the significant relationships reported by primary schools reinforce this finding. As illustrated in Table 6.1, the highest reported area of activity in significant relationships in primary schools is support of school fundraising. However, in comparison with the primary schools with no significant relationships, other areas of activity were also high with 'infrastructure support,' 'expert advice for school leaders and councils,' 'excursions into industry and 'in kind' donations being also reported by at least 67 per cent of schools.

By comparison, schools with no significant relationships also report support of school fundraising as the main area of activity in their interactions with business (at a rate of 72 per cent) but the depth of activity is not apparent to the same degree. Professional development for staff was reported as an activity by 52 per cent of schools with the remaining areas of activity being featured in relationships at a rate below 36 per cent in responding schools.



**Table 6.1: Comparative analysis of peak areas of school-business activity in primary schools**

Activities/program	Primary schools with significant relationships	%	Primary schools with no significant relationships	%
Support of school fundraising	11	92%	39	72%
Consulting/advisory services	10	83%	14	26%
Professional development for staff	9	75%	28	52%
Enhancement of facilities	9	75%	15	28%
Infrastructure support	8	67%	12	22%
Expert advice for school leaders and councils	8	67%	16	30%
Excursions into industry	8	67%	19	35%
‘In kind’ donations	8	67%	11	20%

As illustrated in Table 6.1, ‘support for fundraising’ and ‘professional development for staff’ were strong both in schools with significant relationships and schools without significant relationships. At the same time, the evenness in the spread in the top eight activities experienced in the schools with significant relationships with businesses gives further support to the notion that such relationships are unlikely to have a narrow focus. As highlighted above, significant school-business relationships in both the broader sample, and the 12 primary schools within it, demonstrated a clear propensity to be ‘multi faceted’ with a range of activity arising as a result.

This finding is further supported by feedback received during the consultations where stakeholders noted the evolutionary nature of strong relationships – building on the foundation of an initial activity to foster a broader range of interactions which would not have been conceived when the initial connection was established.

### **6.3.2 Independent schools**

Analysis of the survey data indicated that independent schools had a proportionally higher level of involvement in significant relationships with business than schools in the government or Catholic sectors. For example, while the survey sampling and level of overall response related to independent schools was commensurate with the proportion of independent schools which were currently evident in Australia (11 per cent), the proportion of reported significant relationships by independent schools was at a rate of 26 per cent.

The stakeholder consultations provided some insights into possible explanations for this situation. Independent school leaders and their representative organisations consistently emphasised that independent schools were well placed to form

relationships with the business sector. This claim was generally supported by two or three contributing factors such as:

- Independent schools are businesses in their own right and, as such, have an empathy with business which may not be evident to the same extent in systemic schools;
- By their nature, independent schools are well connected into their local communities which are inclusive of local businesses particularly in the schools which have been established in the last 20 years; and
- The governance structures of many independent schools extend beyond interested and committed parents, to incorporate expertise from beyond the immediate school community. Indeed, independent schools will often target such expertise in the business community for roles within the governance when no actual relationship exists between a given school and the individuals concerned.

The survey analysis also revealed that where significant relationships exist, the independent schools reported a stronger propensity for the relationship with business to be characterised as a 'formal' or 'contractual' partnerships (at a rate of 93 per cent) in comparison with the significant relationships formed by schools in other sectors (at a rate of 50 per cent in both government and Catholic schools).

Beyond these attributes, independent schools shared the same circumstantial benefits as government and Catholic schools in that a key source of potential relationships are the parent owned businesses which may link to the school through enrolments at any given time.

#### **6.4 Key features of significant school-business relationships**

Two thirds of schools (62 per cent) reported that significant relationships were targeted towards specific groups of students. This suggests an orientation towards specific projects and activities rather than relationships with broader goals, for example:

- School to work – *provision of on-site training, work placement, traineeships and cadetship opportunities for students;*
- Curriculum links – *'Energy conservation project' to improve students' understanding of their impact on the environment; 'Health project to give students the necessary skills to look after themselves and develop knowledge around health;*
- Community capacity building – *the employment and training of young people in the business of maintenance and other skills needed within the community.*

Where the relationship was related to non project activity, the relationships were also targeted towards specific groups of students.

*Money is provided for student scholarships into tertiary education*

*Donations to support the school in providing tuition and boarding for indigenous girls.*

Significant school relationships were also reported to provide opportunities for casual employment for students. As informed by the stakeholder consultations, employers of young people, such as supermarkets and fast food outlets, often seek connections with schools in order to raise awareness of employment opportunities and recruit skilled and interested students into casual employment. Such connections have the potential to evolve into stronger or more significant relationships where owners and managers of such businesses engage the business with schools across a broader range of activity and with a longer term perspective of what the relationship may offer.

*IGA Macleay Regional Co-operative takes a great deal of pride and pleasure in being a good corporate citizen. The current Manager has been associated with our education and training philosophy since its inception in 1992. IGA is looking to strengthen existing community links, seeking youth for casual employment opportunities and investing in tertiary education for possible future executive employees.*

#### **6.4.1 Other features of significant relationships**

The survey analysis revealed a number of additional characteristics regarding the nature of significant school-business relationships:

- Formal/contractual relationships – although not universal, significant school-business relationships are more likely to feature some form of formal documentation to guide the relationship, with a significant proportion of the relationships which are governed in this way featuring a formal contract or memorandum of understanding (reported in 69 per cent of significant relationships);
- Designated responsibility - both the participating schools and businesses tend to have a nominated member of staff responsible for managing the relationship and liaison with the other party; and
- By contrast, the extent of policy influence by businesses over schools through involvement in governance arrangements is minimal.

#### ***Commercial interests in school-business relationships***

It may also be noted that opportunities for product placement or branding were not regarded as key drivers in the formation of the reported significant relationship. That is, product placement or branding was apparent in only a minority of relationships (as reported by both schools 33 per cent and businesses 35 per cent) and this did not appear to be a driving force for establishing the significant relationship or an area of tension between the parties in the relationship.

Arguably, the survey analysis would suggest promoting the business and brand exposure exist as features of significant school-business relationships within Australia but not to a level which suggests that this is the primary motivation of businesses engaging in relationships with schools. Moreover, the feedback received during the consultations indicated that, in the relationships which are recognised as being highly effective, there was limited, if any, exposure to brands and

promotional activity - if it occurs at all, it is seen as a by-product of core relationship activity.

*The relationship between Cadbury and Newport Lakes Primary School (in a disadvantaged area of western metropolitan Melbourne) brought the strength of Cadbury's planning and marketing to bear on declining enrolments which was a major issue for the school. Through a series of meetings between the school Principal and the Finance Director and subsequent involvement in a number of school council meetings to gain a better appreciation of the school's culture and governance as well as its strengths and challenges, an agreement was forged to use the relationship to promote the school to its local community - to build its profile and increase enrolments.*

*A team of marketing and promotions staff from the company worked with students and staff to develop a communications plan centred on an information evening for the local parent community. Working together, the company and the school produced a School Promotion Kit including a DVD and brochure. This was used at the information night and distributed to local kindergartens. The school subsequently received 40 new enrolments for the following year's intake of Prep students and has significantly raised its community profile. The school and company have continued their partnership and a range of other projects have evolved as a result (DEECD 2008).*

Through the consultations, it was confirmed that companies' products have not been a feature of the relationship. Rather, the relationship was based on the opportunities it provides for company employees to apply their expertise in the local community and the intrinsic personal and teamwork rewards that arise from this, combined with the benefits that the relationship delivers to the recipients of the company sponsored activity, in this instance to an individual school.

## **6.5 Schools not involved in significant relationships**

Almost two thirds of the schools in the data set reported that, while they have activities of some kind that involve business, they do not consider these to be significant relationships. Therefore, as a counterbalance to the findings related to schools that involved significant relationships, the survey analysis also revealed some insights into the reported experience of schools that are not involved in significant relationships.

Aside from the general findings regarding school-business relationships as outlined in Chapter 5, schools with no significant relationships reported that the absence of significant relationship(s) resulted from scepticism about the benefits derived from such relationships.

Most particularly the reported scepticism was fuelled by a perception of investing time and resources into forming a relationship with business as not being worth the effort.

*Too much trouble. We have enough trouble keeping on top of everything we have to do now and this seems like just one more damn thing to keep teaching staff away from the children.*

*As we are a primary school there is already an overloaded curriculum so to add more would diminish other programs that we run.*

By contrast, other schools, whilst seeing benefits, expressed more of a concern about being too close to one business or another as a result of forming significant relationships.

*Probably [we have] a hesitation with 'significant'. Locking into one business is not always beneficial in the long term. Commitment and significant partnerships can always be beneficial but it is the variety of experiences that are usually of most ongoing value to schools.*

*Significant relationships would imply our committed support or promotion of the business. I prefer to have relationships with many businesses within our community to show our local support of businesses.*

## 7 Elements of successful relationships

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This chapter combines findings from all schools and business in the data set as well as bringing the perspectives arising from the literature review and consultations to provide an overview of the elements of successful relationships.

### 7.1 *From the literature*

The literature review (Appendix 3) provides a synthesis of the observations on effective partnerships from diverse sources and contexts. Ten critical success factors have been identified from the lists featured in the various guidelines and toolkits. They provide a useful point of reference for the elements of success identified by the schools and businesses in this chapter. The list below includes a mix of processes and outcomes and is not in priority order: the factors are included because they are the most commonly cited across the primary sources and by surveys of stakeholder opinion.

1. **Clear mission and goals.** Successful partnerships have a clearly articulated and shared mission focused on student achievement with specified short and long term goals.
2. **Sustainability.** The partnership has the program and flexibility to steer through unanticipated challenges.
3. **Program characteristics.** The program adds value to the school or students, is well-planned, viable and fits with available resources and organisational size. There is opportunity for ongoing learning, adaptability and flexibility allowing programs to evolve and the partnership to grow organically.
4. **Inclusiveness and participant commitment.** The program has high visibility. It provides opportunities for corporate volunteers to work directly with students.
5. **Values – compatibility and shared development**
  - a. The values and approaches of the partners are compatible.
  - b. The relationship creates value and benefits integral to the partnership itself. It establishes mutual trust and recognition of the various strengths brought to the partnership by each organisation.
6. **Capacity and capability.** The time commitment of partners is specified to ensure sufficient capacity to support the program. Appropriate professional development for teachers is provided.
7. **Leadership.** This is widely acknowledged as a critical success factor. Most of the elements are generic to innovation and change management, including:
  - a. visionary and committed leadership;
  - b. willingness to cross traditional institutional boundaries;

- c. ensuring that the partnership has top-level institutional and business support and visibility; and
  - d. the use of data and evidence as a basis for decision-making.
8. **Governance and communication.** Successful partnerships have clear communication of roles and responsibilities.
  9. **Identity and recognition management.** This is often underestimated. Effective partnerships allow each partner to separate their individual reputation and brand while integrating the mechanics of the partnership into the structure of the school and business.
  10. **Accountability and risk management.** Effective programs have a documented and agreed risk management plan, and the capacity to anticipate and prevent problems. Risk management should be incorporated into the design and implementation of partnership agreements. Typical steps in risk management can be adopted including the assessment and categorisation of risks such as inconsistent organisational cultures, lack of resources, and sensitive issues.
  11. **Program measurement and evaluation.** Effective partnerships develop a plan to monitor progress and outcomes. They evaluate the partnership as well as the programs, and they commit to continuous improvement through flexible measurement and evaluation: *‘For most long-term initiatives, evidence of impact plays a key role in securing funding and resources, in garnering internal support, and in building public awareness. From the corporate side, partnerships are often expected to produce demonstrable, and preferably quantifiable, returns that align with the company’s overall business goals.’* (CCC 2004, p. 22).

One of the more informative studies outlined in the literature review examined the conditions and factors that produce enduring partnerships across four long-term major partnerships. These partnerships ‘utilize resources from the for-profit operating budgets to address a business opportunity or need in a way that also generates benefits for low to moderate-income individuals and/or communities’ (CCC 2004, p. 4). Importantly, each of the partnerships has withstood severe external changes involving economic climate, industry structure and government regulation: ‘they have also been subject to many internal organisational and personnel changes’ (CCC 2004, p. 2). The lessons learned have implications for school-business partnerships. The major findings are as follows:

- The greatest differentiator found in the enduring partnerships was the ability of the company and nonprofit organisation to create something that took on a life of its own – growing far beyond its original scope and early expectations.
- Taking an entrepreneurial approach to planning in the early stages lays the foundation for a durable partnership.
- Each partnership in the study proceeded with a series of shorter-term plans that did not lock the alliances into an unyielding course of action.

- In each case, a shorter-term plan in the early stage allowed the partners to work on a more bounded, immediate, and manageable set of tasks.
- The plans provided a chance for partners to produce early results and build confidence with each successful task.
- The new possibilities and challenges affected the operating assumptions of the partnerships – the goals, the populations served, the stakeholders, the funding sources – and the partnership identity subsequently evolved in the process. (CCC 2004, p. 9-12)

The authors conclude that community-business partnerships aiming for a ‘thriving’ and long-standing relationship should, in the first instance, establish a bold, inspirational vision that stakes out the overall direction for the long term. An interesting suggestion is to treat the partnership like an incubating, new venture from the outset. The authors also note that sustainable partnerships occur when participants plan for the short term, asking: What does the partnership need to achieve to survive its early stages? Where does it need to be heading to thrive for the long term? Perhaps the key piece of generic advice is for partners to remain open to challenges and opportunities that arise, using the ‘bold vision and goals to guide decisions, not a rigid plan’. (CCC 2004, p. 13)

With this overview of the international literature providing background information regarding the processes and outcomes relevant to successful school-business relationships, the text which follows provides an overview of the critical features from an Australian perspective based on the inputs received from the survey and stakeholder consultations.

## **7.2 *Successful relationships – indicators and underlying contributing factors***

One of the consistent themes emerging from the consultations related to a perceived benefit of school-business relationships facilitating the provision of funding and other resources to schools. This particularly reflected the views of members of primary principal representative bodies who, as a generalisation, envisaged enhanced relationships with business delivering more resources to schools. In this sense, a successful relationship is regarded as one that delivers otherwise unattainable resources to schools.

This finding was reinforced through the survey analysis where the overall rate of response for all relationships indicated that the provision of additional infrastructure, resources or income streams for schools had the highest level of response in primary schools (91 per cent) and a slightly lower level of response in secondary schools (89 per cent).<sup>3</sup>

The importance of funding and resources was further reinforced by the responses to the project survey from the small number of primary schools that provided

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<sup>3</sup> See Table 5.2 for details



information about their significant relationships with businesses. As Table 7.1 clearly illustrates, 11 of the 12 responding schools noted that ‘support of school fundraising’ was a peak area of school-business activity.

The emphasis on funding and other resources as further reflected in the survey findings relating to the envisaged activities identified by schools aspiring to a closer working relationship with business. Typical responses included:

*Sponsorship of school activity; support for maintenance and upkeep of facilities; internet and telecommunications resources; financial support to facilitate student awards; support for school fundraising activities; recurrent funding; sponsorship of special programs and resources; finance in the form of scholarships; and financial support for school initiatives.*

Further preoccupation with funding and other resources was evidenced in the perceived barriers to establishing a significant school-business relationship. That is, when responding to the question related to ‘potential obstacles to such relationships in the future, common (though not universal) school responses centred on “.... access to resources; funding; finances and money....”

By contrast, the survey responses from the majority of schools involved in significant relationships, while noting that sufficient funding and resources were important to the success of the relationship, did not place the same level of importance on the contribution of these factors. Even with the high proportion of participating primary schools noting the ‘support of school fundraising’ as a peak area of school-business activity, Table 7.1 clearly shows that a range of other activities were also prominent in these relationships.

Moreover, as illustrated in Table 7.1, ‘sufficient funding and resources’ are rated as being of minor importance in comparison to other factors such as vision, good communication and the setting of achievable goals in contributing to the success of significant school-business relationships.

**Table 7.1: What are the most important factors that you believe have contributed to the success of the relationship<sup>4</sup>**

Success factors	Responses	%
A clear vision of what the relationship wants to achieve and how to achieve it	47	89%
Good communication between the school and the business partner	43	81%
Specific and achievable goals that all stakeholders understand and support	39	74%
A strong relationship culture among the stakeholders	38	72%
A shared sense of ownership of the relationship	36	68%
Strong leadership and management	36	68%
Clear understanding of partner roles	30	57%

<sup>4</sup> Based on 53 responses which rated the current significant relationship as being successful – 41 responses (77.4 per cent) rating highly successful and 12 (22.7 per cent) rating moderately successful

Success factors	Responses	%
A school that is well connected to the community, other educators and business	30	57%
Strong promotion of the relationship in the school and the business	27	51%
Sufficient funding and resources	22	42%
Good infrastructure to support processes	17	32%
Valuable support from a broker to guide processes	9	17%
Other	2	4%

Similarly, while the lack of funding and resources was identified as an inhibitor to the further development of a small number of significant relationships<sup>5</sup>, the overwhelming absence of obstacles to most significant relationships (85 per cent) would suggest that successful relationships were driven by a range of factors of which funding and resources was one, but not necessarily the most, critical factor.

Based on the analysis featured in Table 7.1, successful school-business relationships were more likely to emerge through a range of contributing factors such as a shared sense of vision about what the relationship wants to achieve and how to achieve it, good communication between the school and the business,; specific and achievable goals that all stakeholders understand and support, and a strong relationship culture among the stakeholders.

This view was consistently reinforced through the consultations where stakeholders reiterated the importance of shared vision, common goals and open communication.

*“It is like a strong marriage, successful school business relationships are about sharing, communication and making sure the other partner’s needs are being met. You get this part right and the rest will take care of itself.”*

In addition, although not specifically articulated in the survey comments, the apparent breadth of the significant relationships reported through the survey provided a further indicator of successful relationships. As discussed in Section 5.2, school to work activity appeared to be the main area of school-business relationship activity in schools with secondary students. However, the consistency in which schools and business with reported significant relationships identified other activity occurring in parallel with the school to work activity would suggest that the capacity to identify opportunities to expand the relationship and then act on these opportunities provides a strong indication of a successful relationship. In this sense, significant relationships gave the impression of being self perpetuating in that existing mutually beneficial activity provided the fertile ground for further mutually beneficial activity to germinate in other areas of each organisation.

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<sup>5</sup> Five of eight respondents identified the lack of funding and resources as an inhibitor to the development of the identified significant relationship

### 7.2.1 Longevity

While a number of factors were identified as being indicators of a successful school-business relationship, longevity, as evidenced by the survey responses, was not a strong feature of existing significant school-business relationships. That is, of the 58 survey responses, 43 schools (or 74 per cent) indicated that the relationship had been in existence for four years or less and only five schools had significant relationships that were in operation for more than 10 years. Similarly, of the 24 significant relationships reported by respondents to the business survey, 18 had been in operation for four years or less and only one had a life span of over 10 years.

The consistency of responses across the two surveys would suggest that sustainability was not necessarily an indicator of a successful relationship. While some significant relationships clearly last for an extended period (10 years or more), the majority would appear to have a lifecycle which is less than 10 years. Indeed, responses from business regarding the demise of former significant relationships infer that school-business relationships were considered to have a 'project' nature which implies a finite life. For example, in response to the question 'why did the significant relationship cease operating?' businesses noted:

*[The] project concluded.*

*[The] program was staged and set for a duration which has now expired.*

Based on the feedback received during the consultations, it was most apparent that the movement (or lack thereof) of key people was also critical to the long term sustainability of school-business relationships.

*"Personal 'relationships' are the lynchpin [to a successful school business relationship] and they are people dependent – when the principal moves on or a new CEO arrives, what may have once been seen as a strong viable relationship can be easily threatened by the need for new personal relationships to be established."*

It should not be assumed that the intensity and breadth of a relationship guarantees longevity. Rather, whilst reflecting the strength of the relationship at a given point in time, multiple layers of activity may better be viewed as 'projects' which are spin-offs from a relationship – the strength lies in the opportunities opened up by the relationship rather than laying that path for a long term connection.

### 7.2.2 Indicators of success and challenges which impact on relationships focused on supporting the transition from school to work

Successful school-business relationships that focus on supporting the transition of students from school to work were characterised by the way in which they provide students with informed choices for career pathways and practical insights into the world of work. While students are seen to be the main beneficiaries of school to work programs, success can also be measured in what accrues to businesses through contributing to careers briefings or providing work experience or work placement opportunities for students. These benefits included:

- The opportunity for business to identify potential recruits through first-hand interactions and trial activity within the workplace;
- Development of staff - by contributing to careers information sessions and offering work placements, businesses have the opportunity to develop the skills of their own staff in delivering presentations or supporting an individual engaged in training, as well as improving staff knowledge of the Australian training system;
- Altruistic perspectives of undertaking a 'worthwhile' activity with young people; and
- The potential for fresh insights and new skills (such as IT skills) being brought to the workplace through work placements.

### *Challenges*

The data presented in Table 5.2 notes that secondary schools that responded to the project survey universally engaged in activity related to 'transition from school to work and developing employability skills of students' in their relationships with business. While this finding was reassuring, it potentially masked some underlying tensions in how success was measured in this area.

While not necessarily articulated in these terms by industry, schools nevertheless felt increasingly pressure to deliver work ready students who can be 'dropped into' roles in industry as fully functioning employees on the completion of their education. This 'narrow' view contrasted with a generalised community expectation that schools have responsibility to provide students with a broad ranging educational experience to maximise their potential to become fully functioning members of the community. While this incorporated a vocational dimension, it was balanced with other non vocational components which could be of benefit to the individual but take time away from vocationally orientated pursuits.

Through the consultations, industry representative bodies continued to reinforce concerns regarding the varied quality of delivery and assessment in VET in Schools programs. These concerns were particularly focused on the legitimacy of simulated work environments, including the extent to which students were exposed to industry standard equipment and authentic workplace conditions. The varied standing of the VET in Schools program within individual schools contributed to this tension. Programs were viewed to range from being an 'added extra', which was seen to be resource intensive and difficult to manage, to that of being part of core provision and equally valid in standing compared with traditional academic streams. Where VET in Schools programs were an add-on, timetabling difficulties often militated against effective relationships with business to achieve work placements at convenient times to industry.

At the same time, decisions on the range of programs offered to students may be based on cost effectiveness or teacher interests/skills, rather than skill shortages or local industry needs, leading to a mismatch between program provision and post school employment opportunities.

In other instances, it was the lack of local industries or the reluctance of businesses to provide work placements which presented challenges to the authenticity of school to work programs, particularly VET in Schools. While this issue may be potentially addressed through subsidy payments and tax relief for employers, caution was expressed by some stakeholders in this area warning against sending the wrong signal regarding the value of young people to employers.

Governments too have a role to play in supporting the school to work activity. While government policy may highlight the importance of employers opening up their workplaces to school students, government departments and agencies were generally reported to be underrepresented in the provision of such opportunities.

The challenge schools face in reconciling the value of releasing students into workplaces with the desire to ensure that employers and employees are delivering appropriate messages to students were seen to be fair and ethical and fully compliant with relevant OH&S and industrial agreements.

For school-based apprenticeships, the tension centred on managing the challenges of part time roles in both settings (school and workplace) combined with the need to 'catch up' on missed lessons in some settings. A further challenge to the sustainability of a school based apprenticeship related to whether the host employer was a static or mobile operation. That is, apart from regulatory and industrial barriers which were evident in some States, the mobility of host employers can cause significant difficulties for young people to access the workplace on days allocated to on the job training.

For work experience, key issues related to managing the tension between providing students with the learning opportunities associated with negotiating their placements compared with the efficiencies and reduced burden on schools where this was organised through a single point of contact – a teacher within the school or brokered on behalf of the school by another agency. A further challenge centred on keeping businesses onside when students did not display enthusiasm for the workplace or a potential vocation in the industry concerned. While both may be a legitimate outcome of the work experience placement – to find out about what work entails and/or reality falling short of preconceived views of a particular industry – they were not necessarily outcomes that would enamour a business to continue to offer work experience, particularly where the outcome was encapsulated in a negative attitude by the student towards the employer and workers within the business.

In this sense, industry representative bodies and relationship brokers play a critical role in encouraging businesses to engage in structured workplace learning, school based apprenticeships and work experience programs and in keeping them informed of the purpose of these programs and strategies to make them more effective.

At the same time, perspectives from other stakeholders, while not necessarily disagreeing with the issues listed above, reinforced the importance of retaining a broad perspective of school-business relationships and not allowing the potential benefits of such relationships to be devalued by the concerns of some vested interests.

## **7.3     *The role of supporting infrastructure***

### **7.3.1     Supporting the student transitions from school to work**

A key feature of school to work activity centred on the provision of structured workplace learning as a component of VET in Schools programs. Until the end of 2009, 216 Australian government funded Local Community Partnerships (LCPs) played a key role in working with schools and employers to provide these placements. The LCPs were initially developed and funded to manage collaborative projects of Vocational Education and Training between schools, colleges and local employers. During the mid 1990s, the Australian Student Traineeship Foundation (ASTF) provided Commonwealth government financial support and professional advice directly to these partnerships to generate Structured Work Placements.

In the late 1990s, the ASTF, later the Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP), funded partnerships started to grow in three ways. The vast majority expanded their delivery of Structured Workplace Learning, working across a number of schools and offering increased numbers of work placements. Some broadened their range of activities to incorporate community-based learning and other support activities. Even further to this, a small number of partnerships grew into broader coalitions, seeking to influence and impact upon the systems of education, training and personal support for all young people in their communities.

From 2006-2009, the role of LCPs was augmented by the establishment of the Careers Advice Australia initiative which focused on enhancing the career and transitions capacity of the LCPs and incorporated connections with industry through a network of Regional Industry Career Advisers (RICAs) and a network of National Industry Career Specialists (NICS).

The Adopt a School program was also introduced at this time as a strategy to bring schools, students and local businesses together to engage in a specific project to give students more knowledge and skills in relation to a particular industry.

Adopt a School activity experienced varying levels of success across Australia. In many circumstances, it enabled participating schools and businesses to learn more about each other and how they can help one another in future. Businesses learned how to work with schools and with today's young people. Students and schools learned more about career pathways and the skills sought by employers. Case studies commissioned by DEEWR have shown that some successful programs have been the impetus for ongoing interactions between schools and businesses.

#### ***School Business Community Partnership Brokers***

As indicated in the introduction to this report, as of 1 January 2010 existing youth, transitions and career programs have been consolidated into two new programs: School Business Community Partnership Brokers (Partnership Brokers) and Youth Connections. The Partnership Brokers are charged with the task of building 'strategic and sustainable partnerships between key stakeholders, rather than short-term, one-off associations' (DEEWR 6 October 2009 p 9).

Under the new arrangements, Partnership Brokers will aim to create and improve partnerships between community, business and industry, and schools. The specific requirements of the contracts with respect to Business and Industry include ‘maintaining regular contact with local, regional and, where appropriate, national or international employer organisations’ (DEEWR 6 October 2009 p 11).

### 7.3.2 Brokers for businesses and guidelines for schools

Responses to both the schools and the business survey endorsed the important role that broker organisations play in facilitating school-business relationships, particularly for businesses, and the desire that schools have for guidelines to support the formation of relationships. Table 7.2 presents summary data related to these two key elements of supporting infrastructure for school-business relationships considered as part of the assessment of significant relationships from the perspective of schools and businesses.

**Table 7.2: Involvement and use of supporting infrastructure in school-business relationships**

Involvement of other organisations and use of supporting infrastructure	Respondents	Yes		No		Total	
		Number	%	Number	%	Number	%
Other organisations supporting relationships	Schools	19	33%	39	67%	58	100%
<i>Use of supporting infrastructure such as toolkits and guidelines</i>		15	26%	43	74%	58	100%
Other organisations supporting relationships	Businesses	14	56%	11	44%	25	100%
<i>Use of supporting infrastructure such as toolkits and guidelines</i>		2	8%	23	92%	25	100%

While the level of response was quite low (particularly in relation to the business survey), there nevertheless seemed to be a stronger level of interaction with broker organisations by businesses than schools (56 per cent ‘yes’ for business as opposed to 33 per cent for schools) and a low level of use of documented supporting infrastructure by businesses (two out of a total of 25 responses).

To paraphrase the perspective of business arising from the survey analysis, ‘... brokers help to connect businesses with schools, but after that business seeks to get on with the relationship’. Feedback from the consultations suggested that businesses are particularly appreciative of the role of broker organisations as they provided a single point of contact in the formation of relationships, particularly those related to school to work activity.

By contrast, the extent to which schools may take for granted the role of brokers is not clear. What was more apparent was that, although still in the minority, schools make a greater use of toolkits and guidelines, or to paraphrase, ‘... when schools do

*connect with businesses, some guidelines to inform the formation and operation of the relationship may be helpful.'*

In some jurisdictions, such guidelines already exist. For example, in New South Wales, the Department of Education (DET) and training website carried a detailed overview of school-business relationships through an area entitled, *Doing Business with Us*<sup>6</sup> Key sections included:

- Types of school-business relationships;
- Benefits of school-business relationships;
- Requirements for school-business relationships; and
- A four-step process to develop school-business relationships

To assist schools and businesses in understanding the breadth of possibilities in the formation of school-business relationships, the DET website also featured examples of school-business programs and activities and a range of suggested strategies to support school-business relationships (DET 2003).

Similarly in Victoria, the *Schools Reference Guide* provided an overview of school-community partnerships and within this, specific advice about the formation of *Partnerships with Business* (DEECD 2009). During the course of the research, consultations with DEECD revealed that the guidelines are currently being reviewed with a desire to reposition school-community (inclusive of business) relationships as a key strategy in the implementation of the Victoria Governments key education policy platform the *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*.

### **7.3.3 Examples of broker organisations**

The consultations, and to a lesser extent the survey responses, revealed a range of other entities which make connections between schools and businesses as part of their core role or as part of a broad suite of community oriented activity. Our research revealed that such organisations operate across a range of dimensions – from those which have a focus on connecting major corporate organisations with schools (eg ASX top 200 corporations) to those which interact with a range of businesses, both large and small, but target their activity at specific groups of students, such as disengaged youth, students from low SES backgrounds or Indigenous students. For the purpose of illustration, a brief summary of the structure and role of five organisations is listed here as an indication of the range of services which exist in this area.<sup>7</sup>

<p><i>Schools First</i> – a national awards program that brings together the resources and expertise of NAB, the Foundation for Young Australians and the Australian Council for Educational Research (ACER) to foster and promote effective school community partnerships.</p>
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<sup>6</sup> This area of the DET website also carries links to Products and Services for Sale, Commercial Training Opportunities, Tenders and Contracts and DET International

<sup>7</sup> A larger list of organisations and a broader description of roles is featured at Appendix 6



The awards program features two distinct categories:

- Impact Awards - for school-community partnerships that demonstrate improved student benefits as a result of their partnership; and
- Seed Funding Awards - for schools that are seeking funding to help their partnership develop further.

The Awards are premised on a belief that the task of raising young people who are resilient, adaptable and well adjusted, is a responsibility of the entire community. The pledged \$15 million over three years seeks to give recognition to the relationships which have a demonstrable impact and strengthen those evolving towards achieving this outcome.

In establishing the awards program, Schools First has also developed a range of supporting infrastructure including a website, a 'toolkit' of information, templates and other resources and a 'partnership matching service' which facilitates connections for schools or community organisations (including businesses) seeking to participate in the program.

**Australian Business and Community Network (ABCN)** - a self funded organisation, was created in 2004 by a group of senior business leaders with the aim to inspire, challenge and engage businesses to have a greater positive impact in the community and focuses on education to fulfil this aim. With a deliberate focus in low SES communities, ABCN provides mentoring, partnering and support to students and schools through a number of key programs, such as:

- Partners in Learning - brings together principals and Chief Executive Officers and senior teachers and executives to promote the sharing of expertise, develop management and leadership skills, enhance listening and feedback skills and explore solutions to challenges in a supportive and non-judgmental environment;
- Growing Opportunities and Learning Skills (GOALS) - a one on one mentoring program that aims to widen the life choices of students considered to be at risk of disengaging from school; and
- Spark, Primary School Reading Program - a mentoring program targeting primary school students who would benefit most from developing their literacy and conversational skills, along with building their vocabulary.

ABCN place a strong emphasis on being more than just a broker organisation in facilitating connections between business and schools. Rather, the organisation views itself as an 'enabler' and sees its role as being able to deliver benefits to schools and students which reportedly 'government cannot deliver'.

**Beacon Foundation** - with a reach which extends to over 100 schools and 10,000 students each year, the Beacon Foundation draws together support and influence from a range of corporate and community organisations to deliver on its mission: "... to influence the attitudes and culture of Australians so that each young person develops an independent will to achieve personal success for themselves and their community."

A key strategy of the Beacon Foundation is to initiate projects that demonstrate solutions to youth unemployment and encourage self-help at the local level. Two high profile examples of activity include:

- No Dole programs which have evolved in schools and communities throughout Australia and incorporate a pledge commitment by students to engage in

employment, training or education after they leave school

- Polish programs which assist young people prepare for their careers through personal presentation and communication training.

The implementation of projects relies on the support of schools' local communities and the business community at a local and national level. Businesses provide support to Beacon in terms of funding, services in kind and time.

***Dare to Lead for Business (DTL4B)*** – builds on the work of Dare to Lead which is a Commonwealth funded national project with a focus on improving educational outcomes for Indigenous students. DTL4B facilitates connections for business into a wide range of projects and cultural experiences with Indigenous students in schools and Indigenous communities more broadly. Current projects build on 14 pilot activities which were conducted in 2008. Key areas of action include supporting businesses in developing inclusive recruitment strategies and the development of education and training pathways for Indigenous students to gain employment.

***Australian Business Week (ABW)*** – is a not-for-profit organisation which has been operating since the early 1990s and provides a range of enterprise education programs to schools on a user-pays basis.

ABW programs offer 'challenges' which give students hands on experience and practical insights into work in the areas of Hospitality, Manufacturing, IT and Retail. Most typically, the program operates in a school over a week of simulated business activities in small teams which culminates in a judging day in which the performance of each simulated company is presented and evaluated by a panel of judges. Inter-school programs also occur and feed into the Global Enterprise Challenge, a national competition involving a number of Australian teams competing over 24 hours for a chance to be chosen as the winning representative for Australia.

Local businesses are integral to the challenge program, through mentoring, judging and guest speaker roles. Businesses are also connected with schools through ABW's allied initiative known as the Leading Enterprise Education Partnership (LEEP) project which involves local leaders business, principals and teachers working together to foster enterprise or entrepreneurial skills development in schools.

In each of the examples listed above, the organisation provides a clear sense of its mission which is critical to providing a 'hook' to engage business in activity to deliver on the identified mission. One of the more consistent messages arising from the stakeholder consultations centred on the important role of third party organisations in providing a conduit for business to connect with schools, and the importance therefore of providing clear messages about the purpose and expected outcomes of involvement in activity arranged by the external organisation.

## **7.4 Evaluation**

Both the schools and the business surveys sought information regarding the extent to which existing school-business relationships had been subject to an evaluation to assess progress and determine outcomes. The survey responses indicated that 45 per cent of schools and 35 per cent of businesses had completed some form of evaluation of their relationship with other parties.

Schools, reported that the evaluations were inclusive of surveys of relevant stakeholders, analysis of relevant data (such as participation rates, expenditure or hours of activity) or the tracking of student destination outcomes (in the case of school to work programs). In other instances, the evaluation of the school to work program was incorporated within a broader evaluation activity such as the 'triennial review' process in Victorian government schools.<sup>8</sup>

Businesses reported that evaluation activity ranged from receipt of a report from the school (that is, business is a passive participant in the evaluation process conducted by the school) to shared inputs into assessing the outcomes of the relationship.

For the most part, the evaluation activity was either a monitoring exercise, taking stock of progress to date, or summative in nature, evaluating performance against predetermined objectives.

Further analysis of the survey data revealed that there was no correlation between evaluation activity and the longevity of the relationship other than in where the evaluation process and outcomes were documented. In these circumstances, both schools and business respondents indicated that relationships are more likely to have a longer duration where evaluations are completed and the findings are documented.

Although this finding gives a sense that formality in the relationship may contribute to longevity, this does not necessarily ring true as the survey analysis also revealed that there is no positive correlation between the establishment of formal agreements and the length of time that a relationship existed.

What may therefore be drawn from this finding is that where the relationship is taken seriously by both parties, to the point that its impact and outcomes may be evaluated and the findings documented, such actions have a positive impact on the sustainability of the relationship.

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<sup>8</sup> Part of a former accountability cycle in Victorian government schools which led to the formation of a strategic plan to inform the direction of the school for a further three years.

## 8 Gap analysis

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### 8.1 *Current imperatives*

The survey analysis and consultations point to two key drivers of school-business relationships in Australia: that of providing a flow of funding and resources to schools and arrangements to support the transition from school to work (either directly or via a pathway of further education or training) for secondary students. This finding was consistent with the international experience, particularly that of the United States as summarised in Chapter 3.

However, as discussed in Chapter 6, while ‘school to work’ was an obvious mechanism for schools with secondary students to make connections with businesses to form relationships, relationships around funding and resources were generally ‘ad hoc’. This was particularly the case for primary schools that did not have the imperative of supporting students through the transition from school to work or other education or training pathways. As a result, the extent to which primary schools formed relationships with business was largely dependent on the entrepreneurship of one or other party in seeing an opportunity to work more closely together.

Clearly the relationships which occurred between secondary schools and businesses did not occur in isolation. In this sense, the supporting infrastructure established by governments at both the national and state level had a significant impact on the growth of school-business relationships to support student transitions from school to work. As a result, it was the work of broker and enabling organisations that fostered connections between schools and businesses in response to a range of broader needs in schools which were additional to the school to work agenda.

In this respect, there were clear gaps and opportunities for an increased number of school-business relationships which might encompass support for literacy and numeracy programs (particularly in primary schools), teacher professional development, contributions to school governance and mentoring programs for school principals. In this sense, there was an opportunity to look to the United Kingdom (as noted in Chapter 3) for examples of effective practices in school-business relationships which extend beyond the predominantly narrow spectrum which was evident in Australia.

In highlighting these gaps, it was important to note that issues still remained in the school to work arena. The commentary in Section 7.2.2 clearly highlights the ongoing need for schools and businesses to work together to optimise the transition outcomes for young people. As recent history demonstrates, broker organisations, such as the newly formed School Business Community Partnerships, continue to play a critical role in this area.

## 8.2 *Location issues*

As noted in Section 5.4 in the discussion of school-business relationships in remote settings, a school’s location can have a strong influence on the nature and extent of any relationships with business. In this regard, the commentary which outlines the features of the relationships which existed between schools and mining, energy and allied industries in regional and remote locations masked the experience of many other schools in non metropolitan settings where the absence of significant industry can limit the opportunities for relationships with business.

In this regard, the survey analysis provided evidence to confirm the difficulties of non metropolitan schools as revealed during the stakeholder consultations in that, schools that reported involvement in significant relationships were underrepresented in regional settings. As Table 8.1 illustrates, the geographic breakdown of significant relationships, as identified through the project survey, shows that 50 per cent were located in metropolitan settings, 35 per cent in regional setting and 15 per cent in remote settings.

**Table 8.1: Location of schools with significant relationships**

Geographic location	Schools involved in current significant relationship		Overall responding schools	
	Responses	%	Responses	%
Metropolitan	33	50%	94	46%
Regional	23	35%	82	40%
Remote	10	15%	27	13%
<b>Total</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>100%</b>	<b>203</b>	<b>100%</b>

Two findings emerged from the analysis presented in Table 8.1. Firstly, the slightly higher reported level of significant relationships evident in settings identified as remote may be attributed to a combination of the bias in the sample towards non metropolitan settings and the impact of significant relationships which are formed with the mining, energy sectors and allied industries.

Secondly, given the slight bias towards non metropolitan schools in the overall sample (as discussed in Section 2.1.4), school respondents that identified themselves as being located in regional settings were under-represented in the proportion of schools which report significant relationships.

The gap in the level of interaction with businesses in regional settings was further reinforced by additional analysis sourced through the project survey. That is, of the 85 schools that indicated an aspiration to form a significant relationship with business in the future, 51, or 60 per cent, were located in regional or remote settings.

The 34 responses from metropolitan schools to the same survey question suggested that, while there may be obvious gaps in non metropolitan schools, some metropolitan schools also have reported aspirations for greater connections with business. Most telling was the commentary received during the consultations where stakeholders reported that, for some schools, issues associated with geographic location in metropolitan areas mirrored that of regional and rural settings.

*This is an issue for schools located in dormitory suburbs. These schools have very little local industry to connect with and compete with other schools in the same area for what little industry that does exist.*

Similarly, consultations with business and industry representatives noted a parallel concern from the perspective of employees. That is, while a given business may go to great lengths to engage with schools in its local area, the kudos of such interaction may be lost on some employees due to the fact that the interaction is distant from their community and the school(s) where their children are enrolled. As such, efforts to improve the standing of the business as ‘a good corporate citizen’ in the eyes of employees may have varying levels of impact depending on where this effort is located.

### **8.3 School characteristics**

As noted in Section 7.2.2, the growth of activity related to supporting the student transitions from school to work provided schools with secondary aged students with an immediate mechanism for making connections with businesses and, as evidenced in the survey responses, the vehicle for some schools to form significant relationships with business.

With the absence of a similar driver for forming relationships with business, primary schools were under-represented in their interactions with business at a general level and in the proportion of schools with reported significant relationships. As the discussion in Section 6.3.1 outlines, even when the bias in the formation of the survey sample was taken into account, the number of primary schools with reported significant relationships was low in comparison with secondary schools and schools with K-12 enrolments.

Commentary received through the project survey suggested that the apparent under-representation of primary schools with significant relationship may be attributed to a lack of awareness of the opportunities which may unfold as a result of making connections with business or deeper connections where some form of relationship may already exist.

*We are a primary school from Reception to Year 6, it is not relevant.*

*As I am completing this survey for the Principal I am not sure whether in the public system this is actually allowed [in primary schools].*

Further evidence of an apparent lack of awareness of the gains and benefits which may arise through significant relationships between primary schools and businesses arises from the analysis of responses to the survey question regarding origins of significant relationships. Within the 18 respondents that indicated that the school had made a direct approach to the business to initiate a relationship which became significant, only one response was received from a primary school.

## 8.4 *Other gaps*

### 8.4.1 **Teachers in industry**

Table 1.3.1-1.3.5 [in Appendix 5] shows that a relatively small proportion of schools responding to the survey identified 'industry/business experience for staff' as a means by which school-business relationships were able to enhance school leadership and staff development (22 per cent of school respondents) or enhance student engagement with industry/business (20 per cent of school respondents). However, feedback received through the stakeholder consultations consistently reinforced the importance of providing opportunities for teachers to gain experience in industry.

*The education sector generally, and teachers specifically need to understand what happens in industry. For some teachers the path from school to university and back to school gives them limited exposure to other work environments and how industry operates. It is important that we address this and not just for careers teachers and VET specialists.*

A major challenge in responding to this identified need centred on the cost of releasing teachers to industry during the normal working day. While individual schools may provide opportunities for such exposure, systemic programs are generally limited in nature because of these costs.

An exception was the Teacher Release to Industry Program (TRIP) which operated in Victorian government schools from 1991-2003. TRIP operated through a partnership between the Victorian Department of Education, VECCI and a number of universities. It gave 50 teachers the opportunity to gain direct industry experience and a greater understanding of management practices, the organisation of work and the impact of technological developments through a 40 week placement in industry. While the program costs were partially offset by payment by host employers (approximating to 50 per cent of a teacher's annual salary), the cost of replacing the teacher was largely borne by the Department of Education.

Teachers participating in the program returned to their school after the placement to transfer their knowledge and experience to students and the broader school community. Though widely recognised for its strengths as a professional development program and for its capacity to establish strong links across education and industry, the overall cost of the program led to other professional development options being sought.

#### *Programs for careers teachers and other initiatives*

In April 2004, the Australian Government announced 54 scholarships for career advisers in schools to undertake study or industry placements in 2005.

Funding has continued to be allocated since that time to support professional development for career advisers by providing them with opportunities to gain skills, knowledge and experience through scholarships for further study or industry placements.

In June 2009, the scholarships for career advisers project was extended, with scholarships on offer for Study or Industry Placements in 2010.

In 2006, the two similar teacher release to industry programs were established in Victoria:

- The Career Education Scholarships program – providing 20 scholarships per year over two years to cover full tuition fees and enable careers coordinators/teachers in government schools to undertake a Graduate Certificate in Career Education; and
- An Industry Placements program – aiming to enhance the capacity of careers coordinators/teachers in government schools to provide quality, up to date and accurate information and assistance to students through a three week placement with employers in a range of industries, or in a Group Training company, to develop a project that will better inform young people of industry pathways.

Industry placement programs in other jurisdictions included:

- The Teacher Placements in Industry program in Queensland – providing an opportunity for teachers to maintain currency to teach Vocational Education courses and provide teachers in all sectors and curriculum areas a means through which links between the world of work and student learning and teaching can be achieved. Placements have a duration of up to six months and are funded through a variety of sources including schools, industry and professional associations.
- The New South Wales Teachers in Business Program – providing opportunities for teachers to be placed in industry for a period of 2-10 days with costs of participating teachers' salaries and their replacements being covered by New South Wales Department of Education and Training.
- The ACT DET Industry Placement program – specifically targeting VET teachers in public schools and colleges and providing opportunities for industry placement relevant to their VET program for up to five days.
- The Western Australian Teacher Industry Placement Scheme (TIPS) – also targeting VET teachers for a placement in industry for 4-6 days.

### ***Industry to school initiatives***

While clearly addressing the need for exposure to industry, the limitations of the programs outlined above suggest that, for the majority of teachers, there are few opportunities to gain first hand insights into industry and other work environments.

Therefore, bringing industry to schools is clearly an alternative to high cost industry placements for teachers. An example of this alternative approach is the Principal for a Day program operating in New South Wales, Victoria and Queensland. Modelled on a program of the same name operating in United States, Principal for a Day provides opportunities for business and community leaders to “...gain a first-hand behind-the-scenes view of a normal school day, including in-depth management discussions with the principal, taking classes with students, talking with parents and staff, even doing



*canteen or yard duty.*" (ACER 2009)<sup>9</sup> The same interactions also provide the opportunity to bring business perspectives to the conversation as well as providing the springboard for relationships which may extend beyond the day in which the formal part of the program is implemented.

More broadly the career change initiatives which have been implemented in New South Wales and Victoria are generally found to be highly effective enabling teachers to be appointed to difficult to staff locations, in addressing shortages in specialisations across the curriculum and bringing a range of industry backgrounds into schools. Based on a scoping study which was completed for DEST,<sup>10</sup> the New South Wales Accelerated Teacher Training Program (ATTP) and the Victorian Career Change Program foster a range of benefits encompassing:

- For schools and school systems:
  - Recruiting and appointing teachers to hard to staff locations;
  - Filling a void in key areas of the curriculum; and
  - Bringing an authoritative voice of industry to school planning and program development;
- For students:
  - Delivering highly motivated, mature and passionate teachers that offer:
    - Authenticity of their industry background; and
    - Perspectives on career options;
- For the individual participants in the programs:
  - Personal fulfilment;
  - Revitalisation; and
  - A work - life balance.

Such initiatives will continue to play an important role. Given the apparent trends in the teacher workforce, with the baby boomer generation departing and significant numbers of younger teachers choosing to pursue other interests, prospective career change initiatives may need to expand to address the potential school leadership vacuum which may emerge in the future.

#### **8.4.2 Curriculum coverage**

Aside from the coverage of activity around school to work in schools with secondary students and activity centred on literacy in numeracy across all schools, the survey responses gave some insight into other areas of the school curriculum which have been the focus of school-business relationships. Science programs,

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.acer.edu.au/pfad/index.html>

<sup>10</sup> [http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school\\_education/publications\\_resources/profiles/research\\_on\\_career\\_change\\_pathways\\_teaching.htm](http://www.dest.gov.au/sectors/school_education/publications_resources/profiles/research_on_career_change_pathways_teaching.htm)

sponsorships delivering sporting equipment, environmental initiatives and technology programs were all listed in the commentary provided by schools.

By contrast, commentary within the survey responses was largely silent on other areas of the curriculum and the arts and language education and less so in the stakeholder consultations where gaps referenced against economic, environmental and security challenges pointed to the need for language education to be prioritised

*If Australia is to become a leading economy in an increasingly globalised world then our workforce is going to need to be culturally and linguistically savvy as well as being technically and commercially savvy. The same imperative is evident when other non economic indicators such as environmental sustainability and climate change or security are considered. If we are to engage with our neighbours on an equal footing Australian needs to improve its cultural and linguist competencies. We are way behind in this respect. It would be good to see schools and businesses working together to address this issue.*

The gap in activity related to arts education is one of the focus areas of the work of ABCN where the *InterAct Arts Experience* provides the opportunity for students from partnered schools that do not normally have access to the arts to see and participate in arts performances and activities in and around their city.

Without being prescriptive, the limited identification of some areas of the curriculum in reported school-business relationships presents as an opportunity for the future in expanding breadth of curriculum areas which may benefit from schools and businesses working more closely together.

## 9 Conclusions

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The idea of making stronger connections between business and schools has been embraced by many schools in Australia as they endeavour to make significant inroads into addressing the many and complex needs of their students. The schools participating in this survey that have established significant relationships with business, attest to the potential value added by business, in particular in their efforts to provide enhanced opportunities for students from disadvantaged backgrounds. Others nominate a range of broader benefits that flow to their relationship and standing with their local community, and the enhancement of school leadership and staff development.

Likewise, many businesses investing efforts in building relationships with schools derive direct or indirect benefits from their relationships with schools beyond immediate outcomes such as those concerned with skills gaps and labour market shortages. The survey findings show that, from the perspective of most businesses, the benefits are primarily concerned with contributing more generally to the development of young people. Clearly, the businesses are also keen to enhance their reputations while building capacity in the school community, and they see direct benefits in engaging with potential employees.

These and other patterns of responses follow the international developments examined in the literature review, that is: businesses are drawn to establishing relationships primarily to improve workforce capability but increasingly in response to calls for greater corporate responsibility; schools continue to be motivated by the need to increase their funds and resources, but the range of perceived benefits is broader; and the role of government, where it applies, is increasingly focused on facilitating stronger relationships appropriate to the local conditions, to address national policy issues.

There is a range of underlying issues in the development of sustainable relationships that need to be addressed. While some are essentially systemic and concern processes, others are more fundamental and relate to the values, motives and expectations of the potential partners. For example, we observed that not all schools or businesses are able to articulate whether and in what ways the other party is benefiting from the relationship. The data from this study, supported by international experience, shows that, where the relationship is grounded in a shared vision and strong communication of values and aspirations, schools benefit across a broad spectrum of activities from their involvement with business.

Importantly, there are notable differences in the starting points for schools and business that both need to recognise and articulate. For example, schools tend to focus on the immediate opportunities the relationship provides to enhance student outcomes, especially for secondary schools in the transition to work, whereas large businesses appear to focus on both skills preparation for the workplace, as well as the broader national interest in terms of productivity and international

competitiveness. There is a problem if the lack of mutual understanding dilutes or undermines the potential impact of the relationship.

## **9.1 Issues for the schools**

There are, nonetheless, some issues and concerns that need to be addressed. The literature review, consultations and surveys show that the valuing of school-business relationships is not universal. The presence of business and industry in Australian classrooms has a long history, including the provision of curriculum support materials such as project materials, instructional posters, industry samples and fund-raising promotional products. However, the emergence of deeper, and perhaps more strategic, partnerships more closely aligning school and business agendas raises a different set of concerns.

During the course of this project, a number of issues were raised in the media about the potential downside of business involvement in schools. Most particularly, the release of the book, *This Little Kiddy Went to Market* (Beder, S 2009) and a series of media interviews by its author sparked extensive debate about the merits and potential downside of the ‘corporatisation’ of childhood and the negative influences of businesses working with schools. Further interest in this issue was generated by a public forum hosted by *Spheres of Influence International* in Melbourne in October 2009 where headline grabbing statements such as “.....it was entirely appropriate for schools to turn to business for investment and sponsorship, even if meant exposing students to corporate advertising, provided students ultimately benefited from their support .... this kind of marketing is ‘a small price to pay’ if it helped improve children's skills....”( *The Age*, 21 October 2009, p.3) sparked further debate about direct and indirect (or less understood) outcomes of school-business relationships.

From the perspective of the businesses surveyed in this study, promotion and brand exposure was regarded as one of a number of benefits, but not the most important. From the school perspective, exposure of products or brands and promoting the business through signage or in school newsletters are seen as secondary benefits for businesses.

The overall assessment from this investigation, and from international experience, is that the benefits of school-business relationships outweigh the negatives. However, to protect schools from excessive commercialism, or indeed exploitation, it may be useful to revisit established guidelines from various organisations that have evolved over time in response to these developments. For example, the British Columbia Teachers Federation Guidelines include criteria such as:

- Programs of corporate involvement meet an identified educational purpose, not a commercial motive.
- Ethical standards (developed by the BCTF) that protect the welfare of students and the integrity of the learning environment are agreed to and followed by all parties.

- Sponsored teaching resources and materials are evaluated for bias before they are used, and teachers retain discretion in the use of the materials; sponsored and donated materials are held to the same standards used for the selection and purchase of curricular materials.
- Corporate involvement does not require students to observe, listen to, or read advertising. Sponsor recognition and corporate logos, for identification rather than commercial purposes, are kept to a minimum.
- Partnership agreements are reached after full discussion among participating school staff, parent representatives, and the prospective partner, and any agreements are open as public information.
- All partnership agreements are systematically evaluated.

(British Columbia Teachers Federation <http://bctf.ca/parents.aspx?id=3560>)

Examples from this study provide ample evidence to show that the involvement of business provides a new and positive set of dynamics to support school operations. This does not involve business resources substituting for government funding, as it is sometimes argued. Many of the schools point to benefits for both staff and students that are not directly dependent on additional financial or material resources. The contributions of expertise, time, energy, and enthusiasm from company leadership and employees provide resources in a number of forms that do not necessarily require money.

At the same time, it should be acknowledged that some survey responses from the schools sector raised a different set of questions about the merits of school-business relationships, including two in particular: some schools referred to the distraction from core business, taking teachers' time away from teaching in order to build and sustain relationships; and, as noted above, there was also concern that the involvement of business was a means of providing funding and resources for schools as a substitute for what could or should be the responsibility of government.

For other stakeholders a central issue centred on the quality of school to work activity. That is, while stakeholder commentary acknowledged the depth and breadth of activity in this area, it also highlighted with some consistency the need for vigilance in quality assuring the experiences of young people in the transition from school to work. This was balanced by the perspective of other stakeholders who also stressed that a narrow preoccupation with school to work activity as the primary focus of school-business relationships, diminishes the value which may accrue to schools, businesses and the community at large through a consideration of the broader opportunities which exist for schools and businesses working together.

## **9.2**     *Key messages arising from the baseline study*

### **9.2.1**    **Increasing diversity in the range and objectives of relationships**

There is a wide range of school-business relationships throughout Australia, although the dominant activity is centred on supporting the transition of students

from secondary school to post school destinations. Nevertheless, the schools in nominated significant relationships reported diverse activities, including those focused on student learning programs and school improvement.

### **9.2.2 Improving human capital resources and national productivity**

School to work programs dominate the activities involving secondary schools and business, as they have done for more than 20 years. Significant government resources at both a state and national level have been applied to the establishment of supporting infrastructure to facilitate and support students' understanding of career options, and to provide opportunities for learning in the workplace and learning about work. The opportunities that this provides for businesses to interact with potential recruits and expose the industry as a potential career choice was reported by schools as the prime motivator for business to seek relationships with schools. There is some evidence that, for schools with particularly strong relationships with businesses, this core activity is providing a springboard into other activities drawing on the expertise and resources of business, for example, in curriculum design and in professional development for school staff.

### **9.2.3 Improving school performance and student achievement**

The involvement of business in activities targeted at supporting student aspirations and achievement is slightly more common and perhaps more obvious in secondary schools. In contrast, the international trends appear to lean towards involving business in supporting foundations for basic skill development and widening horizons for primary school children. While this is a feature of major programs in regional and remote Australia, particularly in areas of disadvantage, it is not so evident in mainstream schools. The exception to this conclusion centres on the work of some organisations such as ABCN which deliberately set out to improve student achievement in low SES communities by facilitating relationships and programs that link businesses with schools in these settings.

### **9.2.4 Lessons to be learned from existing significant and successful relationships**

#### *Grounding relationships in a shared vision*

The challenge for school-business relationships is to progress from single focus connections to longer term and outward looking partnerships which contribute benefits to each organisation, as well as adding value in other areas such as community well being, economic development or security. Not all school-business relationships will progress down this path. The survey analysis builds a strong case that, in many instances, relationships will be short term and for a specific purpose. However, as we have noted, the survey analysis and consultations also reveal that where such relationships are grounded in a shared vision, open communication and commitment to realising benefits for each party, there is equal opportunity to externalise the value derived from the relationship to the greater good beyond the two organisations.

A lesson learned from the reported experience of schools involved in significant relationships, particularly independent schools, centres on the benefits of

documenting memoranda of understanding as a means to formalise the shared vision, as well as providing a reference point in monitoring the impact and effectiveness of relationship activity.

### *The role of supporting infrastructure in fostering increased activity*

Many of the obstacles to schools establishing and sustaining relationships can be addressed with the support of broker organisations. Their effectiveness depends in the first instance on understanding some fundamental differences in starting points for schools and businesses. Focussing on the success factors most commonly cited in the literature, and largely confirmed by the views of the schools and businesses surveyed, is likely to be critical.

Government funded agencies, not for profit organisations and corporate sponsored project managers all have a critical role to play in promoting the benefits of school-business relationships, fostering opportunities for such connections to be made and providing tools and resources which may assist in formalising relationships and monitoring their impact.

### *Developing staff capability in schools*

The survey analysis shows that schools are involved with business in staff development activities. While most of this is likely to take the form of school staff keeping up to date with developments in industry, there is some indication from the survey responses and consultations that there is potentially more activity involving leadership development.

Again, in circumstances where brokering organisations make connections between school and business personnel, opportunities for sharing knowledge, problem solving and learning from each other invariably emerge.

## **9.2.5 Challenges for school and business leadership**

A key success factor is the degree to which the partnership is institutionalised or integrated into the structure and culture of the participating organisations. Following the Boston College study of effective business-community relationships outlined in Chapter 7, we suggest a number of key leadership initiatives that may assist schools and businesses in the Australian context to embed the partnerships. These include, for example:

- Building multiple points of connection between the partner organisations.
- Ensuring significant internal organisational support - senior champions, torchbearers, and line operations.
- Creating supportive infrastructure and processes that genuinely facilitate and grow the partnership.
- Integrating partnership benefits back into the organisation.

It is generally the case that the more parts of the business partner – legal, human resources, and research and development – that are aware of the partnership,

contributing resources to it, and reaping benefits from it, the more stable the partnership.

### **9.2.6 Notable gaps in activity**

Gaps in school-business activity are evident on a number of levels. Relationships between businesses and primary schools are not as apparent as those which exist with schools that have secondary aged students. In part, this discrepancy may be attributed to the predominance of school to work connections with business in secondary schools. The survey analysis would also suggest that there may be limited awareness in primary schools of the potential benefits in forming relationships with business. Similarly, the international experience, particularly that of the United Kingdom, would suggest that opportunities exist for greater interaction between primary schools and business into the future.

More generally, location is identified as a limiting factor in the formation of relationships. The unmet demand for stronger connections with business, which was reported by schools in regional and remote settings that do not have the good fortune to be co-located with a mining or energy industry company predisposed to forming a relationship with schools, points to a need for innovative strategies to be developed to open up connections, irrespective of location.

Less pronounced, but equally important, is the reported experience of some schools in metropolitan settings which may not have the needs profile of other schools, or the convenience of proximity, and therefore suffer from an absence of a critical mass of industry to turn to in forming relationships.

Of the reported relationships, further gaps are reported to be evident in the opportunities for teachers to directly interact with businesses, particularly teachers who do not have a role in careers counselling, and in the limited connections which have been made in some areas of the curriculum, notably the arts and languages.

## **9.3 *Implications for policy directions***

There is sufficient collective experience, systematically gathered over a long period and in diverse contexts to guide and inform practice. Evidence and effective practice from other countries is generally transferable to the Australian context. Successful school-business relationships can be replicated. We have revisited the framework assumptions against the findings from the consultations and survey results, and suggest the following have particular implications for policy directions:

- School-business relationships have multiple and overlapping purposes and objectives. Policy should recognise, and indeed foster, the diverse forms of relationships based within a framework of core criteria for success.
- School-business relationships should be mutually beneficial and, by definition, are only successful if both schools and businesses benefit. They should reflect and support the core values of schools and the desire of business to play a greater role in public education for the broader good.



Relationships with businesses do not undermine the core values and operations of schools. The potential benefits of effective school-business relationships far outweigh any threats to educational values and outcomes.

It has been argued by the United States School Turnaround Group (Mass Insight Education and Research Institute) that none of the current partnership types combine the required capacity, accountability and intensity to deal with the complexity of chronically underperforming schools. The need for urgent turnaround, and the political realities of working with multiple stakeholders, create the need for a new partnership paradigm. Table 9.1 from the Turnaround Group sets out the comparisons of the obstacles to success and proposes a new partnership paradigm. This is one of a number of emerging efforts to re-frame the ways that school-business partnerships are created and managed. The aim is to create a new generation of school-business relationships. While we are not suggesting that the elements of the new paradigm should be uncritically adopted, there are insights that may be relevant to the Australian context.

**Table 9.1: Current and proposed partnership paradigms**

Current Landscape	New Partnership Paradigm
<b>Lacking coherence</b>	<b>Lead partner plays a coordinating function.</b> Supporting partners can have important parts to play in turnaround, where needs are broad and deep, but management of the various partner organisations is key.
<b>Multiple, disconnected initiatives</b>	<b>Any initiative the school takes on fits tightly with advancing the organisational mission.</b> Non-aligned initiatives divert effort from the work of coherent transformation; the scale of challenge in turnaround schools demands that all resources be applied effectively.
<b>Unclear lines of authority</b>	<b>Partner has authority (or shared authority) over key conditions.</b> Partners must be able to gain at least shared control over the conditions they need to implement transformation – particularly people, money, and time.
<b>School, not partner, accountable for results</b>	<b>School and partner share accountability for results.</b> Lead partner needs to be a true, accountable partner in order for partnership to function in the best interests of students.
<b>Expectations for who does what underspecified</b>	<b>Expectations transparent, clearly delineated in MOU.</b> A strong partnership must delineate who is responsible for what types of task, and set the metrics to be used to define success.

Source: Mass Insight Education & Resource Institute 2009

Effective school-business relationships cannot be imposed. Schools and businesses need opportunities to ‘sound each other out’ and explore options for collaboration and contributing to each other’s development. The policy imperative therefore is to foster the environmental conditions to enable such dialogue to occur, and to make strategic investments in supporting infrastructure, enhanced capacity and capability in both sectors, and to open up opportunities for interaction.

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## Appendix 2: Stakeholder organisations consulted

Stakeholder organisations consulted
ACT and Region Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Ardoch Research
Ardoch Youth Foundation
Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia
Association of Heads of Independent Schools of Australia - Western Australia
Association of Independent Schools - National Office
Association of Independent Schools - New South Wales
Association of Independent Schools - ACT
Association of Independent Schools - Victoria
Association of Independent Schools - Western Australia
Association of Independent Schools - Queensland
Association of Principals of Catholic Secondary Schools Australia
Australian Business and Community Network
Australian Business Week
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry
Australian Council for Educational Research
Australian Council of State School Organisations
Australian Industry Group (Melbourne)
Australian Primary Principals' Association
Australian Secondary Principals' Association
Business Council of Australia
Career Industry Council of Australia
Career Link - Western Australia
Catholic Education Commission - New South Wales
Catholic Education Commission New South Wales
Catholic Education Commission of Victoria
Catholic Education Office - Archdiocese of Canberra and Goulburn
Catholic Education Office of Western Australia
Catholic Secondary Principals Association - Western Australia
Catholic Secondary Principals Australia
Chamber of Commerce and Industry - ACT
Chamber of Commerce and Industry - Queensland
Clontarf Aboriginal College
CPA Australia
Dare to Lead for Business
Department of Education and Early Childhood Development - Victoria
Department of Education and Training - New South Wales

### **Stakeholder organisations consulted**

Department of Education and Training - ACT  
Department of Education and Training - Queensland  
Department of Education and Training - Western Australia  
Foundation for Young Australians  
Group Training Australia  
Independent Schools Council of Australia  
Instep Central & South East - Western Australia  
Instep West - Western Australia  
National Australia Bank  
National Catholic Education Commission  
National Electrical and Communications Association (NECA)  
New South Wales Business Chamber  
New South Wales Primary Principals' Association Inc  
New South Wales Secondary Principals' Council  
Onsite - Western Australia  
Principals Australia  
Queensland Secondary Principals' Association  
Queensland Association of State School Principals  
Queensland Catholic Education Commission  
Rangeview Primary School  
Restaurants and Catering - New South Wales  
Schools First  
Small Business Council of Australia - Tasmania  
Social Compass  
St Joseph's College - Echuca, Victoria  
Victorian Association of State Secondary Principals  
Victorian Employers' Chamber of Commerce and Industry  
Victorian Principals' Association  
West Australian Secondary School Executives Association  
Western Australia Primary Principals Association  
Western Australia Secondary School Education Administrators Association  
Worklink - Western Australia