

# National Career Development Strategy (NCDS) Research Project

## Element 2: Qualitative Research

May 2011



**URBIS STAFF RESPONSIBLE FOR THIS REPORT WERE:**

Director	Roberta Ryan
Associate Director	Lee Holloway
Senior Consultant	Sam Ryan Watkins
Consultant	Susan Hatherly
Group Support	Jillian Rose
Job Code	SSP32710



Urbis Social Planning and Social Research team has received ISO 20252 certification, the new international quality standard for Market and Social Research, for the provision of social policy research and evaluation, social planning, community consultation, market and communications research.

© Urbis Pty Ltd  
ABN 50 105 256 228

All Rights Reserved. No material may be reproduced without prior permission. While we have tried to ensure the accuracy of the information in this publication, the Publisher accepts no responsibility or liability for any errors, omissions or resultant consequences including any loss or damage arising from reliance in information in this publication.

**URBIS**  
**Australia Asia Middle East**  
urbis.com.au

## TABLE OF CONTENTS

<b>Acknowledgements</b> .....	<b>1</b>
<b>Acronyms</b> .....	<b>2</b>
<b>Executive Summary</b> .....	<b>3</b>
<b>1 Introduction</b> .....	<b>10</b>
1.1 The policy context.....	11
1.2 The National Career Development Strategy Research Project.....	11
1.3 Terms of reference for Element 2.....	12
1.4 Element 2 research design.....	13
1.5 This report .....	13
1.6 Qualitative analysis.....	14
<b>2 Methodology</b> .....	<b>15</b>
2.1 Stakeholder interviews .....	16
2.2 Focus group discussions.....	17
2.3 One on one interviews.....	18
2.4 Discussion guide design.....	18
<b>3 Young people in schools</b> .....	<b>19</b>
3.1 Notions of career and career development .....	21
3.2 Who is responsible for Career development? .....	25
3.3 Young people's ideas about work and study.....	25
3.4 Influences on young people's career aspirations .....	27
3.5 Meeting the career needs of young people in school.....	30
3.6 Getting the right help at the right time .....	36
3.7 Thinking ahead .....	38
<b>4 Young people in higher education or VET</b> .....	<b>40</b>
4.1 Notions of career and career development .....	42
4.2 Who is responsible for career development? .....	43
4.3 Influences in career development .....	44
4.4 Career development needs and wants of young people in higher education and VET .....	46
4.5 Meeting the career development needs of young people in school.....	48
4.6 Meeting the career development needs of young people in higher education and VET .....	52
4.7 meeting the career development needs of young people not in education.....	53
4.8 Getting the right help at the right time .....	53
4.9 Thinking ahead .....	54
<b>5 Young people not in education</b> .....	<b>56</b>
5.1 Notions of career and career development .....	58
5.2 Who is responsible for career development? .....	61
5.3 Career aspirations of young people not in education.....	62
5.4 Influences in career development .....	64
5.5 Meeting the career development needs of young people in secondary school .....	66
5.6 Meeting the career development needs of young people in higher education and VET .....	70
5.7 Meeting the career development needs of young people not in education.....	72
5.8 Getting the right career information at the right time .....	75
5.9 Thinking ahead .....	76

<b>6</b>	<b>Parents and carers .....</b>	<b>79</b>
6.1	Notions of career and career development .....	80
6.2	Who is responsible for career development? .....	82
6.3	Parent's own work experiences.....	82
6.4	Young people's ideas about work and study.....	84
6.5	The role of parents.....	85
6.6	Meeting the career development needs of young people in schools .....	87
6.7	Meeting the career development needs of young people in higher education and VET.....	90
6.8	Meeting the career development needs of young people not in education.....	91
6.9	Getting the right career development help at the right time .....	92
<b>7</b>	<b>Teachers .....</b>	<b>94</b>
7.1	Notions of career and career development .....	96
7.2	Who is responsible for career development? .....	97
7.3	Young people's ideas about work and study.....	98
7.4	the influence of parents .....	100
7.5	Meeting the career development needs of young people in schools .....	101
7.6	Meeting the career development needs of young people in the VET sector.....	107
7.7	Meeting the career development needs of young people not in education.....	109
7.8	Getting the right career development help at the right time .....	109
<b>8</b>	<b>Career practitioners .....</b>	<b>111</b>
8.1	Introduction .....	112
8.2	Notions of career and career development .....	113
8.3	who is responsible for career development?.....	115
8.4	Influences in young people's career development .....	116
8.5	Meeting the needs of young people in primary school .....	117
8.6	Meeting the career development needs of young people in secondary school .....	117
8.7	Meeting the career development needs of young people in higher education and VET....	122
8.8	Meeting the career development needs of young people not in education.....	123
8.9	Getting the right career development help at the right time .....	124
<b>9</b>	<b>Employers .....</b>	<b>127</b>
9.1	Notions of career and career development .....	129
9.2	Views on young people's career aspirations and needs .....	129
9.3	Who is responsible for career development? .....	132
9.4	Influences in career development of young people.....	133
9.5	Supporting the career development needs of young people.....	134
<b>10</b>	<b>Stakeholders .....</b>	<b>138</b>
10.1	Notions of career and career development .....	139
10.2	National strategy on career development.....	140
10.3	Views on young people's career aspirations and needs .....	140
10.4	Influences in career development.....	145
10.5	Meeting the career development needs of young people in schools .....	146
10.6	Meeting the career development needs of young people in higher education and VET....	148
10.7	Meeting the career development needs of young people not in education.....	148
10.8	Getting the right career development help at the right time .....	149
<b>11</b>	<b>Key Views from Qualitative Research .....</b>	<b>150</b>
11.1	Career development needs and wants of potentially disadvantaged young people .....	153

TABLE OF CONTENTS

**12 Bibliography.....158**

**APPENDICES:**

**Appendix A Stakeholder consultation list**

**Appendix B Focus group specifications**

**Appendix C Communication tools**

**Appendix D Career practitioner consultation list**

**Appendix E Large employer telephone interviews**

**Appendix F Discussion guides**

**TABLES:**

Table 1 – Acknowledgements..... 1

Table 2 – Acronyms used in this report ..... 2

Table 3 – Young people: What do they want - how they want it – when they want it..... 8

Table 4 – Young people: What do they want - how they want it – when they want it..... 156

# Acknowledgements

Urbis would like to gratefully acknowledge the assistance and support provided by the following organisations to this research.

TABLE 1 – ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

ORGANISATIONS
Adult Migrant English Service
Anglicare Launceston
Anglicare Youth Housing Program: Darwin
Baptist Care South Australia
Blacktown Youth Services
Carers Northern Territory
Carers South Australia
Career Industry Council of Australia
Career Development Association of Australia
Career Education Association of Victoria
Cornerstone Youth Services
Fairfield Migrant Resource Centre
Family Resource and Network Support
Goolarri Media Enterprises
Koorie Heritage Trust
Miller College, TAFE NSW
Miller Technology High School
Physical Disability Council of NSW
Whitelion Tasmania
Youth Disability Advocacy Service

# Acronyms

TABLE 2 – ACRONYMS USED IN THIS REPORT

ACRONYM	DEFINITION
ANSTO	Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation
ABCD	Australian Blueprint for Career Development
CALD	Culturally and Linguistically Diverse
CATI	Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing
CDAA	Career Development Association of Australia
CEAV	Career Education Association of Victoria
CICA	Career Industry Association of Australia
COAG	Council of Australian Governments
CSIRO	Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation
CV	Curriculum Vitae
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
ESOL	English for Speakers of Other Languages
FLO	Flexible Learning Options
GAMSAT	Graduate Australian Medical School Admission Test
HR	Human Resources
HSC	High School Certificate
IQ	Intelligence Quotient
IT	Information Technology
ITEC	Industry Education Networking Pty Ltd
NCDS	National Career Development Strategy
NGO	Non-Government Organisation
NP	National Partnership
NSW	New South Wales
PLP	Personal Learning Plan
PR	Public Relations
QC	Queens Council
QLD	Queensland
SA	South Australia
SES	Socio-Economic Status
SES	State Emergency Service
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
UAC	University Admissions Centre
UAI	Universities Admissions Index
VCE	Victorian Certificate of Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VTAC	Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre

# Executive Summary

Urbis was commissioned by the Australian Government Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to identify and analyse the career development needs and wants of young people (5-24 years), their parents, teachers and communities. The purpose of this research is to inform the creation of a National Career Development Strategy (NCDS).

This document is the Qualitative Research Report.

## RESEARCH ACTIVITIES

Urbis conducted an in-depth qualitative exploration, in the form of focus group discussions and one on one interviews. This involved consultations with over 400 people, including:

- a diverse range of young people aged 11-24 years in primary school, secondary school, higher education, Vocational Education and Training (VET) and not in education
- primary, secondary and VET teachers
- parents
- small and large employers
- career practitioners
- and other stakeholders.

Consultations were undertaken across Australia in a mix of metropolitan, regional and rural locations.

## THIS REPORT

The findings of this report explore the following:

- understandings of the terms 'career' and 'career development' by young people, their parents, teachers, career practitioners and employers
- views on who should be responsible for young people's career development needs
- the career ideas and aspirations of young people, and the key influences in relation to these
- the career development needs and wants of young people at different schooling levels, including children in primary school, young people in secondary school and young people in higher education and VET
- the career development needs and wants of young people currently not engaged in education
- awareness of, access to and perceived quality of career development services by young people, their parents, teachers and employers
- the needs and wants of, as well as challenges or barriers faced by, particular groups of young people in obtaining equity of access to quality career development services and resources including:
  - young people at risk
  - Indigenous young people
  - culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) young people
  - young people with a disability
  - young refugees
  - young people with caring responsibilities
  - and young people in regional, rural and remote locations.



The report also examines:

- *what* information, guidance and advice is needed by young people to manage their careers over their lifespan and assist them with making better choices in relation to their learning, education and employment
- *how* young people want career information, guidance and advice communicated to them
- *when* young people want to receive career information, guidance and advice
- the role of online information, web based and interactive technologies in meeting the career development needs of young people and their parents
- and the specific career development needs and wants of parents and carers, teachers and employers.

## DEFINITIONS

In this report, 'career development' is defined as the complex process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan (Miles Morgan 2003)<sup>1</sup>. In some instances, we make a distinction between 'career education' and 'career guidance', which both contribute to a young person's career development. 'Career education' is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences that will assist young people with making informed career decisions (MCEETYA Career Education Taskforce 1998)<sup>2</sup>. 'Career guidance' is counselling and advice provided to young people to assist them with developing a specific understanding of the realistic learning and work opportunities available to them (Miles Morgan 2003).

Career development services can be defined as a wide range of programs and services provided in many different jurisdictions and delivery settings. Their object is to assist individuals to gain the knowledge, skills, attitudes and behaviours to manage their life, learning and work in self-directed ways<sup>3</sup>.

## SUMMARY OF KEY FINDINGS

### *How do young people approach career development?*

This research suggests young people have diverse career development needs and wants, depending on their age, level of schooling and whether they come from a potentially disadvantaged group. After discussing young people's career aspirations, including when they started thinking about what they might like to do and what influenced their ideas, with young people, their parents and teachers, it seems young people generally approach career development in one of the following ways:

- Those that know what they want to do from an early age: these young people generally need information about their chosen career path.
- Those that have general ideas about what they might like to do: these young people need to be given opportunities to refine these ideas and test them out.
- Those that have no idea what they want to do or are not interested: these young people need help to figure out what their interests, values, strengths and weaknesses are and an understanding of how their personal interests and abilities link to particular career paths.

---

<sup>1</sup> Miles Morgan Australia, *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, Draft Prototype, July 2003

<sup>2</sup> Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA), *National Principles for Career Education*, MCEETYA, Canberra, 1998

<sup>3</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*, Revised 2007

## *The provision of career development at different stages of education*

### *Primary school*

There is a general view that primary school students can be introduced to a wide range of careers and have their horizons broadened. This is particularly important for primary students from low socio-economic backgrounds and from regional, rural and remote locations who may have limited exposure to different careers. Broadening their horizons may also be important for combating negative influences of family and culture, and for overcoming gender stereotyping. Primary school students can also be taught general competencies and life skills such as resilience, self-esteem, flexibility, reliability, and communication and interpersonal skills.

Teachers said career development in primary school should include career education but not career guidance.

There is disagreement among teachers on how well career education is currently delivered in primary schools. The key barriers to quality career education in primary school appear to be a crowded curriculum and time restrictions.

### *Secondary school*

Participants report that the provision of career development in secondary schools is patchy and inconsistent across states and territories, and also across and within education sectors (Independent, Government and Catholic). There is a general view that Independent secondary schools provide more comprehensive career development than Government schools, and Catholic schools are somewhere in the middle.

Our discussions with young people in secondary school, and with young people who have finished school and were reflecting on their experiences at school, suggest that secondary students want personalised one on one career information and advice that takes into account their interests, values, strengths and weaknesses. They want this advice to be *independent* and not biased.

Secondary students also said they want a variety of experiential opportunities that give them '*hands on*' practical experience, and allow them to 'test' different career ideas. Related to this, the VET in Schools Program is generally highly regarded by young people, their parents and teachers, and is seen as particularly valuable for students who know what they want to do.

Although many secondary students can articulate their career development needs, some are unfamiliar with the notion of career development, and see it as related only to career guidance (eg getting advice on specific jobs).

There is a general view that years 10-12 are the most important years for career development in secondary school as this is when young people are selecting subjects, undertaking work experience, and considering their post-school work and study options. Many career practitioners and a smaller number of parents, teachers and students say career development should start earlier in secondary school, with some suggesting career development should start as early as year 7.

Several participants said school career practitioners could adopt a '*holistic*' approach, and better engage parents and classroom teachers in the career development of young people. There is a view that parents largely want the best for their children, but have varying abilities to cater to their children's needs. Many parents think schools should seek the opportunity to work in partnership with parents to '*fill the gaps*' in addressing the career development needs and wants of young people who receive limited support from their parents or other family members.

### *Higher education or VET*

The majority of young people that are in, or have been in, higher education or VET said that they have not accessed career development services offered by these institutions. There is a view that universities and VET institutions can market their career development services more effectively. Some students said universities and TAFEs can do more to ensure all students, including those studying by correspondence, have access to these services.

Our discussions suggests that young people in higher education or VET want personalised one on one career advice from someone with industry experience. They also want universities and VET institutions to facilitate greater contact with industry through more integrated learning and internships.

### *Not in education*

Our discussions suggest young people not in education are a particularly diverse group. Some of these young people said they are happy with the career path they have chosen and do not need any specific career development at this stage of their lives. Others said they have no idea what they want to do and have significant career development needs.

Many young people not in education report they do not know how to get career advice and information. There is a general view that there is no central place outside educational institutions where young people can go for career development. Many of these young people said they have had negative experiences with employment service providers, and are forced to seek career information and advice from the internet and their own personal networks. Our discussions suggest that young people not in education rely more heavily than other cohorts on employers for their career development needs. Some of these young people said employers adequately respond to their career development needs but the majority said they do not.

There is a general view that career development services for young people not in education would be more effective if they were free and easy to access, as young people not in education said finance and transport are key barriers for them.

### *Career development needs and wants of potentially disadvantaged young people*

#### *Young people in regional, rural and remote areas*

Young people in regional, rural and remote areas report having limited exposure to the different careers and the day to day existence of universities and VET institutions. Many of these young people cannot get this exposure in their hometown which leads to limited career opportunities and horizons.

Support at key transition points, particularly the transition from school to higher education or VET, and from education to the workforce is reported as important for this cohort. They often have to move away from home for post-school work or study which complicates the transition.

These young people and their parents want information on labour market conditions. They also want detailed advice on university courses across the country so they can match courses to local labour market demands.

It is reported that universities and VET institutions are less likely to visit regional, rural and remote areas so young people, parents and teachers in these locations rely more heavily on online services. Many say the quality of online services (both for career development and for accessing higher education) could be improved.

It is suggested that finance and transport are key barriers for these young people accessing career development. More can be done to promote government assistance and scholarships for people from regional, rural and remote areas.

#### *Indigenous young people*

Our discussions suggest that Indigenous young people are not a homogenous group.

Indigenous young people in regional, rural and remote areas have many of the same needs and wants as those identified under the heading '*Young people in regional rural and remote areas*'.

There is a general view among Indigenous students and parents that Indigenous young people do not necessarily want advice from an Indigenous career practitioner, but they do want advice from someone who has had Indigenous cultural awareness training. It is reported that Indigenous organisations and Indigenous staff in educational institutions are available to provide career development to young Indigenous people.

Some young Indigenous people said maintaining a connection with their community is important, and leaving their community for post-school work or study can make the post-school transition very challenging. Some Indigenous young people are highly mobile and this makes the provision of career development both within and outside educational institutions difficult.

It was frequently reported that young Indigenous people may complete several Certificate IIIs at TAFE in a range of different fields. This VET study is often facilitated by employment service providers. However, there appears to be a lack of opportunity to link this study with employment opportunities.

Young Indigenous people, like all young people, do not want assumptions made about what they can and cannot achieve.

### *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people*

There is view among teachers and career practitioners that schools can better engage CALD parents to help them have realistic and informed expectations of their children, and to ensure they understand the education system in Australia and the opportunities provided by career development.

### *Humanitarian refugees*

Many young refugees we spoke to said they want to develop proficiency in the English language. Furthermore, it would assist them to be exposed to the notion of 'career' and 'career pathways', and to have awareness of the various careers available to them in Australia. They have a poor understanding of the labour market in Australia and cultural norms in Australian workplaces. Transitioning from school to higher education or VET, and from education to employment, can be a challenge for this group.

### *At risk young people*

At risk young people often have poor connections with schools, universities and VET institutions, and families. Trust was strongly reported as an issue for them, so career information and guidance from someone with whom they can have a long-term trusting relationship would be beneficial. They felt employment service providers could more helpfully take a holistic approach to their career development, and consider their interests, values and abilities, rather than just finding them short term and casual work.

At risk young people have barriers in accessing career development services in terms of cost, transport and child care.

### *Young carers*

Young carers reported the need for flexible work and study options that take their personal circumstances into account. Someone who can provide practical support in an empathetic and understanding way would also be valued.

Young carers felt access to career development opportunities are hindered by finances. They report that they cannot get a full-time carer pension if they are full-time students.

### *Young people with a disability*

Young people, career practitioners, teachers and parents report that young people with a disability need specialised advice that takes into account their individual circumstances. Young people with a disability report that it is important their abilities are recognised.

*What career development is needed by young people, how they want it communicated to them, and when do they want to receive it*

Table 3 – Young people: What do they want - how they want it – when they want it

WHAT	HOW	WHEN
Develop general competencies and life skills (eg resilience, flexibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ influence of parents, family and friends</li> <li>▪ personal development activities at school</li> <li>▪ trying different things (eg sport)</li> <li>▪ part-time and casual work</li> <li>▪ travel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in the home</li> <li>▪ continues in schools and higher education or VET</li> <li>▪ development of these skills is a life-long evolving process.</li> </ul>
An understanding of interests, aptitudes and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ trying different things</li> <li>▪ feedback from parents and family, teachers, peers and the wider community</li> <li>▪ school achievement</li> <li>▪ stated preferences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in primary school.</li> </ul>
An understanding of, and exposure to, the different career options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ linking classroom learning to careers</li> <li>▪ workplace visits/ work experience etc</li> <li>▪ presentations in schools</li> <li>▪ research projects into different jobs and careers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in primary school.</li> </ul>
Link abilities with different career options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one on one interviews with career practitioners</li> <li>▪ discussions with teachers, parents, other family members and friends</li> <li>▪ interactive technologies and use of the internet, etc</li> <li>▪ labour market information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in secondary school.</li> </ul>
Opportunity to test out career ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ part-time or casual work</li> <li>▪ work experience</li> <li>▪ other forms of integrated learning (eg VET in Schools Program)</li> <li>▪ visits to universities, VET institutions and workplaces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in secondary school</li> <li>▪ continue in higher education and VET</li> <li>▪ continue after young people have left educational institutions.</li> </ul>
Advice and information about careers options, and pathways to get there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one on one interviews with a career practitioner (for subject advice <u>and</u> advice on post-school options)</li> <li>▪ discussions with people with industry experience</li> <li>▪ discussions with parents and other family members, teachers and peers</li> <li>▪ use of online materials</li> <li>▪ use of written materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in secondary school</li> <li>▪ continue in higher education and VET</li> <li>▪ continue after young people have left educational institutions</li> <li>▪ continue after young people have left educational institutions</li> </ul>

## *The specific career development needs and wants of parents and carers, teachers and employers*

### *Career development needs and wants of parents*

It is reported by parents and teachers that many parents find transition points and the later years of secondary school difficult, because they do not know how to support the career development needs and wants of their children. Parents said they want schools to provide them with more information and to better engage with them on the career development of their children.

Our discussions suggest that there may sometimes be tension between schools and parents on the career development of young people. Some parents report that schools are not adequately catering to their children's needs, and some teachers report that they are trying to manage parents' expectations of their children. There is a general view that schools and parents should seek to work in partnership with each other.

Some parents suggested an online '*one stop shop*' for career information on the labour market, university courses and the cost of these courses, and awards and pay rates, would be valuable.

### *Career development needs and wants of teachers*

There is a general view that teachers can better understand career development and its importance. Professional development to train teachers on how to incorporate career development into classroom or subject teaching would be valuable. There is also a view if parents and school practitioners develop a good working relationship, the holistic approach to career development in secondary schools will be easier to implement. Some primary teachers are of the view that professional development in the area of career development for primary school teachers should be delivered by professionals external to the school.

### *Career development needs and wants of employers*

Our discussions suggest that many employers, particularly small to medium employers, can better understand career development and the benefits it can deliver to their workplace. Young people are often critical of employers expectations of them, suggesting that employers expect them to be able to do more than they can. Some employers report that if employers want work ready graduates, they could work with educational institutions to assist young people to become more work ready (eg through work placements and work experience).

# 1 Introduction



\* In focus groups with young participants, they were asked to draw jobs they would love to do and jobs they would hate to do. Some of these illustrations have been used throughout this report.

In November 2010, Urbis was commissioned by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) to undertake Element 2 of the National Career Development Strategy (NCDS) Research Project.

## 1.1 THE POLICY CONTEXT

In support of the Australian Government's agenda on productivity and workforce participation, the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) has set targets to drive reforms in the areas of schooling, skills and workforce development. These include:

- achieving a national year 12 or equivalent attainment rate of 90% by 2015
- halving the gap for Indigenous students in year 12 or equivalent attainment rates by 2020.

To support the delivery of these reforms, the Australian Government is working together with the State and Territory Governments to implement a National Partnership (NP) Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions. Under the NP, the Australian Government is committed to the implementation and administration of national career development initiatives. This will be facilitated through the creation and implementation of a National Career Development Strategy.

In line with the NP Agreement, the desired outcome of the NCDS is to maximise the educational engagement and attainment of young people and to improve their transition to post-school education, training and employment. More specifically, the NCDS aims to:

- ensure equity of access to appropriate and quality career education and guidance at key transition points
- support all young people to gain the skills to manage their own career development over their lifespan
- support individuals to take responsibility for and manage their own learning and career directions across their lifespan
- ensure that practices are in place that support the growth of career development skills from a very early age.

## 1.2 THE NATIONAL CAREER DEVELOPMENT STRATEGY RESEARCH PROJECT

The purpose of the NCDS Research Project is to assist the Australian Government to provide policy leadership in the career development agenda by building an evidence base and presenting options to inform future directions. The Australian Government is currently responsible for a range of national career development initiatives and resources. National Career Development funding under the NP Agreement may continue to provide support for these existing projects and/or may result in the implementation of new initiatives. The outcomes of the NCDS Research project will influence the future direction to be taken in this regard.

Urbis has been commissioned by DEEWR to undertake Element 2 of the NCDS Research Project. This represents one of the total four elements, as outlined below.

- *Element 1* – a literature review of national and international research in career development
- *Element 2* – identification and analysis of the career development needs and wants of young people (5-24 years), their parents, teachers and communities (**undertaken by Urbis**)
- *Element 3* – options for a national strategy for career development support for young people (5-24 years)
- *Element 4* – a cost-benefit analysis of these options.



The objectives of the research project as a whole are to:

- provide government with a lifelong learning strategy for supporting young peoples' career development
- ensure a strategic approach to the development of a National Career Development Strategy
- eliminate confusion and duplication of career development services in Australia
- identify what career development activities the Australian Government and State and Territory governments are undertaking, what is working well and where there are opportunities for improvement or gaps
- identify the most appropriate approach and intervention point in career development support for key cohort groups
- ensure equity of access for all young people to high quality national career information services, guidance, resources and standards
- ensure that key influencers, such as parents, career practitioners and teachers have access to appropriate career resources and information that they need to support young people
- improve the quality of career advice and guidance in schools, Vocational Education and Training (VET), higher education sectors and outside of the school system
- identify what role State and Territory governments and the Australian Government could have in the career development agenda
- ensure that Australian Government funding is directed towards the most cost-effective option/s for supporting the career development of young people.

### 1.3 TERMS OF REFERENCE FOR ELEMENT 2

Element 2 of the NCDS Research Project involves an identification and analysis of the career development needs and wants of young people, their parents, teachers and communities. Element 2 is important for ensuring that under the NCDS:

- career information, advice and guidance meets the needs and circumstances of individual young people; reflects the ways in which young people want to access information and advice; and is age appropriate
- parents, career practitioners and the wider community have access to career development information and resources that enable them to provide appropriate support to young people.

The terms of reference for this project stipulate that Element 2 will provide analysis on:

- the career development needs, wants and issues of both 'mainstream' young people and harder to reach or potentially disadvantaged young people (including young people at risk, Indigenous young people, Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people, young people with a disability, young refugees, young people with caring responsibilities and young people in regional, rural and remote locations) parents and carers, career practitioners, teachers and employers
- the career development needs and wants of young people at different schooling levels, including children in primary school, young people in secondary school and young people in higher education and VET
- the career development needs and wants of young people currently not engaged in education
- the career development needs at the primary school level to ensure that practices are in place that support the growth of career development skills from a very early age
- the knowledge and skills of the individual where effective career development has occurred
- what is needed by young people to assist them with making better choices in relation to their learning, education and employment

- the role of online information, web based and interactive technologies in meeting the career development needs of young people and their parents
- awareness and perception of career development services, information and guidance by young people, their parents, teachers, communities and employers.

#### 1.4 ELEMENT 2 RESEARCH DESIGN

Element 2 of the NCDS Research Project consists of three key stages of research and reporting.

##### *Stage 1 – Qualitative research*

The purpose of Stage 1 is to undertake an in-depth qualitative exploration, in the form of focus group discussions and one on one interviews, of the career development needs and wants of young people, their parents, teachers and communities. This report details the findings from Stage 1.

##### *Stage 2 – Quantitative research*

The purpose of Stage 2 is to undertake quantitative research to supplement and support the qualitative research findings. Stage 2 involves national online and Computer Assisted Telephone Interviews (CATI) surveys administered to over 5,000 respondents. A separate report detailing the findings from Stage 2 will be submitted on the 8<sup>th</sup> April 2011.

##### *Stage 3 – Synthesis Report*

The Synthesis Report will be a thematic report that pulls together the results from the qualitative research and the quantitative research to enable a holistic and comprehensive understanding of the key findings from Element 2. The Synthesis Report will explore and demonstrate how the quantitative research aligns with, builds on and supports the qualitative research. The Synthesis Report will identify where the findings and insights that emerged from the qualitative consultations are quantified or confirmed by the quantitative research and where there are points of divergence. The Final Synthesis Report will be submitted on the 5<sup>th</sup> May 2011.

#### 1.5 THIS REPORT

This document is the Qualitative Report for Element 2 of the NCDS Research Project.

The structure of the Report is as follows:

- Chapter 1:Introduction
- Chapter 2:Methodology
- Chapter 3:Young People in School
- Chapter 4:Young People in Higher Education or VET
- Chapter 5:Young People Not in Education
- Chapter 6:Parents and Carers
- Chapter 7:Teachers
- Chapter 8:Career Practitioners
- Chapter 9:Employers
- Chapter 10:Stakeholders
- Chapter 11: Key Views from Qualitative Research.

## 1.6 QUALITATIVE ANALYSIS

Urbis consulted with 404 people as part of the qualitative component of the Element 2 project. A diverse range of cohort types and stakeholders participated in the research. A variety of views, issues and experiences were discussed in the focus groups and interviews. Given the volume and diversity of research subjects, it is not possible for all views and experiences to be documented in this report. In order to provide an overview of key findings, an analysis of the main insights and issues is provided. This report highlights key themes and issues common across participants, and provides an analysis of issues and themes specific to the different population cohorts. Where demographic similarities and differences exist, these are noted. We have used direct quotes from participants to demonstrate the views expressed. We have also included examples in blue text boxes to give practical illustrations of the themes and issues identified. Our key findings for each chapter have been presented in dot point format in green text boxes at the start of each chapter.

## 2 Methodology



The qualitative component of Element 2 of the NCDS Research Project involved a mixed method approach comprising focus group discussions and in-depth one on one interviews. This section of the report provides a detailed outline of the qualitative methodology, including:

- the process for identifying key stakeholders, the purpose of the interviews and the discussion topics
- the composition and distribution of focus groups, and the methods for recruiting focus group participants
- the process for identifying career practitioners and large employers and the methods for recruiting these participants
- the design of the qualitative discussion guides.

## 2.1 STAKEHOLDER INTERVIEWS

A total of 23 stakeholder interviews were conducted. Interviews were conducted with a range of national and state/territory based government and non-government organisations.

In order to identify stakeholders an initial list was developed with input from both DEEWR and Urbis. The list was then refined and finalised in consultation with DEEWR.

The interviews were deliberately targeted to ensure representation of a broad range of stakeholder views, including the following:

- organisations that represent and support young people
- organisations that represent and support parents
- career practitioner industry associations
- school associations
- higher education and VET sector organisations
- organisations that represent and support teachers and principals
- state and territory education and training departments
- Indigenous education and training organisations.

Stakeholder interviews were generally conducted in the early stages of the Element 2 Research Project. The purpose of the stakeholder discussions was to inform our thinking and approach to career development, and to identify and inform themes and issues to pursue as part of this project. We also sought stakeholder views and input on the following:

- key issues regarding the provision of career development to young Australians at different schooling levels and different levels of engagement with the education sector
- challenges or difficulties faced by particular groups of young people in obtaining equity of access to quality career development services and resources
- the adequacy of the current career development system in Australia and the identification of key gaps
- any relevant published or unpublished research and literature
- key questions to consider when undertaking focus group discussions with and designing surveys for young people, parents, teachers, career practitioners and employers.

The majority of stakeholder interviews were conducted as one on one telephone interviews.

For the stakeholder consultation list and further details on the consultation methods please refer to Appendix A.

## 2.2 FOCUS GROUP DISCUSSIONS

A total of 48 focus groups were conducted<sup>4</sup>. There was an average of eight participants in each group, with a total of 358 focus group participants. The discussions lasted for approximately 90 minutes and all participants were offered a financial incentive.

### 2.2.1 *Make up and distribution of groups*

The makeup and distribution of focus groups was designed to capture a representation of relevant demographics. Groups were as follows:

- 34 groups with children and young people aged 11-24 years
- 6 groups with parents (two with parents of young people in secondary school, one with parents of young people in VET, one with parents of young people in higher education, and two with parents of young people not in education)
- 7 groups with teachers (four with primary school teachers, two with secondary school teachers and one with VET teachers)
- 1 group with small employers.

**State:** groups were held across seven states and territories including New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Western Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory.

**City/town:** to account for regional differences, groups were conducted in metropolitan (Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane<sup>5</sup>, Adelaide, Hobart), regional (Launceston, Darwin, Cairns) and remote (Ceduna, Broome<sup>6</sup>) locations.

**Suburb:** in the metropolitan locations, groups were held in suburbs that were likely to attract a mix of participants across the socio-economic status (SES) spectrum.

**Potentially disadvantaged/harder to reach cohorts:** groups were conducted with a range of young people including: CALD young people, Indigenous young people, at risk young people, young people with a disability, young people with caring responsibilities and young refugees.

**Age:** groups included young participants aged 11-24 years. Groups were conducted with a mix of different age groupings.

**Education status:** groups were conducted with young people in primary school, young people in secondary school, young people in higher education and VET, and young people not in education.

See Appendix B for further details of the focus group composition.

### 2.2.2 *Recruitment*

Recruitment of the 48 focus groups comprised a mixed method approach, involving: the recruitment of 'mainstream' or easier to reach participants through an accredited professional recruitment agency; and the recruitment of harder to reach or potentially disadvantaged participants through relevant community organisations.

Recruitment through community organisations involved Urbis identifying organisations working with the desired cohorts of young people, identifying their willingness and ability to assist with recruitment and ongoing liaison in relation to how the young people might be selected, the timing and venue of the group,

---

<sup>4</sup> This includes some 'mini groups', mainly to facilitate better communication with Indigenous participants.

<sup>5</sup> Nine groups were originally scheduled for Brisbane. Three of these were undertaken in late December 2010. Due to the floods that occurred in Brisbane in January 2011 the outstanding groups were relocated. Adelaide was added as a new fieldwork location. Some Brisbane groups were relocated to Adelaide and others were relocated to an already existing location (ie Sydney).

<sup>6</sup> Groups were moved from Kununurra to Broome due the small population size of Kununurra and the difficulties this presented in recruiting focus group participants.

and other necessary arrangements. Urbis developed a suite of communication materials to help facilitate this process. A financial donation was also offered to each community organisation for their assistance.

See Appendix B for further details on the recruitment of focus group participants and Appendix C for the communication tools developed for liaising with community organisations.

## 2.3 ONE ON ONE INTERVIEWS

### 2.3.1 *Career practitioners*

A total of 15 career practitioners were interviewed. Consultations with career practitioners were conducted in the form of one on one in-depth telephone interviews, because it was not practical to bring career practitioners dispersed around the country together for a focus group session. In-depth interviewing enabled us to explore issues in detail with career practitioners in various geographic locations.

Career practitioners were identified and reached through peak industry associations. The Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA) and the Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV) both provided Urbis with comprehensive lists of career practitioners to potentially participate in an interview. Some further career practitioners were also identified during stakeholder interviews.

Drawing from the pool of potential contacts provided, we selected career practitioners to ensure a spread of participants across geography and sector. Interviews were conducted with career practitioners in every state and territory, and also with those working in schools (Independent, Government and Catholic), Technical and Further Education (TAFE), universities, and the private sector.

Please refer to Appendix D for the career practitioner consultation list.

### 2.3.2 *Large size employers*

Eight one on one in-depth telephone interviews were conducted with large employers. We decided telephone interviews were preferable to a focus group session because large employers have limited time and are notoriously hard to engage in research.

Interview participants were identified through a list of contacts provided by DEEWR as well as through Urbis' own personal and professional networks. Interviews were conducted with employers across a range of industries and included some of Australia's biggest companies and biggest employers of young people (eg Woolworths and McDonalds).

Please refer to Appendix E for a list of large employers who participated in an interview.

## 2.4 DISCUSSION GUIDE DESIGN

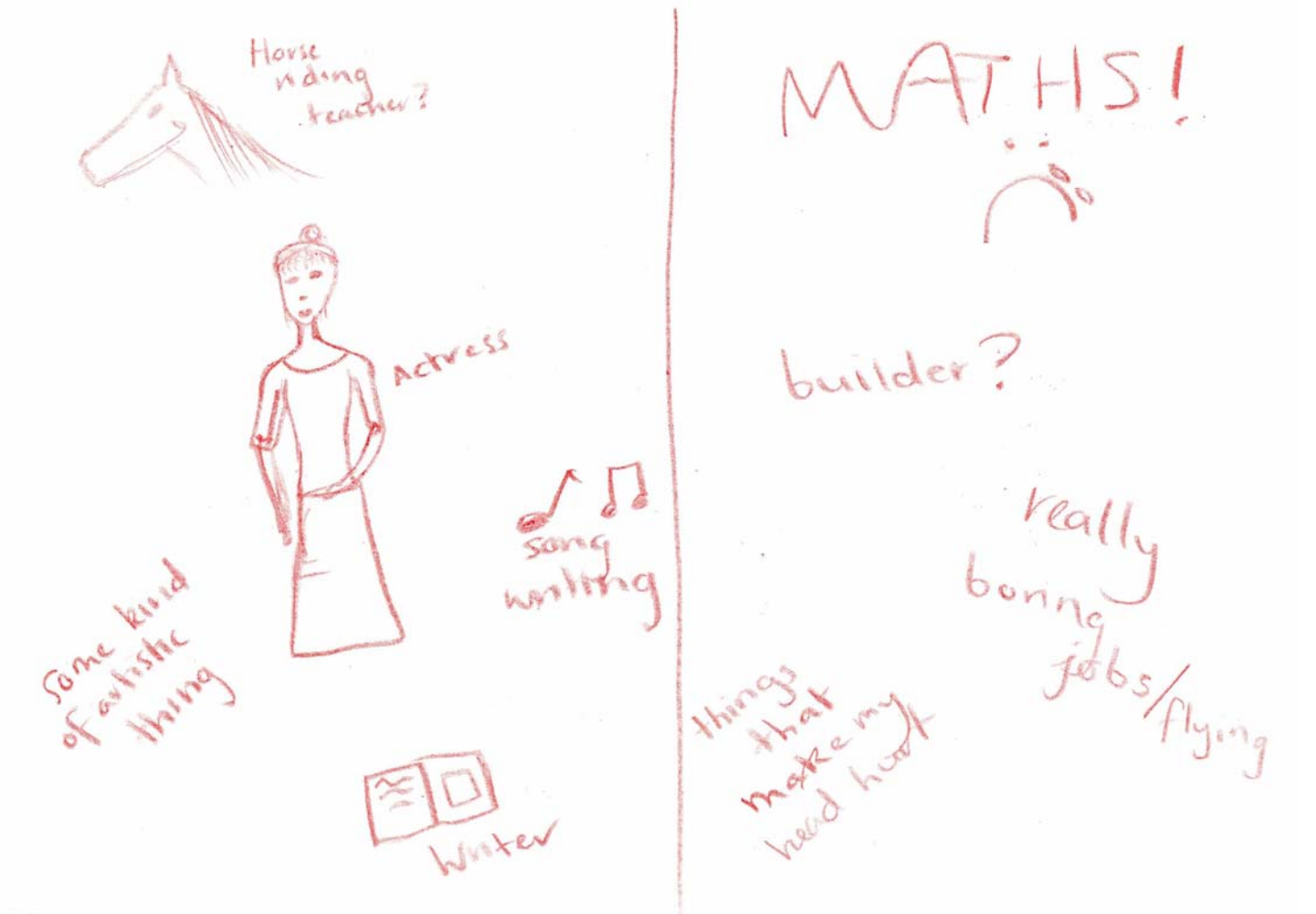
A total of 13 discussion guides were developed for the qualitative focus group and interview consultations. The discussion guides were developed taking into consideration the seminal studies identified by the contractors of Element 1 and feedback from the stakeholder interviews.

The discussion guides were pilot tested in the first round of focus groups conducted in December 2010, and changes were made accordingly. Feedback and input on the draft guides was also provided by both DEEWR and the contractors of the other three elements.

To the extent it was appropriate, the discussion guides were designed to ensure consistency regarding the range of issues explored. This includes consistency within the same cohort, for example, having common core questions across the three streams of young people (young people at school, young people in higher education and VET, and young people not in education). It also includes consistency across cohort types, for example, having common core questions across the young people in secondary school, parents of young people in secondary school and secondary school teacher groups.

Please refer to Appendix F for the focus group discussion guides.

### 3 Young people in schools





### Key findings:

- Primary school students have ideas about the work they might like to do, influenced by: parents, exposure, interests, school subjects, and jobs they perceive to be fun and well paid. Traditional gender roles are evident when primary students speak about careers.
- Primary students participate in a range of classroom activities designed to raise their awareness of different jobs. Workplace visits help primary students better understand the world of work. The effectiveness of guest speakers in schools depends on the speaker's ability to engage effectively with children.
- The majority of secondary school students say they will have a career even though most do not know what their career will involve. Some secondary students say there are no barriers to having a career, while others are less confident about this.
- Secondary students identified a range of life skills and general competencies needed to manage their careers.
- Most secondary students say young people themselves are responsible for their own career development. Some Indigenous students say parents and families are primarily responsible for the career development of young people.
- Parents and other family members appear to have the most significant influence on school students' career aspirations.
- The quality of information and advice provided by school based career practitioners on subject selection and post- school options is variable, as is access to school career practitioners.
- When done well, work experience and the VET in Schools Program are valuable career development activities. Students have mixed views on other career development initiatives such as career expos, Personal Learning Plans, Set Plans, Aptitude Testing and the Job Guide publication.
- School students have a range of views on when career development should be provided. Many identified year 10 as an important point for information and advice on subject selection and year 12 as critical for practical advice on writing resumes, interview skills, applying for university and TAFE and pathways to employment. Some said leaving career development until the later years of school was leaving it too late and some younger students said they would like to access career development services earlier.
- Students prefer to use a mix of different methods (mainly speaking to someone in person, the internet and workplace visits) to receive career information and advice from a range of sources. Students did not nominate school based practitioners as who they would go to first for career information and advice. Several issues regarding access to and perceived quality of information and advice provided by career practitioners were identified. Students said they prefer to receive information and advice from someone working in the industry, parents or other family members, a classroom teacher, peers, the internet, someone from the higher education or VET sector.
- Some potentially disadvantaged cohorts mentioned community organisations as a source of career information and advice. Young refugees said it is important for them to speak with someone in person, one on one, given there is often a language barrier. Indigenous students in Broome said they are happy to receive advice from Indigenous or non-Indigenous people *'so long as they know what they are talking about'*.
- Students want career information and advice to be independent and are sceptical of some career development initiatives and resources they deem to be promotional or positive spin.

Urbis conducted 12 focus group discussions with school students across five locations. The groups included:

- Primary students aged 11-12 years in Sydney.
- Indigenous secondary students aged 12-13 years in Sydney<sup>7</sup>.
- Secondary students aged 12-13 years in Broome.
- Secondary students aged 14-16 in Darwin.
- Secondary students aged 14-16 in Ceduna.
- CALD secondary students aged 15-18 years in Sydney. For this research CALD is defined as either the young person or one of their parents having been born in a non-English speaking country.
- Refugee secondary students aged 15-18 years in Sydney. Eight participants in this group were from Africa and two were from Asia. Participants arrived in Australia between 2003 and 2008.
- At risk secondary students, aged 15-18 years in Sydney. These participants were deemed to be at risk of disengaging from school. Participants were recruited through a youth service that works with secondary school students who are of a language background other than English identified by the school community as facing multiple barriers to remaining at school. Students are targeted at the critical transition point of reaching the legal school leaving age, as well as year 11 and 12 students assessed to be at risk of not completing two years post compulsory education or training.
- Secondary students with a disability aged 15-18 in Sydney<sup>8</sup>. All participants in this cohort had a mental or developmental disability.
- Secondary students aged 17-18 in Cairns.
- Secondary students aged 17-18 in Broome.
- Indigenous secondary students aged 17-18 in Darwin.

This chapter details the findings of these focus group discussions.

### 3.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

#### 3.1.1 *Defining the term 'career'*

##### *Primary school students*

Primary school students from Sydney were all familiar with the word 'career', indicating they had heard it used at school, on television and by their parents. Primary students said a career refers to a job or the kind of work someone does. However, they also said it can be broader than just the work you do, and can mean *'what you want to do with your life'*. A career is linked to an individual's passions and involves a goal that they actively pursue. All primary students said there are some careers for boys (eg builder, stunt driver, architect, mechanic and priest) and some for girls (eg beautician, hairdresser, assistant and nun). One female student said *'girls might be better at certain jobs than boys'*, while a male student said *'have you ever seen a girl builder?'*

##### *Secondary school students*

Secondary students most commonly said a career means a job or paid employment. Nearly all of the students with a disability in Sydney are not familiar with the term 'career'. The one participant who does have an understanding of the term said a career means *'working'*, a *'job'* and *'not being at school anymore'*. Some 14-16 year old Indigenous students in Broome said the word 'career' also means an

---

<sup>7</sup> This group was originally intended to be Indigenous students aged 11-12 years in primary school. Due to difficulties with recruiting for this group the specifications were altered.

<sup>8</sup> There were four focus group participants for this cohort and two one on one telephone interviews.

apprenticeship, while Indigenous students in Sydney thought it could include running your own business. Most students spoke of 'career' as relating to their future. 17-18 year olds in Broome and Cairns said a career is something you begin developing or studying for once you leave school. Young people in Darwin said a 'career is where you end up'. CALD students in Sydney said teenagers and young people can have jobs but that adults generally have careers.

Most secondary students identified a career as 'the way you make a living' or a means of earning an income. 12-13 year olds in Broome said a career improves an individual's quality of life.

*If you don't have a good career you don't have a good life.*

(Secondary student, 12-13 years, Broome)

Most secondary students also identified a career as encompassing not only an individual's professional life but also their personal life, referring to a career as 'your life' or 'what you do with your life'. At risk young people from Sydney said a career relates to the work you do, and the life you are able to make with your family. A few participants spoke of the need for work/life balance, with some commenting they want a 9am-5pm job so they can travel and spend time with their family.

*A career is a lifestyle; it is a job that connects with the life you would like to lead.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

[A career is] *what you do with your life and how you can live with your family.*

(At risk secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

For some, a career involves a lifetime commitment, with participants commenting a career is what you do for the rest of your life. Some students said a career also signifies stability. In about half of the focus groups, participants said individuals need to invest in and work at achieving a career. A career is something you actively pursue and gradually build up to.

*You have to work towards it, it is not something that just happens.*

(CALD secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

*You can start as an assistant, build and study and you get better and work up to the top to owning the business.*

(Secondary student, 15-18 years, Ceduna)

A few students associated a career with doing the type of work you are interested in and really enjoy. Some students said there is a distinction between a career and a job.

*I reckon there is a diff between a career and a job, when you think of a career you usually think of some sort of training involved, like you can just have a job at Foodland for the rest of your life or you can have a career which involves some sort of training, and you build on it and you are not stuck, you can go higher.*

(Secondary student, 15-18 years, Ceduna)

The majority of secondary students said they will have a career, although at this stage, most do not have a clear idea of what their career 'will look like'. Participants most commonly said they want a career because it provides opportunities to make money. One group of 12-13 year olds from Broome said a career is necessary for a high quality of life.

*Because you see what people without careers are like and you don't want to be like that...they are lazy hoboos, they have regrets and no money or home.*

(Secondary student, 12-13 years, Broome)

*A career is getting a good job and a good house.*

(Indigenous secondary student, 12-13 years, Sydney)

Some students said there are no barriers to having a career. 12 -13 year olds from Broome said it is easy to get a job and therefore easy to have a career. Participants from Ceduna and Cairns said if people want a career they can have one. Young refugees in Sydney said they will have a career because that is '*what everyone does*'.

Conversely, one student from Broome who has a clear idea of what he wants to do and has already selected his preferred university course is not confident he will have a career. He said he will get a degree, but this does not mean he will have a career. He said he knows other people that have degrees but cannot secure the jobs they want. For him, a career is different from a job, as a career specifically relates to doing the type of work you want to do.

Secondary students said other benefits to having a career include security, opportunities to grow and move forward, and opportunities to try new things. Some said a career provides personal satisfaction and fulfilment, and gives people something productive to do with their time. Indigenous students in Darwin spoke of being able to establish a reputation through the job you do. Participants from the rural location of Ceduna said a career provides opportunities to travel and go to different places.

Some participants in Darwin said although there are more jobs available nowadays, it is hard for young people to access work directly upon finishing school as employers require young people to have tertiary qualifications. This group said there is more competition for jobs and that employers expect young people to conform more than in the past, for example, by having no body piercings.

There is a perception among some of the Indigenous students in Broome that a career means having the same job forever. One participant said he thought he would have a career if he stuck with whatever he chose to do. Another participant said it was too early for him to know if he would stick with the same job forever and therefore too early to know if he would have a career. A participant in Ceduna expressed a similar view, saying he does not want a career because:

*I don't plan on doing the same thing forever ... feel stuck, after I do an apprenticeship I would want to go and do something else, don't want to do the same thing.*

(Secondary student, 15-18 years, Ceduna)

### 3.1.2 What does 'career development' mean?

Secondary students have different definitions of the term 'career development', with many students having a limited understanding of the term. Nearly all students with a disability from Sydney said they had not heard of the term 'career development'. One participant said he was familiar with the term but commented:

*I have heard someone say it [career development] before but no one has ever said it in relation to me.*

(Secondary student with a disability, 15-18 years, Sydney)

CALD young people from Sydney, for example, said they were not familiar with the term 'career development' and were unable to articulate what it means. Nearly all participants in the at risk and Indigenous group in Sydney were also not familiar with the term. One participant in the at risk group suggested it was about having a job and then developing in it. He gave the example of starting a job at the bottom and then developing over time to become a manager.

Similarly, Indigenous young people in Broome were largely unacquainted with the term and took some time to answer the question, eventually suggesting it means an '*apprenticeship*', '*job development or work experience*' and '*skills*'. Refugees in Sydney said 'career development' means '*improving your career*' or '*taking yourself to the next level*'. Participants from Ceduna said it means developing towards your career or working on what you want to do.

Other students mentioned specific aspects of career development, indicating that school, work experience, part time/casual jobs and further study and training all contribute to career development. Some of the students with a disability from Sydney were not familiar with the terms 'apprenticeship', 'university' or 'TAFE'.

A few students spoke about career development as an ongoing, lifelong process. One participant from Cairns commented:

*Career development starts from when you are young, I guess like from our age when you are still at school and you think about what you want to do and then you go to uni or get an apprenticeship and then you just try and sell and get higher in those areas until you are the big boss and you get paid more, and have more responsibility. As you get older you can handle that more and not stress or whatever.*

(Secondary student, 17-18 years, Cairns)

Some young people from Darwin said *'the better you do at school, the better the job you will have'*, and as such made a conscious effort to get good grades. At risk students from Sydney, many of whom were newly arrived migrants, said young people need to work towards a career from a young age, adding that if they put in the hard work now it will be easier for them in the long run. They said this is currently difficult for them to do, because they are new to Australia and still have a lot to learn. They said they need to work hard to improve their English so they can do well at school and have career choices. They also said that although working towards a career will be challenging, *'if it is what you want to do, and you love it, that makes things easier'*.

*You have to put in the hard work when you are young because when you are older you are tired and don't have the energy to work hard.*

(At risk secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

12-13 year olds in Broome predominately said career development means *'getting more ideas of what to do'* and *'getting prepared for life'*.

#### *Skills and competencies needed to manage lifelong career development*

Participants generally said they need communication, confidence, and resilience to manage their careers.

*In every career you need to have social skills to get along with people.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

In addition to these skills, Indigenous young people in Broome said literacy and numeracy skills, and knowing how to listen are important. Some said they have learnt these skills from school, the Football Academy (for Aboriginal boys), the Basketball Academy (for Aboriginal girls) and through their parents and grandparents.

A few students with a disability in Sydney spoke of resilience (ie *'sometimes I have a bad day...but my teacher says it's ok, that's just life'*), communication skills, knowing how to listen and follow instructions (ie *'doing what the teacher says'*), reliability, and being focused (ie *'I have my mind on the job, I know what I am doing'*). These participants indicated they learn these skills from their parents and school teachers. One student with a disability said he learns about communicating in the workplace in the business administration course he is undertaking at TAFE where they complete tasks on how to use a telephone, write letters and send emails. One student with a disability also spoke on needing practical skills, such as knowing how to catch a bus, be on time and buy your own lunch. He said he learns these skills by doing work experience (at a supermarket, retail chain and leagues club) and by catching the bus to and from school.

Refugees in Sydney emphasised the importance of English and maths to succeed in their chosen career. They also said they will need respect, consideration for others, and trust. Most refugees said they have these skills, but said there is room for improvement. They said they have developed these skills from their parents, friends, teachers and through their own experiences.

Maths was also considered important by Indigenous students in Sydney, with one student commenting *'maths is useful for everything'*. At risk young people in Sydney, many of whom were newly arrived migrants, said the most important skill for them to develop is proficiency in the English language. All of the Indigenous students in the Sydney group felt they were learning general competencies including communication skills and the ability to learn from mistakes, in school.

Some of the 12-13 year olds in Broome said they have developed general competencies and skills, including perseverance, confidence, communication skills, resilience and patience, through primary school and just *'by growing up'*. Others in this group said they sometimes have these skills, and a few said they do not have these skills.

*No, I don't have these skills. I get shy, don't have much resilience, am not confident and always seem to think I will fail. My parents and school try to encourage me and give me advice but I still need to develop these skills.*

(Secondary student, 12-13 years, Broome)

Students in the later years of high school (ie years 10-12) spoke of needing time and financial management skills, organisation, leadership, initiative, a good work ethic, punctuality, reliability, business management skills, computer literacy and research skills to manage their careers.

Students said part time and casual work contribute to the development of the skills and competencies they need to manage their careers. Some secondary students did have part time and casual jobs, which they said has helped them develop these skills. One participant, for example, said his part time job had taught him a lot about patience and time management. Some of the refugee participants from Sydney, none of which currently have part time or casual jobs, indicated they face barriers to securing part time work which impacts negatively on their ability to develop these skills and competencies. Some said they had tried to apply for jobs at fast food or retail chains but thought that employers were *'racist'* and would not employ them because of the colour of their skin.

### 3.2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Most students said young people themselves are responsible for their own career development. The group of refugees from Sydney were adamant that *'you, yourself and you'* are responsible for your career development *'because no one else is going to help you with your future'*. Young people said parents and families, teachers, school based career practitioners, and workplaces have an important contribution to make in supporting and encouraging the career development needs of young people. Schools have a particularly important role to play in preparing young people for post-school life.

In contrast, most participants in the group of Indigenous students in Broome said parents and families are primarily responsible for the career development of young people. Family were also identified as being important by Indigenous secondary students in Sydney.

### 3.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT WORK AND STUDY

#### *Primary school students*

All primary students from Sydney said they had thought about the type of work they might like to do, and all but one student had some ideas. Ideas about the type of work primary students want to do are influenced by:

- Their likes and interests. One participant, for example, wants to be a vet because he loves animals.
- What they have been exposed to. One participant has a pet snake at home and wants to be a reptile handler. Another participant wants to be a nuclear physicist at the Australian Nuclear Science and Technology Organisation (ANSTO) following a holiday tour of the organisation.
- The subjects they enjoy at school. One participant likes maths and wants to be an accountant, while another participant likes performing arts and wants to be a singer.

- Jobs they perceive to be well paid. Several participants said they are interested in particular jobs (eg doctor, engineer, accountant, etc) because *'you get paid a lot of money'*.
- Jobs they perceive to be fun.

Primary students all thought they would go to university. Some had already drawn links between the work they want to do and what they want to study at university. For example, one participant wants to be a nuclear physicist and said she would study science and maths at university. In speaking about what to study at university others said *'I'm not sure yet, whatever I want to'*.

Some primary school students have made a connection between their strengths and aptitudes and their future career aspirations. Some said they understand what they are good at based on the things they get good marks at school in, are in the top classes for, enjoy doing, do often and get practice at.

Primary school students said they do not want to do work that is boring, poorly paid, has limited opportunities to socialise, is dangerous or is ill-suited to their skills and interests.

### *Secondary school students*

Secondary school students' ideas and views about post-school work and study vary significantly. A small number of students said they knew from an early age what they wanted to do. One 17-18 year old in Broome said he developed an interest in electronics when he was 10 years old and decided he wanted to be an electrician. More recently, he had undertaken work experience as an electrician which confirmed it was the right choice for him. A student from Ceduna said in year 8 she decided to be an accountant, an idea influenced by the perceived potential to make money. *'My uncle is an accountant and I see what he can buy and do'*. One refugee from Sydney said he had been exposed to war and suffering and as a consequence decided from a young age to do medical science so he could help others.

Many secondary students, including students in the later years of secondary school, said they had only recently begun to think seriously about what they want to do post-school. A small number of these students had subsequently developed firm ideas on what they want to do. Several young people said they want to be their own boss and do not want to work for others. Some of these young people had bad experiences working for *'bad'* bosses in part time jobs. When asked about their post-school plans, 14-16 year old Indigenous students in Broome all said they would go to TAFE and/or do an apprenticeship. None of these students said they would go to university. One Indigenous student in Sydney said they wanted to go to TAFE, but was not sure what she wanted to study. Many of the students in Broome had earlier said they wanted to be athletes, although none of them spoke of taking steps towards a sports-related career. These young people had clearly made a distinction between *'dream'* jobs and *'real'* jobs.

Other secondary students did not have very firm or specific ideas about post-school work or study, despite some being in years 10-12. Some participants said their main focus was on getting through school and that post-school work or study *'seems a bit far away'*. Many had general ideas (e.g. go into the defence force, do an apprenticeship, attend university, etc.) but had not worked out the details. Some students said this is normal because most people their age are still *'pondering'* their options. Some participants said their ideas about work and study change regularly.

Most of the students with a disability from Sydney have ideas about work, which are generally related to their likes and interests, but not specific career aspirations. One participant, for example, said she has been interested in horses from a young age and would *'really like to work with horses'* although she is *'not really sure'* of what job opportunities are available to her. Another participant said he would like to be a policeman *'so I can turn on the sirens'*.

Most of the 12-13 year olds in Broome did not have firm or specific ideas about post-school work or study. However, they had begun to think generally about what they might do, and many expressed a preference in relation to their immediate post-school options (ie go to TAFE, attend university, or enter the workforce). This was similarly the case with many Indigenous students in Sydney. One student, aged 13, intended to *'take a year off to lay around the house'* before going to university, while another said she wanted to go *'straight to university and design school'*. Another student, who wanted to be a mechanic, was unsure what he would do to get there, but said that he would study and work at the same time.

At least one participant in each group of secondary students said they still did not have any idea of what they want to do.

### 3.4 INFLUENCES ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAREER ASPIRATIONS

Parents and other family members appear to have the most significant influence on school students' career aspirations by shaping their ideas, raising or lowering their ambitions, or pushing them in a certain direction. In some cases parents appear to be supporting young people to achieve career aspirations that are linked to their skills and interests. For others, particularly younger children, it seems that their career aspirations are shaped by the limited jobs they have been exposed to through various family members. Some parents also appear to push their children into certain career paths, although these do not always align with the child's interests. Some examples are outlined in the text box below.

#### Snapshot: The influence of family

- An Indigenous young person from Broome said he wants to be an apprentice fitter and turner. This is what his cousin does and his cousin has promised to help him get a job.
- An Indigenous young person from Darwin said her parents have very high career aspirations for her. They are pushing her into legal studies so she can become a Queens Council (QC). The young person was following this path but is *'not exactly enjoying it'*.
- A 12-13 year old from Broome wants to work for his father's charter business. He has been helping his dad on charter trips for some time.
- A 17-18 year old from Broome decided in year 8 to be an architect because he liked drawing shapes and graphs, and his parents were pushing him to do something that pays well. His uncle is a builder and took him to visit work sites which made him realise he likes the building industry.
- a 14-16 year old from Darwin said *'my mum thinks I would be good at working with animals and customs but I think that's stupid because I want to be a chef'*.
- A 12-13 year old from Broome said he wants to go to university 'to be smart' like his cousin who went to university.
- A primary student from Sydney said he wants to work at Kennard's Hire like his dad. He said his dad could get him a job there because he knows the area manager.
- A young refugee from Sydney said her elder sibling is a nurse, and that this has influenced her decision to also become a nurse.
- A CALD student from Sydney said *'Asian parents want you to be a dentist or a doctor but they do listen to what you want to do, every now and then they tell me to study hard, it is annoying'*.
- Several participants from Ceduna spoke of their ambitions to have better careers than their parents have, some of whom *'got whatever jobs they could pick up'*. Some participants said their parents always complain about money, they want high paying jobs so they do not have to struggle like their parents did.
- Some Indigenous students in the Sydney group were adamant they would have *'have better jobs'* than their parents.
- A few students with a disability in Sydney indicated their parents play a very important role in supporting them to achieve positive work and study outcomes. As one participant commented *'all I know is my dad is going to sort me out'*.

Some students, particularly CALD and refugee students, said they either did not discuss their career options with their parents or dismissed the suggestions their parents made.

Young people said their ideas about post-school work and study are also influenced by friends, teachers and the media. Teachers can be both a positive and negative influence in relation to young people's career development. Inspiring teachers can spark a young person's interest in a particular subject and the related career options. High quality teachers were also said to contribute to students excelling at particular subjects and can play a role in encouraging students' when they display an aptitude or skills for something. Some young people also said their teachers discussed subject selection or post-school options with them, which is often thought to be useful. Students said that *'if you don't like the teacher you are guaranteed to fail in that subject'*. All students in the Indigenous group in Sydney said they would not



Speak to their teachers about careers or student because they don't like the teachers and *'they don't like me'*. Some students also said that teachers could act as a deterrent for choosing subjects they are interested in doing. Some specifically chose not to do subjects based on their views of the teacher.

*If you have a bad teacher you won't learn as much.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

*The teacher makes a difference. I got good marks last year and was pretty much failing English beforehand and the difference is we got a new teacher who made it fun.*

(Secondary student, 17-18 years, Cairns)

*We don't listen [to the maths teacher] – she just gives us her life story.*

(Indigenous secondary student, 12-13 years, Sydney)

Some students said they discuss their post-school work and study options with their friends, with some young people interested in attending the same university or TAFE as their friends or to work in a similar industry. Friends also appear to play a role in the subject selection of young people. Some students said they picked subjects based on what their friends have chosen. Friends can also play a role in influencing decisions on when young people choose to leave school. One participant, for example, said all his friends left school in years 10 and 11 to do apprenticeships. Because of this, he was tempted to leave school and do an apprenticeship too but in the end decided to complete year 12.

Some students said the media can play a role in shaping and broadening their ideas about post-school career options. This was particularly mentioned in relation to sporting figures and reality television shows. Even the at risk students, many of whom had been in Australia for less than a year, mentioned the television show *Master Chef* in the context of discussing a career as a chef. Some young people indicated that although the media influences career aspirations, these are often fantasy jobs and do not translate into anything concrete.

Some secondary students recognise the importance of career aspirations being linked to an individual's interests, skills and abilities. For a career to be enjoyable it helps if it is linked to an individual's interests and to be viable options it should be linked to your skills and aptitudes. One participant, speaking about the career aspirations of his friends, said:

*[They] have some crazy ideas. Two want to team up as a barrister and a lawyer but they are not really that smart.*

(CALD secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Other participants had also made a link between their career aspirations and their interests, skills and aptitudes. Some examples are provided in the Snapshot below.

### Snapshot: Linking interests and aptitudes to career aspirations

- A primary school student from Sydney said she was not well suited to be a hairdresser *'because I cut my sisters hair once but it didn't turn out very well, I cut it crooked'*.
- A 17-18 year old from Broome said she wants to pursue a career in events management and advertising because she liked being creative and because she had enjoyed and did well at media studies at school.
- A primary school student from Sydney said he was not well suited to be a marine biologist because he doesn't like diving or putting his head under water.
- A young person with a disability from Sydney said she likes cooking and is currently doing a hospitality course at TAFE, she thought she could get a job working in a café.
- A 12-13 year old from Broome said he was thinking about doing an apprenticeship or trade because he would be sick of studying after Year 12 and would prefer to earn money and do a hands-on job.
- A 12-13 year olds from Broome felt she was not well suited to be a pilot because *'I am a worrier and I panic a lot and I would probably kill lots of people'*.
- A 12-13 year old Indigenous student from Sydney said he wants to be a mechanic *'because I know a lot about cars'*.
- A young person with a disability from Sydney said he did not think He would go to university as it would be too hard for him.
- Another participant with a disability in Sydney commented *'I will probably be packing shelves at Franklins because that is what I am good at'*. This participant also said he was good at computers; *'everyday when I come home from school mum and dad have a question about the computer, it is hard for them but easy for me'*. He said he could also get a job working on a computer.

Young people in secondary school said various things influence their understanding of their skills and aptitudes, including; their grades, feedback received from others, the things they enjoy doing and things they find easy to do. Some said they inherently know their strengths and weaknesses, *'you feel it in your heart'*. Indigenous students from Broome said if people ask them for advice or ask them to lead something (eg a sports team), this means they are good at that thing. Similarly, a 12-13 year old from Broome said she knows she is good at English because her teacher said her writing is good and because her teacher refers other students to her for help. One Asian participant in the refugee group in Sydney said if you try hard you can be good at anything.

For several participants, their career aspirations are influenced by a desire to help others or make a difference in the community. Some Indigenous young people from Broome, for example, said they want jobs that enable them to help people in the community. Some of the refugee young people in Sydney also have aspirations to work in professions that involve helping others (ie teacher, police officer and nurse, etc).

For the at risk group, cultural experiences contributed to their views on certain careers. Many of the African participants said policing is not a good profession and noted corruption and bribery in the police forces in Africa. One participant said he asked his school teachers about police in Australia and whether they are *'bad'* like back in his country of origin.

In thinking about their post-school work and study options some participants from Cairns, Ceduna and Darwin said they take labour market demands into consideration. An Indigenous young person from Darwin, for example, said he wants to be a psycho therapist but that maybe he would consider being a plumber instead because *'I love being in Darwin'*. He recognised he would have better employment options as a plumber: it is a job that has transferrable skills. There is demand for plumbers everywhere and this provided opportunities also to travel.

## 3.5 MEETING THE CAREER NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOL

### 3.5.1 Primary school

All primary participants spoke of someone visiting their school to speak about their career and some secondary students recalled having someone visit their primary school. Visitors included a policeman, Antarctic explorer, fire fighter, nurse, obstetrician, and a volunteer from the State Emergency Service (SES). Several participants also spoke of excursions to workplaces, including hospital tours, excursion to the gelato shop, and excursion to the Commonwealth Scientific and Industrial Research Organisation (CSIRO). Students said these activities are a useful way for them to learn about particular jobs or workplaces and what they involve. They help to inform students' ideas of what they would or would not like to do, and assists with narrowing their options.

*We went to a hospital, got a tour and spoke to some of the nurses. I gained more information about how the hospital runs. I wouldn't like to work there, I don't like that type of job.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

Primary students said the usefulness of guest speakers at school depends on the speaker's ability to engage effectively with young people by using age appropriate language and tailoring information in the right way.

Many primary students said their classroom teachers link classroom activities to everyday life and the world of work. They agree that this is a useful thing to do.

*Yes, in maths lessons the teacher says you could use this in a job and how you can use it. It is a good thing to do because it helps explain about it, gives you more information.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

*The teacher doesn't say it, she asks it. For this subject what do you need to use it for? Trying to read a timetable, shopping, everything you might need it for life.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

### 3.5.2 Secondary school

#### *Subject selection*

Secondary school participants ranged from 12 to 18 years of age. Participants in the early years of secondary school had not yet made any subject choices neither had the at risk students, as they were attending an Intensive English Centre. Only one student with a disability in Sydney had selected a subject. This student, who attended at support unit in secondary school, said he was encouraged by his teacher to choose an elective in year 8 to get exposure to the 'mainstream classes'. He chose French because he had done some French studies in primary school. The participant said '*it didn't work out*' and he had to withdraw from the class. He said it was too difficult for him to understand what the teacher was saying and he was not used to there being so many other students in the class.

Some participants had selected (or aware they were shortly going to have to select) a few electives for years 8-10, and some had picked subjects for years 11 and 12.

Participants said they took the following factors into account when selecting subjects: their likes and interests, their strengths and abilities, the subject's relevance to their chosen career, who was teaching the class, the subjects taken by their friends, how easy the subject was, whether the subjects would enable them to keep their options open, and perceptions of how much work the subject involved and whether they were prepared to do the work.

*I liked certain subjects but didn't like the teachers who were teaching them, always got into trouble, so I avoided it.*

(CALD secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

[Based on] *if you are able to pass that subject. You could think you are not smart enough for it so you might not choose it. If [teachers] say there is heaps of work to do and you have to be real smart, you feel really intimidated by it.*

(Secondary student, 17-18 years, Cairns)

It was suggested that choosing subjects for years 11 and 12 can be more difficult for students who do not have a clear or specific idea of what they want to do post-school.

*Most people last year didn't know what they wanted to be so picking their subjects was really hard but mine was really easy because I knew what I wanted to do and I didn't really have any of the requirements to get into university.*

(Secondary student, 15-18 years, Ceduna)

Some participants said they spoke to a range of people about their subject choices including: parents, older siblings, friends, classroom teachers, school principals and career practitioners. Other participants, however, said they did not discuss their subject choices with anybody. Some CALD participants said they spoke to their parents, but their advice was not very helpful and not always accurate.

*I talk to my father but it's not really helpful, he doesn't know much about the subjects so told me to choose what I like.*

(CALD secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Students who had picked electives for years 8-10 had generally not received any information or advice from a career practitioner (although many had spoken informally with teachers). Indigenous students in years 7 and 8 in Sydney reported not having career assistance of any form and were not aware of there being a career practitioner at their school. The majority of students did not perceive this to be a gap, indicating they were not really thinking about their post-school options at this point in time and were happy to 'go with the flow'. Conversely, one refugee participant said it would have been useful to speak to a practitioner, saying:

*It's better to get advice than to find out 6 months later that you don't like the subject you have chosen.*

(Refugee secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Students who had picked subjects for years 11 and 12 had received information and advice through numerous channels at their school including: one on one interviews with a career practitioner; group career classes; meetings with the school principal, head of department or year coordinator; and written materials. Across schools and even within the same school, participants had hugely variable experiences in relation to the quality of subject information and advice received. While some felt they received 'good advice', many said it was 'useless' and did not meet their needs.

Some said their school career practitioner was unable to provide information and advice relevant to their career aspirations. One participant from Broome, for example, felt the career practitioner focused too heavily on vocational training, and for this reason did not seek any advice from the practitioner on university options. Instead, this participant researched the university pre-requisites for the course he was interested in and picked his subjects accordingly. Similarly, a participant from Cairns commented:

*I spoke to mine and she said we don't have information on what you want, go and talk to the defence force. They only know about universities, so I had to find out for myself.*

(Secondary student, 17-18 years, Cairns)

Some participants said their school career practitioner advised them to take subjects they felt they were ill suited to do. For example, one refugee participant from Sydney said the advice he received was 'useless', as the career practitioner advised him to do a maths subject that was too difficult for him. He decided instead to do two science subjects and two business subjects because he thought they would help with a medical science degree.

17-18 year olds in Broome said they had to choose whether they wanted to take the university or the VET path. Students that chose the university path had to study English and maths and were able to pick the rest of their electives. Students that chose VET only got to pick their VET course. In some cases, participants felt that teachers and career practitioners did not listen to them and were not supportive of their aspirations. For example, one participant told the practitioner he was interested in doing sport through the VET in Schools Program but was put into cooking. Another said he wanted to study psychology at university but the head of secondary school *'laughed at me and told me to do the VET path because the university path would be too hard'*. Another participant said she was told by the maths teacher she could not do the maths subject she wanted because she *'wasn't smart enough'*. She then spoke to the career practitioner who told her to do what the subject teacher advised. It was only after her parents got involved that the school allowed her to do the maths subject she wanted.

*Basically if you want anything done, you have to take it to your parents.*

(Secondary student, 17-18 years, Broome)

Some participants in Broome, Darwin and Cairns felt their subject choices were limited. For example, some students said they were not allowed to do their preferred subject because the class was at capacity, and were instead put into a class that had vacancies. Some felt this could potentially impact on their future work or study options.

Notwithstanding the above, some participants were satisfied with the subject information and advice received. They said they had sufficient one on one time with a career practitioner, they felt they were listened to, and were provided with information and advice that supported their aspirations and broadened their horizons. A good example of this was given by a 17-18 year old in Broome. She told the Follow your Dreams (program for Indigenous students) coordinator she wanted to be a teacher. The coordinator suggested the VET path and arranged an educational assistant traineeship for the student. The participant plans to finish this traineeship through TAFE and then look at university. She has a definite pathway, she knows what she needs to do to get into university, and feels confident about getting there. She is also aware of other options available to her if she decides not to go to university (eg she is aware that with her qualification she will be able to work with the Department of Education).

### *The provision of career development in schools*

The quality of information and advice on post-school options provided by school career practitioners appears to be variable, as does access to career practitioners. While some participants have spoken to a practitioner, others have not. Some are aware of the services provided by career practitioners but feel career practitioners keep a low profile and are not easily accessible. As one student commented, *'you can never find them'*. Others are simply not aware if their school has a career practitioner. Limited knowledge regarding the availability of career development services appears to be especially pertinent in Darwin due to the impact of population mobility. Some participants expressed little desire to speak with a career practitioner because they do not think they are useful. Others appear to have a limited understanding of the broad scope of career development suggesting that there is no point in access career development until they have a clear career aspiration or until the later years of secondary school.

*Never occurred to me, I wouldn't think about talking to a career advisor.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

*Wasn't sure what I wanted to do so didn't see any point going [to the career practitioner].*

(Indigenous secondary student, 17-18 years, Darwin)

Only one student with a disability from Sydney had spoken to a career practitioner. This student was in year 12 and wanted information relating to jobs he could do in the police force. He was currently waiting for the career practitioner to get back to him with this information. Two of the other participants in this cohort had some awareness of the career practitioner at their school and of her role – *'she helps kids try and get jobs'*. However despite being in year 12, neither of them had spoken with the career practitioner.

*It's mainly a thing for the mainstream kids. We don't do that in the support unit.*

(Secondary student with a disability, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Of participants who have spoken with a career practitioner, there are mixed views on the quality of the advice and information received. A few said the advice and information were *'very helpful'*. In these cases, students felt the career practitioner gave them lots of advice, supported their career aspirations, broadened their horizons, and spent time exploring their interests, strengths and abilities. For example, one participant from Broome said the practitioner sat with him and tried to figure out career options based on his interests and the subjects he was good at. A participant from Darwin said the career practitioner got him into TAFE and helped him find employment related to his interests.

The need for career practitioners to engage effectively with young people was raised by several participants. Some participants from Ceduna spoke positively about their career practitioner describing her as *'heaps cool'* and indicating they would feel comfortable asking her for help. In contrast, a participant from Sydney described her school career practitioner as *'mean and really aggressive'*. Although the practitioner has good information to offer, this participant said she avoids her.

Where participants were not satisfied with the quality of advice and information, they said the career practitioner did not listen to them, did not answer their questions, attempted to push them down a path they were not interested in, did not appear to have much knowledge or expertise, and said they would do something and then did not deliver or follow through.

*I asked [the career practitioner] what subjects I should do in year 11 and 12 and she said I should leave school, she said its not good for me, I should drop out. So I didn't go back to her ... I still wanted to stay [at school] I thought she was saying I wasn't good enough for school.*

(CALD secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Participants had mixed views on the value of career expos. Some described them, as *'really fun'* and said it gave them new ideas. Others described them, as *'information overload'*. There is a view that the information provided at career expos is not targeted or relevant enough and that, although students get to speak with someone working in their chosen field, the event is too rushed and not very in-depth. At one regional careers expo, students who got the most stickers on their attendance sheet from visiting the greatest number of booths went in the running to win an iPad. Consequently, rather than being a learning opportunity, the competition became the key focus of the expo.

Students said work experience is a useful way to test out their ideas about post-school work and learn about their interests, strengths and aptitudes. It also gives young people a unique opportunity to have exposure to workplaces they wouldn't normally have access to in part-time or casual roles. Some good examples are provided in the box below.

#### Snapshot: Work experience

- One participant from Ceduna did work experience in year 11 at a primary school. Although she did not enjoy the experience, she found she had a particular aptitude for working one on one with children who have learning difficulties. For her second round of work experience, she worked in a hospital and really enjoyed it. Based on these two experiences she has now decided to study nursing with a view to specialising in mental health.
- One participant from Broome said her work experience was a *'good trial'* for the education assistant traineeship she is currently doing. She said she got a lot of support and advice from the teachers at the school where she did work experience. These teachers had, for example, shown her how teachers prepare for classes.
- One participant from Cairns said he had an aspiration to work with animals from a young age. He did work experience at the Cairns Wildlife Safari Reserve which confirmed this aspiration. He was planning to study Zoology at university next year.

Some students, however, did not get opportunities to undertake work experience in a field related to their interests or aspirations. In some instances, where the school did not organise work experience for the student, they ended up working in one of their parents' workplaces or wherever they could find a position. These were not valuable experiences. In other instances the school did organise the work experience but

placed young people in workplaces they did not have an interest in. As one participant from Darwin commented:

*I didn't really enjoy it. It wasn't my choice, it wasn't what I wanted to do, it was boring.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

Secondary students generally like the VET in Schools Program as it enables them to avoid school for part of the week, get a certificate while at school and get paid some money. It also assists with transitioning into employment. While participants are generally positive about the Program, some students feel that VET options are limited, particularly in regional and remote locations. Participants in Darwin said for the program to be successful, workplaces need to be located nearby, as access to transport is an issue. Some participants in Darwin said they have to pay for some courses under the VET in Schools Program, and that this acts as a barrier.

Participants in Darwin and Ceduna spoke of doing Personal Learning Plans (PLP) and had varying views on their usefulness. Some participants like that PLPs facilitate one on one discussions with their classroom teacher about future career options. Some students in Darwin enjoy the compulsory community service component. They also like the exploration of strengths and aptitudes. Others describe it as '*the biggest bludge class*'. Students indicated that it has the potential to be a useful activity but is currently not structured enough instead dependent on the drive of individual students. Young people get out of it when they put into it. The PLP can be a valuable exercise if done properly but students often do not take it seriously or put much effort into it.

*Most people slack off on it; some people want to take it seriously. It is useful but most people don't want to take it seriously.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

*We are still young we don't know what we want to do in 10 years time. Still it's necessary, boring, but necessary.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

*I didn't like it. It is a bit boring and you already know everything about yourself and it didn't make much sense.*

(Secondary student, 15-18, Ceduna)

*Heaps of people found it really hard to write about what they are good at ...because they said well I'm not good at anything and I don't do anything well, so heaps of our class found it really hard to write about it.*

(Secondary student, 15-18, Ceduna)

Participants in Cairns spoke of doing a Set Plan, which involves discussions with their parents, principals and teachers' about career goals and pathways to achieving them. Some said the Set Plan is useful for students who do not have a clear idea of what they want to do post-school but, for those who already know, it is a waste of time. Others said that '*most people just made it [Set Plan] up because they didn't know [what they wanted to do]*'. They said by the time students get to year 12, their ideas for the Set Plan, which is developed in year 10, have '*completely changed*'. As such, there was a perception amongst students that this is not a useful activity.

Participants from Ceduna spoke of participating in a Transitions Trip which involves tours of universities and workplaces. Participants generally agreed this is a useful exercise and in fact some said the Trip was instrumental in their decision to study at particular universities.

*Made me decide what uni I wanted to go to ...Flinders uni, seems like people are really chilled, good people, gym and shops, well set out.*

(Secondary student, 15-18, Ceduna)

Participants also spoke about internet and paper based career development resources. A few participants indicated they did the career quiz on the myfuture website, which was not always said to be useful. As one participant commented:

*It gave me some ideas but was not really helpful.*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

Many other participants spoke of doing career quizzes or aptitude tests (although it was not clear if they were referring to the myfuture quiz or other applications). There is a prevailing view among participants that aptitude tests are not a reliable or accurate tool, with participants describing them as: *ridiculous, wrong, dodgy, whacko, pointless and silly*. One participant said the aptitude test said she should be a vet but she hates animals. Another participant said the test recommended she be an actor, but she gets bad stage fright, and another was told to be a computer programmer despite being *'really useless at computers'*. Some students from Cairns were also sceptical about the computer generated predicted Overall Position's (OP's) that they received.

Many students sought out career relation information on the internet. Some said they were required to do school assignments where they researched particular industries or jobs. Students had also used the internet to research information on university and TAFE courses and requirements, job requirements, scholarships, the defence forces, and salaries and wages. One Indigenous student in Sydney had *'looked on the internet for fun'*, whilst another said she couldn't access the internet at home because her family were always on it. Some young people said that *'it is easy to find stuff on the web'* while others had more difficulty. For example, one participant said he had trouble finding information on scholarships.

Some students mentioned paper based resources. A few students said they were aware of paper based resources but were not interested in reading them. As one student commented *'the student services level in the school has career booklets, mainly for yr 11 and 12, noone else goes there'*. Some had received booklets and materials from careers expos. Some felt this could be 'information overload' with one student commenting *'the booklets are that thick at the end of the day it is just too much'*. Another student said that he does read the booklets he received from the careers expo to gain a better understanding of what certain jobs involve. He said however, that he would prefer to speak with someone who has done the job he is interested in but that he didn't know anyone personally. Some students also mentioned the *Job Guide*. There are varying views on the usefulness of the *Job Guide*. Some said it is *'pretty useful'*. It is thorough, comprehensive and contains relevant information. One student said she liked the fact it showed her what mark she needed to get for her desired university course. A few said it was helpful in giving them ideas about their post-school options. One Indigenous student in Sydney said she read the job advertisements at the back of the newspaper to find out about different job options.

Others said that Job Guide did not have the information they needed. One student, for example, it provided contact details but not enough description of what the job entails and what is required. Another participant said it did not have enough information on the sector he was interested in (eg the mining sector). Some students also said it is intimidating and overwhelming. A few suggested it would be helpful to have it online so they could click to the relevant sections rather than trawling through *'a 400 page book'*. These students were clearly not aware that there is an online version.

### *How could schools improve career development?*

Most of the group thought schools could be more pro-active when it comes to career development, and focus more on broadening awareness and giving students advice on the range of options available to them. Many students said career development mainly focuses on securing work experience, VET placements or part time jobs for students. Some felt schools could work more with students to help them understand their strengths and aptitudes, and suggest career options that take into account individual interests and strengths. Having said this, where participants did have an opportunity to undertake career development activities on identifying strengths, skills and interests (ie Set Plan and Personal Learning Plans) they were generally not well received. It is unclear from discussions with young people if this is due to the design of these programs, their implementation or a mixture of both. It also appears that the range of benefits of such activities (ie the importance of thinking about the future, goal setting and the development of skills related to this) are not fully understood by students.

Students want greater access to people who are doing the work or study they are interested in. Some students have already used their personal networks to do this. Notwithstanding this, many students said



they want schools to facilitate greater access to people working in industry, and to a lesser extent contacts from universities and TAFEs. (This is discussed further in section 3.6.1).

Some participants from regional locations said career development could be improved by relating it more to local options, conditions and labour market demands. One participant from Broome commented *'make it more relevant to me and to kids in this region'*.

Students in Broome said they want the school based career practitioner to provide better and more specific advice on university courses, rather than just VET courses.

### 3.6 GETTING THE RIGHT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

#### 3.6.1 *How do young people want career information communicated to them?*

Primary students said they want to speak with someone who has personal experience doing the work or study they are interested in, so they can get an accurate and detailed understanding of what the job or course involves. Some have already used their personal networks to do this.

*My uncle because he works in what I want to do, I talked to him about what you need to do the job.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

Some primary students said they prefer to visit workplaces to see for themselves what the job involves. They said that without seeing a workplace first hand it can be difficult for them to visualise it.

*You might actually go to the place and see what it is about, see what it is like inside. Then you can actually see what they are talking about, you might not understand what they say but when you see it you get a better picture.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

Primary students want to speak with someone who knows how to engage effectively with children. They said some people who visited their schools to talk about their careers were either boring or used complex words that were not age appropriate.

*We had a few weird jobs. My friend's dad is an obstetrician. He kept saying all these big words that no-one really understood, it was a bit confusing.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

While secondary students said they like accessing information and advice in different ways from different sources, the majority of students have a strong preference to speak to someone, and prefer a one on one conversation to a group session. None of the participants said they would speak to a career practitioner as their *first* choice, instead preferring to get information or advice from someone working in the industry (that they know personally or not), parents or other family members, a classroom teacher, friends or boyfriends/girlfriends, the internet, someone from the university or VET sector, or someone from a community organisation.

Like primary students, secondary students across all focus groups said they want to speak with someone who is doing/has done the work they are interested in. There is a general view that people who work in the industry can give a truthful account of both the positives and negatives, or the 'ups and downs'. They can also provide advice, opinions and personal anecdotes. Some secondary students are sceptical of career expos, brochures and other written materials, because they see them as promotional or positive spin and not conveying an accurate picture. Some participants have already utilised their personal networks to speak with someone working in the field they are interested in. The Indigenous participant whose parents are pushing her to become a QC, for example, has spoken to a QC about the tertiary study she will need to do. Others students said they have spoken to family members or friends of the family. Young people who do not have personal access to industry want the school to facilitate this.

Young refugees and at risk young people both said it is important for them to speak with someone in person, one on one, given there is often a language barrier. The majority of these young people said they would prefer to receive career information from a class teacher they like instead of a career practitioner. Conversely, others felt that classroom teachers do not have enough knowledge or expertise.

*I wouldn't expect to get it from the school, better to get it from the trade. Teachers just get it from the website.*

(Indigenous secondary student, 17-18 years, Darwin)

*If you can't talk to your parents about it, why would you talk to a stranger [referring to the career practitioner]?*

(Secondary student, 14-16 years, Darwin)

Several students said they like to access information on the internet because it is more independent, you can access information at a time that is convenient for you, and it is easier to directly seek out specific information. Participants said they had used the internet to seek out information on: TAFE and university courses, cost of courses, scholarships, salaries of jobs, part time or casual jobs to apply for, and the defence forces.

*You can get a lot of information yourself now, it is on the internet. You don't have to wait for the school to give it to you.*

(Secondary student, 17-18 years, Cairns)

Participants said that some information is, however, difficult to find online. This includes regional labour market information or details of jobs available locally. A participant from Darwin, for example, said it is hard to find adequate information about mining jobs in the local area. An Indigenous participant from Darwin also said he had trouble finding information on available scholarships. Although some young people have a preference for the internet, others said they struggle to use computers.

At risk young people said they are still learning to use computers and are undertaking classes at both the Intensive English Centre and the youth centre. They said printed materials could sometimes have too much information and *'if you're not able to read then it's no use'*.

Overall, Indigenous participants had the same views as other young people on how they want career information to be communicated to them. Indigenous students in Broome said they are happy to receive advice from Indigenous or non-Indigenous people *'so long as they know what they are talking about'*. Some Indigenous participants also receive career development advice from community organisations. For example, Indigenous male participants in Broome are involved in the Football Academy; a foundation in the Kimberley established to improve the education, discipline, self-esteem, life skills and employment prospects of young Aboriginal men. All male students spoke very highly of the foundation and some said it is a good source of career information and advice. Indigenous young people in Sydney, in the early years of secondary school, hadn't experienced much by way of career development although said they were being taught general competencies in school and didn't think there was information that they need but weren't getting. The importance of family in providing career information and advice was emphasised in this group.

### 3.6.2 What are the critical points?

Schools students have a range of views on when career development should be provided.

Not all primary students commented on when career development should be provided. Those that did comment said it is important for young people to start thinking about careers early. As one participant commented:

*Then you can do what you want to do instead of leaving the decisions to the last minute and getting a crappy job.*

(Primary student, 11-12 years, Sydney)

There is a prevailing view among all secondary students that the critical points for career development are years 10 -12. Year 10 is critical because this is when young people select their subjects for years 11 and 12, generally get part time or casual jobs and undertake work experience. Participants agree that it is important to get information and advice when choosing subjects as it can impact on future career options. One CALD student in year 12 spoke of not seeking out advice and now regretting it:

*I regret not doing that, I didn't ask anyone. It would have been useful. I may have taken the wrong subjects, now I am really stressing out.*

(CALD secondary student, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Participants in a number of groups said that year 10 is also important as this is when young people generally start focusing seriously on their future options and aspirations. Some suggested that years 7-9 are about having fun and that not many young people are paying attention to their careers at this time.

A number of groups also mentioned year 12 as being a critical point. It is thought to be an important time for practical advice on things like writing resumes, interview skills, applying for university and TAFE, and pathways. At risk students in Sydney and Indigenous students in Broome emphasised the need for advice and support when transitioning from school to higher education, VET or employment. Participants from Broome said advice about their options and pathways, financial, transport and accommodation assistance would help with the transition, particularly as they may have to move away from home to undertake tertiary study. At risk students said they want further information and guidance regarding their post-school options, as they do not feel confident or well informed to make choices and to navigate their future pathways. They also want support to assist with settling into tertiary education as it can be daunting and scary attending a tertiary institution in the first few months.

In contrast, a few students said that leaving career development until years 11 and 12 is leaving it 'too late'. One 17-18 year old from Broome, for example, said that students in years 7-10 should have some form of career development focused on raising awareness and showing young people the range of career options available to them.

Some young people do start to think seriously about their career options before the later years of secondary school and want to have access to career development services at this point. 12-13 year olds from Broome said they are aware of career development services at their school but said these are for the 'older kids'. Indigenous young people in Sydney were aware of work experience and subject choice, but it didn't interest them at this stage. Conversely, some of the 12-13 year olds in Broome expressed an interest in undertaking career development earlier in high school. They thought schools give year 8 students the opportunity to do work experience as some already have ideas about work that they are keen to test out. They also want to learn about the range of different jobs available and said using computers at school to research different jobs would be useful.

### 3.7 THINKING AHEAD

Primary students all thought they would go to university. Some had already drawn links between the work they want to do and what they want to study at university while others did not have specific study ideas at this stage. Most primary students said they are confident and optimistic about achieving their work and study aspirations. Others said they are not sure they will be able to do what they want, adding it '*really depends on how you go in your [High School Certificate] HSC*'. However, this latter group felt they had plenty of time to work towards getting good grades. One participant said at the beginning of school you might be bad at maths but if you study hard by the end of school you could be good at maths.

Some secondary students said they '*can't wait to get out of school*'. Some said they hate school and would much rather work or do an apprenticeship. They said as soon as they can secure an apprenticeship, they will leave school. Several participants in year 12 are keen to have all exams, assignments and homework behind them. Others feel that school is a better option than working full time, which they said would be hard (ie longer days with shorter breaks). Some students feel confident they will get into the university course of their choice. Others, particularly those from regional and rural locations, are looking forward to having a gap year, doing some travel, and earning some money.

Most of the 17-18 year olds from Broome are worried about the transition from school to higher education and employment. Students planning on going to university are particularly concerned about money as they will have to leave their families in Broome and support themselves in another city.

Indigenous young people generally did not raise any issues different from those mentioned by the mainstream cohorts. One Indigenous young person from Broome said the transition from school to employment will be easier if young people have part time jobs at school. Part-time work would give them exposure to the world of work and a foot in the door. In line with the concerns raised by others in regional locations, Indigenous young people said having a car and a place to stay would also help the transition to higher education and employment for those who have to move away from home.

Half of the young refugees are confident about leaving school, with one commenting *'if I can finish school I can do anything'*. The other half are less confident about their future, with one participant saying she does not know if she has the skills and knowledge to succeed. Several young refugees said the decision to undertake post-school study would be influenced by whether they could afford it.

A few of the students with a disability from Sydney said they had *'mixed feelings'* about leaving school. One participant said *'I can't wait to leave school'* but was also nervous. *'It is pretty scary, when you are actually working'*. This participant did have some level of confidence, due to the strong family support he receives.

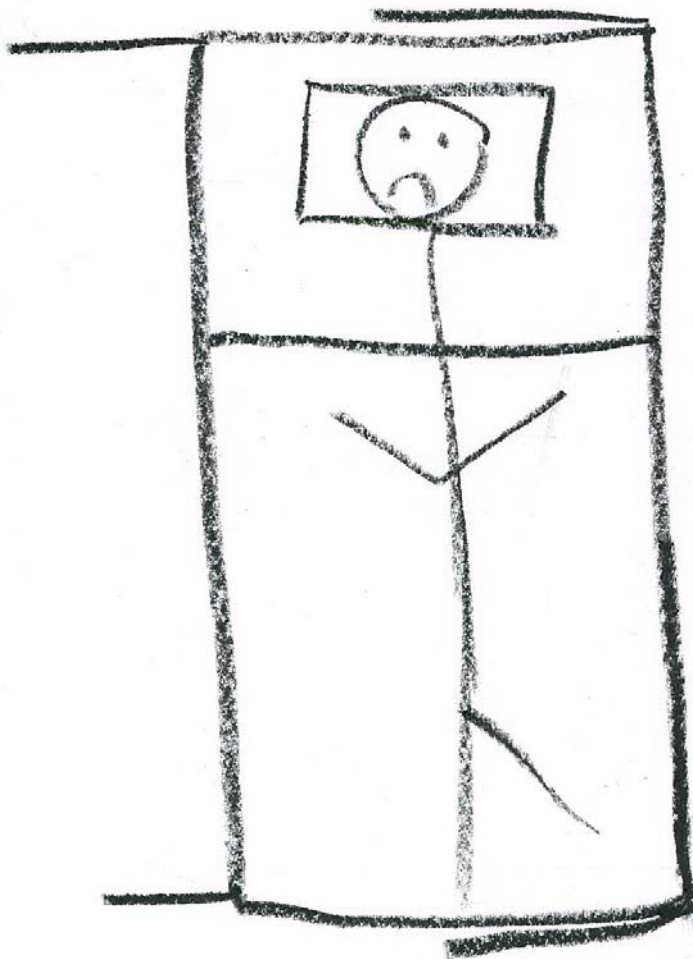
*A bit nervous but I know my parents will sort me out with some kind of job.*

(Secondary student with a disability, 15-18 years, Sydney)

Another student with a disability said she did not want to leave her friends and teachers behind but was excited by the prospect of having a job, *'because then I can earn a lot of money'*.

At risk students said they need more information, guidance and support on their post-school options. Some said they do not feel confident or well informed to make choices and to navigate their future pathways. One participant said he will soon be leaving the Intensive English Centre and will need to choose between going to secondary school or TAFE. He is interested in studying business and does not know which choice will be the best option for him. He would like more information and guidance in this regard. Other at risk students said they will need more support to help them transition from school to tertiary education. They said it can be daunting and scary attending TAFE for the first time. They are concerned about what classes to take, who they will talk to, and how they will find their way around campus. Others in this group said they are currently just focused on finishing school and improving their English. If their English is adequate they will then consider TAFE.

#### 4 Young people in higher education or VET



nurse/doctor

### Key findings:

- Most young people in higher education or VET say they will have a career, even though they define 'career' differently. Some young people make a distinction between a career and a job, whereas others say the distinction is redundant because a career nowadays *'encompasses your whole life'*.
- Some cohorts of young people are more likely to see themselves as primarily responsible for their own career development. These cohorts include young carers, CALD and refugee young people, and some mainstream young people.
- The main influences in the career development decisions of young people are personal interests, parents, teachers, peers and government agencies. The influence of parents varies significantly depending on cultural background and SES.
- Young people in higher education or VET generally want access to personalised one on one career advice that takes into account their values, interests and personal circumstances. They would prefer to receive this advice from someone *'younger'*, as opposed to a baby boomer, and someone with industry experience. They also want access to online career information and would prefer a 'one stop shop' for this information.
- Many young people 'chop and change' jobs and expect to try different careers over the course of their working life. They generally recognise that, in order to manage their careers, they will need certain life skills such as communication and interpersonal skills, flexibility, resilience and self-confidence.
- Young people want support at transition points, particularly at the transition between school and university. They also want greater financial assistance and flexible work and study options.
- The quality of career development these young people received in schools varied, but was generally poor. One on one interviews with a career practitioner and work experience were the most common forms of career development offered by schools. Young people are generally in favour of work experience and critical of school career practitioners.
- Many young people said school career practitioners failed to give them options or provide advice on pathways to get where they wanted to go.
- The majority of young people in higher education or VET are not aware of career development services offered by their institutions and have not tried to find out. Of the students that have pro-actively sought out career advice at university and TAFE, some have been satisfied and others have not.
- With the exception of at risk and Indigenous young people, young people in higher education or VET have generally had limited exposure to career development support outside educational institutions. Most have, however, sought career information online or from written materials.

Urbis held 10 focus groups with young people in higher education or VET across three locations. These groups included:

- 17-19 year old students in university or a private college in Sydney
- 17-19 year old students in VET in Melbourne
- 17-24 year old CALD students in a mix of higher education in Melbourne
- 17-24 year old Indigenous students in VET in Sydney
- 17-24 year old Indigenous students in a mix of higher education in Melbourne
- 17-24 year old at risk students in a mix of higher education in Adelaide
- 17-24 year old refugee students in a mix of higher education in Melbourne
- 17-24 year old young carers in a mix of higher education in Adelaide
- 20-24 year old students in university or a private college in Melbourne
- 20-24 year old students in VET in Adelaide.

## 4.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### 4.1.1 Defining the term 'career'

Young people in higher education or VET generally agree that "career" means your *'life journey'* or *'what you want to do with your life'*. However, a major point of difference among this group of young people is the idea that a "career" is different to a job. While focus group participants expressed a diverse range of views, most mainstream and CALD young people and some Indigenous young people said there is a difference between a career and a job. These young people see a career as something *'you study for'* and something long-term. It offers opportunities for growth and development, as well as success and a stable income. It is also something you *'choose'* to do or you *'like'* doing and are *'interested'* in. University students in Sydney said a career is something you invest in and it defines who you are. A job, on the other hand, is seen as something short-term and something you *'just do'* for money.

*When we think of career, it's something you want to expand in, it's long-term whereas a job is just a quick thing you do.*

(VET student, Melbourne)

*A career is a choice.*

(VET student, Adelaide)

*It feels like that [a career] is who you are, if you have a career in something a lot of thought goes into it...it's defining who you are.*

(University student, Sydney)

Most young people who said there is a distinction between a job and a career said the notion of 'career' has positive connotations because a 'career' facilitates a range of opportunities. However, some mainstream university students have a different view. They said 'career' could be associated with a feeling of being *'stuck'* or *'trapped'*.

*It almost seems like a lifetime sort of thing. You are stuck in one career forever. Kind of a bad thing.*

(University student, Sydney)

*It's [a career] daunting. It's daunting because it's restrictive. I like the idea of doing it for a while and then changing.*

(University student, Melbourne)

Refugees, at risk and some Indigenous young people are less likely to make a distinction between a job and a career. These young people generally said everyone has a career, irrespective of what job they do, because a career encompasses your whole life. Some refugees in Melbourne, however, make a distinction between a 'high' career such as an 'academic career' and a 'low career' such as 'working in a factory'. Young refugees said the latter is still a career because working in a factory requires certain skills.

*Everyone has a career, it doesn't matter what they do.*

(Indigenous VET student, Melbourne)

A small number of at risk and Indigenous young people in higher education or VET define a career primarily in terms of making money to pay expenses. This view is not, however, the prevalent view among at risk and Indigenous young people.

Almost all young people think they will have a career, however they define it. However, while young carers and refugees are optimistic and hopeful about having a career, they said they face many barriers. Refugees said they often arrive in Australia with big gaps in their education and limited work experience which limits their career options. Carers said a career is only possible if they are able to access flexible learning and work options and low cost respite care for family members.

#### 4.1.2 What does 'career development' mean?

Most young people in higher education or VET said 'career development' means 'developing knowledge and skills' to enable you to grow or advance in your chosen field through formal learning or on the job training. Some of these young people associate career development with promotions, an increase in salary and leadership roles.

*...enhancing your knowledge and skills in your chosen field....taking yourself to the next level.*

(Refugee university student, Melbourne)

Other young people spoke about career development in terms of setting goals and developing pathways or steps to reach those goals. This latter group said career development can involve moving up in your chosen field as well as transitioning into another field.

*...career development is about reaching the point you want to get to....the progression, the path you take, the steps you take to get there.*

(University student, Sydney)

## 4.2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Young people in higher education or VET have different views on who is responsible for their career development. Most agree that young people themselves, parents, schools, employers and the government are all responsible to varying degrees.

Young carers, CALD young people, refugee young people, and approximately half of the mainstream young people saw *themselves* as primarily responsible for their own career development. These young people generally said it is up to the individual young person to set their own goals and create opportunities to reach those goals. They said others, however, play an important role in *supporting* young people's career development.

CALD and some mainstream young people said schools and universities are responsible for giving young people the skills they need to develop their careers and for providing career counselling. Young refugees said parents and peers are responsible for supporting young people's career development, although parents often need more information on the labour market in Australia to effectively do this. Young carers said government agencies, schools and not for profit organisations could do more to support their career development.



At risk, Indigenous and the other half of the mainstream young people do not see themselves as primarily responsible for their own career development. Indigenous young people generally said their families, teachers, elders and community are responsible, as well as Aboriginal mentors working in schools. At risk young people said schools, TAFEs, government agencies and community organisations are responsible. Some mainstream young people said parents, teachers, universities and employers are responsible.

### 4.3 INFLUENCES IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The majority of young people in higher education or VET have common influences in career development, although the degree of influence varies depending on the particular cohort of young people. Young people generally said their career decisions are influenced by:

- personal interests
- parents
- teachers (and to a lesser extent school career practitioners)
- peers
- government agencies and support services
- cost.

Young people generally want to do something they are interested in or are good at. Some university students spoke about wanting to find a balance between doing something they enjoy and doing something that will pay well and guarantee a good lifestyle. Most young people said they know what they are good at by their grades and by feedback they receive from teachers and lecturers. Some young people said they know they are good at something if they like it. Other young people, however, said liking something does not necessarily equate to being good at it or well-suited to a career in it. A small number of young people said they instinctively know what they are good at. For example, one refugee university student said she has empathy and family members have always come to her for advice. She knows she is good with people and consequently decided to study social work.

There is general agreement that work experience or part-time and casual work can be very useful in helping young people figure out what they are good at. One CALD student said he had no idea what he wanted to do until he started working in a call centre and realised he has good communication and marketing skills. He subsequently decided to do a business degree.

Most young people, with the exception of young carers and at risk young people, said their parents are one of the biggest influences in their career decisions. Indigenous young people said their extended family, including grandparents, are also important influences.

The degree of influence and the type of influence parents have differs significantly. Some parents have very high expectations for their children, and push them into university and particular careers. They do this for different reasons. Some university educated parents want their children to follow in their footsteps. Other parents who are not university educated want their children to *'do better'* than them, and see university as a vehicle for this. The issue of 'pushy parents' was generally raised in focus groups with CALD, refugee and mainstream young people.

*If you live with strict parents, you can't move out of the circle unless your parents agree. People are missing out on opportunities because their parents won't allow it. I know a girl who wanted to do hairdressing but her parents made her go to year 12. Her parents won't let her take her own direction.*

(Refugee university student, Melbourne)

*Parents play a big part. My dad's a tradie and always insisted that I go to university. Neither of my parents finished school. They were the driving force.*

(CALD university student, Melbourne)

*My parents didn't care what I did as long as I got a degree.*

(University student, Sydney)

*Newly arrived parents haven't had an education. These parents need information. Some of these parents will insist their children do the VCE even though their children want to do an apprenticeship.*

(Refugee university student, Melbourne)

*Parents shape you as well. It's not always positive though. Mine nagged me to make lots of money but I resented this.*

(VET student, Adelaide)

*I have strict European parents. When we came to Australia my parents made me feel 'we came here for you'...they basically came not from a good life. They wanted me to make something of myself. Education is a big thing for them. They sort of screwed me up. No matter what I did in high school, it didn't matter whether or not I liked it, what mattered was that I got good marks, So now I'm 22 and I don't know what I want to do. Just work your butt off and get good grades and I did, but now I don't know what I like.*

(VET student, Melbourne)

Other parents, however, have lower career expectations for their children. Some young people said their parents discouraged them from further study because they could not see the long-term benefit and preferred their children to work and earn money. Other parents appear to have little interest in their children's careers.

*Mum gave me a hard time about giving up my full-time job to go to university. Mum thought about money and the short-term. Dad was supportive though.*

(CALD university student, Melbourne)

*I was told I wouldn't get a job by family. They told me I wouldn't make it to 18.*

(At risk VET student, Adelaide)

Young carers said their parents have limited influence in their career decisions. Many of their parents are unwell and young carers said they make a conscious decision not to 'burden' them with anything else. Notwithstanding this, one young carer said his family circumstances influenced his decision to study social work and psychology. This young carer said he plans to use his qualifications to advocate for young carers and educate the public on the pressures they face.

While many young people in higher education or VET said they had some engagement with career practitioners in high school, many of them said their subject teachers were more influential. Subject teachers generally had a good influence, but some young people said subject teachers they did not like turned them off particular subjects and associated careers. Some Indigenous young people in Sydney and Melbourne said Indigenous teachers or Indigenous mentors played a key role in helping them decide what career direction to take and giving them advice on how to get there.

*When a [subject] teacher is passionate and knows what they are taking about, they can really inspire you.*

(CALD university student, Melbourne)

*I had bad experiences with science teachers...it turned me off science.*

(University student, Sydney)

Young people across the different cohorts said their peers also influenced their career decisions. Again, the degree of peer influence varies. Young people said sometimes it is a positive influence and other

times it is not. One CALD student, for example, said he found out about graduate opportunities through his peers at university. However, another CALD student said he had three friends who all left university because they wanted to make an 'easy buck' working as labourers.

Some at risk young people said their career decisions are positively influenced by government agencies, not for profit employment service providers and grassroots youth workers. Young carers said their decisions are often influenced by what careers will fit in with their responsibilities at home. One young carer said she wants to be a personal trainer because it will allow her to work hours that fit in with her carer demands. Another young carer said her career decisions were influenced by her family therapist. This carer told the family therapist she wanted to be a teacher, but in the end decided against it because her family therapist told her that her autistic son needed her and she had to put him first.

There are a number of other factors that influence the career development decisions of young people in higher education or VET. Some young people said the cost of university and VET is a big deterrent. Labour market conditions, in particular considerations about what jobs are in demand, are another influencer. Some university students who did not know what they wanted to do when they left school said their post-school study choices were influenced by a desire to '*keep their options open*'. These students said they deliberately picked a science or business degree because they are '*broad*' degrees that offer a range of career options.

#### 4.4 CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND WANTS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

While young people in higher education or VET have different career development needs and wants, a common theme is that these young people want access to personalised one on one career advice. They would prefer to receive this advice from someone '*younger*', as opposed to a baby boomer, and someone with industry experience. They also want access to online career information, and would prefer for there to be a '*one stop shop*' for this information (see section 4.8 for more information on what information young people want and how they want it communicated to them).

A small number of young people leave secondary school with a clear career path, but the majority do not. Many young people '*chop and change*' jobs, either because they do not like what they are doing, because they want to try different things, or because they do not know what they want to do. It is difficult to estimate how many young people fall into each of these three categories, and it varies based on the particular cohort of young people. Several young people said they do not have the '*job for life*' mentality that their parents have, and expect to try different careers over the course of their working life. Young people generally recognise that in order to manage their careers, they will need certain '*life skills*' such as communication and interpersonal skills, flexibility, resilience, self-confidence and time management. They will also need to know themselves, and know where to go to get career development information and support. While some young people said they have developed or partly developed these skills at home, school, VET, university and also through sport and travelling, other young people are less confident that they have adequate life skills.

*There needs to be more life skills training. We talk about education and other things but if you don't have the ability and resources to cope with the problems you face then you can't go and study.*

(Indigenous university student, Melbourne)

### Snapshot: Young people in higher education or VET: *'chop and change'*

- One participant at university finished school in 2005 and did *'not do very well'*. At the time he was more interested in *'partying'*. He worked in hospitality for a short time. At the suggestion of a friend, he decided to study carpentry at TAFE but found he did not like it. He then travelled and *'sulked around not knowing what do to'* before a friend's mum suggested he consider nursing. He is now studying nursing and is considering further postgraduate study to become a nurse practitioner. He said he is very happy with this career path, noting that nurses are in demand and the job will allow him to travel and work all over the world.
- One participant at TAFE said she left school and accepted a traineeship with a Hotel but did not enjoy it. She then took a job as a legal secretary in a law firm. She liked the job and spoke to a partner at the firm who recommended she do a Certificate II and III in Legal Services. She is currently doing this at TAFE and enjoying her job, but said she does not know if she will do this forever.
- Another TAFE participant said when she was 5 years old she wanted to be a hairdresser but by the time she left school, had decided she wanted to be a tattoo artist. She spoke to a tattoo artist in Adelaide who told her there were already too many tattoo artists. She then decided she wanted to get a bar licence and is now doing a Certificate II and III in hospitality at TAFE. While she said she likes the course, she is not sure if she will stay in the hospitality industry.
- Another participant at university said *'year 12 came and went and I played a lot of sport'*. He said he did not do very well at school. After he left, he thought about doing sports science, but was talked out of it because *'there is not a lot of money in it'*. His parents said it would not take him anywhere. He got a casual Christmas job in the superannuation company his dad worked for. After Christmas, he was offered a full-time job to do *'mind numbing stuff, purely just for the money'*. He did this for 2 years and then was told he could progress in the company if he went to university. He is now studying a business degree at university and is enjoying it.

Young people in higher education said they need more help at the transition point between school and university, because this is when they are most at risk of dropping out and making poor career decisions. Many young people said they were not prepared for the demands of university or the lack of structure, and found the experience isolating and overwhelming. Refugee young people found the transition particularly difficult. As an example, one refugee said *'it was the worst time of my life'*. She recalled being asked to write a 2500 word essay but said she had no idea how to do this or how to reference correctly. She said she still struggles with this despite the fact she is now in her third year at university. Some young people in higher education are also anxious about the transition to the workforce, because they have often had little experience in the industry their study relates to. They want universities to do more to facilitate contact with industry, including through work placements and internships.

*If you want an entry level job in commerce you need two years experience.....a few get an internship, the rest finish their commerce degree and where is the experience going to come from? How do I get a job?*

(University student, Sydney)

The transition from school to VET and from VET to the workforce appears to be easier. Many young people said they like TAFE more than school because it is *'more relaxed'* and *'they treat you like adults'*. TAFE students also appear to have more exposure to industry than university students. Notwithstanding this, some TAFE students are anxious about finishing apprenticeships because they do not know if their employers will keep them on.

Young people in higher education or VET said they need more financial assistance to pursue study in their chosen fields. This message came from potentially marginalised groups, such as young Indigenous people and young carers, as well as mainstream groups. Young carers said they are not eligible for Centrelink full-time carer benefits if they are full-time students. Centrelink student benefits are less than carer benefits, and consequently young carers said they are *'financially penalised'* if they want to study full-time. One young carer said the home help his family received ceased when he finished school. The reality, however, is young carers need home help far more when they are transitioning to university and

struggling with new expenses. Some mainstream students started a university course but could not live on casual wages and had to drop out. Some apprentices described their apprentice wages (approx. \$350 per week) as *'appalling'* adding *'and they wonder why we have a shortage of tradies'*.

Some young people said flexible work and study options would also assist their career development. Students said evening or online classes would enable them to work during the day to earn money and study at night.

#### 4.5 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOL

The majority of young people in higher education or VET had some form of career development in school. The content and quality of this career development varied significantly across schools, and within schools. The majority of young people said career development in schools is *'poor'*. Only a handful of young people across the different focus groups had positive career development experiences at school.

Young people in higher education or VET said schools generally provided a mix of the following career development *between years 10 -12*:

- one on one interviews with a career practitioner
- work experience
- presentations by people working in different careers
- presentations by school alumni
- group sessions with a career practitioner.

Also used but far less common were:

- interactive technologies.

One on one interviews with a career practitioner and work experience were the two most common forms of career development offered to these young people at school. Young people are generally critical of school career practitioners and supportive of work experience. Many young people said their school career practitioner did not provide quality personalised advice that took their individual values and interests into account. Several students said their career practitioner tried to *'put them in a box'*, and push them into careers they were either ill-suited to or not interested in. As an example, one young refugee said her school career practitioner advised her to do hospitality or teaching even though she had no interest in either. Most young people in higher education or VET enjoyed work experience because it exposed them to the world of work. Although not all students liked the work they did, they said it was still a useful experience because it taught them what they do not like.

Many students said career practitioners failed to give them options or provide advice on pathways to get where they wanted to go. One CALD university student said her school career practitioner told her she was *'not smart enough'* to get into psychology at university. Rather than provide advice on alternate pathways, the career practitioner suggested she *'aim lower'*. In the end, this student went to TAFE and was later accepted into psychology at university as a mature aged student.

Some former Independent school students said their school career practitioners had a bias for university and actively pushed students to go to university. One CALD student recalled his Independent school invited former students back to the school to speak about their careers, but said they only ever invited doctors and engineers back. He said the school did not consider or promote a broad range of career options. On the other hand, other students, generally from Government schools, said their schools had a bias for VET courses or careers in the defence forces.

It is clear from focus groups that relationship-building is an essential part of career development in schools. Several students said they did not like their school career practitioner and did not feel comfortable speaking with them about important life decisions. Some students said they did not engage because they felt the career practitioner was just *'ticking the boxes'* and did not really care. Some students said they would have liked to engage with a career practitioner but he/she was never available. Others said they did not know whether their school even had a career practitioner.

Some students, who had negative experiences with school career practitioners, said they had more positive experiences with subject teachers who took an interest in their career decisions and provided career advice.

(CALD university student, Melbourne)

*The school I went to was private. Almost everyone went to uni. Uni seemed like the only option.....I got annoyed with my careers adviser, I said I liked art and she tried to push me into fine arts. She didn't give me any options.....just pushing.*

(CALD university student, Melbourne)

*[career development] is a load of crap...forced meetings, artificial, ticking boxes...the careers adviser didn't help me at all. I couldn't express myself and felt imprisoned.*

(VET student, Adelaide)

*The careers advisor I thought was really crap but the teachers at my school were really good so I didn't need one. The teachers were more equipped to deal with any questions I had about university.*

(University student, Sydney)

I don't know what one [school career practitioner] is.

(At risk VET student, Adelaide)

*My career advisor...I kept telling her I wanted to do carpentry and she kept putting me everywhere else...mechanics, farming, cooking. She pushed me into areas I didn't want to go because she is lazy.*

(Indigenous, VET student, Sydney)

*We had two careers advisors at school, they weren't very nice ladies and no one liked going to them. They were grumpy and hated their job. Everyone found it ironic that they hated their jobs and told you what job to do.*

(VET student, Melbourne)

Young carers said career practitioners in schools only cater to 'normal people'. They said career practitioners did not consider their personal circumstances when providing advice, and often saw them as 'hard work'.

Young carers found Government schools generally had more empathy than non-Government schools. One young carer said he obtained a scholarship to go to a private school. In year 11 he had poor grades because of difficulties at home. He said the school was 'very harsh' and told him he had to 'lift his game'. Consequently, in year 12 he had to 'be selfish' and put off going home so he could stay at school and study. He said he spoke to the school career practitioner about the difficulties he faced as a carer but the school 'did not empathise'. This young carer said private schools are generally filled with kids from wealthy families, and it is easy for them to forget they have scholarship students who are in tough situations and need extra guidance. Another young carer said she left a Catholic school for a Government school which she found far more accommodating. The Government school was sympathetic to her personal circumstances and gave her a personalised learning plan which allowed her to complete year 10 over three years. Had the school not done this, she may not have finished year 10 and this would have negatively impacted on her career options.

While the majority of students had mediocre experiences with school career practitioners, there were exceptions. Some students, across Government, Independent and Catholic schools, had positive experiences with knowledgeable career practitioners that considered their interests and values, and provided them with individualised advice and options.

*She [career practitioner] had been at our school for a long time, she was knowledgeable about everything so if you were unsure about something you could just ask her. As well as just giving you information she had anecdotes about other students that had gone through and their pathways. She was really good at giving first hand advice.*

(University student, Sydney)

*I had a one on one interviews with a careers adviser in year 9...she organised work experience and advised me to stay until Year 12. We met once a week after that...she told me to do what I wanted to do and encouraged me to do new things...she gave me work experience in carpentry, metal work and kitchen fitting.*

(Indigenous VET student, Sydney)

Many, but not all, young people in higher education or VET did some form of work experience at school. Work experience was compulsory in some schools, optional in some, and not an option in others. Students generally found work experience useful, even if it demonstrated to them what they did not want to do. Some students found it hard to get work experience because employers 'don't want young kids hanging around', and some said when they did get work experience, employers gave them menial tasks that did not teach them anything.

*I worked at a nursery [work experience], horticulture stuff. It was alright, but I didn't really understand the work there and the people running the place didn't really help me out. I decided I didn't like it and that I wanted to study and learn more.*

(University student, Melbourne)

*I did work experience at my primary school. I had a lot of fun with the little kids but I knew teaching was definitely not for me.*

(University student, Melbourne)

Young people in higher education or VET said the VET in Schools Program provides young people with a valuable opportunity to gain practical work experience. There is a view, however, that the Program is far more useful for young people who know what career direction they want to take. One VET student in Adelaide studied carpentry through the VET in Schools Program and went on to do a carpentry apprenticeship. He liked the Program because it was 'like a normal class' but counted towards his carpentry training. Another at risk student studying child care through the Program said she likes it because she knows it is the career direction she wants to take, and because it is 'practical and less on theory'. Several at risk young people said they were encouraged to do the VET in Schools Program but found it useless because they 'didn't get it', 'never planned on finishing year 12 any way' or 'kept getting expelled'.

A very small number of students in higher education or VET had used interactive technologies at school to try and ascertain what they were good at and what career paths they should consider. There is a view that these programs are sometimes useful, but often produce 'wild' answers that are unrelated to the student's interests or abilities. One student said 'they are useful to a degree... sort of 50/50'.

### *Subject selection*

Some young people in higher education or VET received advice before selecting subjects at school. However, the quality of subject advice varied, consistent with the quality of more general career advice received by these young people. Prior to selecting subjects, some students met with a school career practitioner to discuss what careers they might be interested in and what subjects they would need for those careers. Some students said they were given a 'questionnaire' to help identify their interests and values with a view to selecting suitable subjects. One student said his school had a 'subject open day' – all classes were open for three days and teachers gave students a 'taste' of different subjects.

There was a view that students who had a goal or knew what they wanted to do picked subjects that would help them get there. However, those that did not know what they wanted to do picked subjects based on what they liked, what their friends were doing, and what would help them get a good final mark.

Many students said they spoke to their subject teachers about subject choices. While these young people were generally supportive of subject teachers, they said when it came to subject choices, teachers were competitive and pushed high achieving students to pick their class.

*....at the end of year 10, the teachers from the different departments would come and try and poach the more nerdy kids. They did it for science and I was like 'dude I don't want to do science.*

(University student, Sydney)

Some young people were critical of the subject advice they received, saying they were not told how certain subjects were scaled and what impact subjects would have on their final mark. Refugee young people said schools made unfair assumptions about their abilities. For example, one refugee student said she wanted to study history but the teacher said her English was *'not good enough'*. Another refugee student said she wanted to sit a subject for the Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE) in year 10 but the teachers told her she could not because it would be *'too hard'*.

Some students received no subject advice at all from schools. One student said she has a friend that received no advice, and realised when she got to year 12 that she could not pursue the career she wanted because she had not picked the right subjects at school.

*I didn't really get told. I picked all the science subjects at the start and then I spent the first week back going and getting all my sciences and changing them to humanities.*

(University student, Sydney)

*What advice? I received no advice on subject selection ...it was eeney meeney miney mo.*

(VET student, Adelaide)

Some students said they did not like the fact that some subjects are mandatory. One VET student in Adelaide said it was mandatory for her to do maths, but she hated it and thought her time would have been better spent elsewhere.

#### *How can schools improve career development?*

Young people in higher education or VET said schools could improve the provision of career development by improving the quality of career practitioners, and providing students with one on one career advice that takes their values, interests and personal circumstances into account. For this to happen, students said there needs to be a smaller student to career practitioner ratio. Several students said schools focus too much on final grades and should instead focus on presenting students with options and pathways to get to where they want to go.

*It's about providing different avenues...there are so many avenues to get into university and there are so many options....schools need to broaden our horizons.*

(VET student, Adelaide)

*They need to give out more information about how you can grow your career, where it leads to, what courses will lead to where....*

(University student, Melbourne)

Young people said school career practitioners need to be proactive and push students to think about their future. This is important because young people in secondary school are often not focused on their post school options until far too late. Participants in the Melbourne CALD group said career practitioners need to be able to *'pick students up from ground zero'* and *'stress career, career, career'*. Students agree that all schools should make work experience available to students.

Most young people appear to receive some career development between years 10-12. A few young people across the various groups said career development should start earlier in secondary schools, and



should be integrated into the curriculum. However, this view was not shared by the majority of young people.

*We should start having these [career development] discussions in year 7. It might be overwhelming but I think it's important.*

(University student, Melbourne)

*If that was me, I would have wagged school if they had suggested it [career development] so early [year 7].*

(University student, Melbourne)

As noted in section 4.4, young people often find the transition to university very difficult and said schools should do more to prepare young people for this transition. Some refugee students like the idea of mentors and said schools should arrange for former school students to 'mentor' current students on what to expect post-school. At risk young people have fairly negative attitudes towards school, and said before career development can be improved, the quality of schools and teachers needs to be improved.

#### 4.6 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

Many young people in higher education or VET said they have 'no idea' what career development services are offered by their university or VET providers. Some of these students know *something* exists but they do not know how to access it and have not tried to find out. Some young people said universities and VET providers need to provide clear information on how to access career development services and need to reinforce this regularly throughout the year.

While there is clearly a marketing issue, there also appears to be an attitudinal issue among some male apprentices who do not want to be seen seeking advice from a career practitioner. These young males tend to seek advice from course teachers.

*You're a pussy if you go [to a VET career practitioner] it's not a manly thing to do.*

(VET student, Adelaide)

A small number of students said they had pro-actively sought out career development in higher education or VET institutions, and were pleased with the services provided. One female university student in Melbourne said she spoke with a career practitioner about studying postgraduate medicine. The career practitioner asked her to fill out a questionnaire to work out her interests and values, and then helped her develop a pathway plan and arrange work experience. Several TAFE students said they had one on one interviews with a TAFE career practitioner and had been happy with the advice provided. Some students, however, did not have such positive experiences in either university or VET, and spoke about being referred to a website and given written material to read.

Several young people had been to university open days. However, they said these had limited value because they were so crowded, and young people did not get to speak in any depth with university representatives. There also appears to be an issue with the timing of these open days. Several students said open days were scheduled around exam times which made attendance difficult.

Some students said universities and TAFEs need to provide better information to students seeking to transfer courses within and between institutions. One CALD university student said he wanted to transfer from biomedicine to medicine but could not get specific information from the university on the grades required or the Graduate Australian Medical School Admission Test (GAMSAT). A TAFE student in Melbourne said she did a certificate III in hairdressing in Queensland but was given very bad advice about the transferability of the qualification to other states. She said young people are highly mobile now, and TAFE needs to better explain to students that TAFE course requirements differ across states.

Some refugees said universities and VET providers need to provide more detailed information of what specific courses/degrees involve, including the level of English required, to prevent young refugees from

making poor decisions. One young refugee said he enrolled in a Certificate IV in business management at TAFE but on the first day he was given a CD and told the course was distance learning. This student did not know what distance learning was. Another young refugee who works extensively with the Karan community said many young Karan refugees undertake a Certificate IV at TAFE with the aim of articulating into university, only to find out too late that their English is not good enough for university.

#### 4.7 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

With the exception of at risk and Indigenous young people, young people in higher education or VET have generally had limited exposure to career development outside educational institutions. This is probably because they are still engaged in an education system that offers career development services. Most young people in higher education or VET have, however, referred to the internet and other written material for career information and advice.

A small number of young people in the refugee, CALD and mainstream VET focus groups said they have used the myfuture.com website. Most of these young people said they found the website *'useful'*, but others said it *'boxes you in to certain careers'*. Other young people said they looked at job advertisements on seek.com to figure out what qualifications and competencies they need for certain jobs. A very small number of students said they had taken careers tests or IQ tests they found online.

Some students said they used written materials such as the Victorian Tertiary Admissions Centre (VTAG) Guide and the Universities Admissions Centre (UAC) Guide to select university courses. However, not all students like these guides, with some saying they are too big and contain too much information. Other students said the Unigrad Guide, a guide which outlines what graduates employers are looking for, is helpful for young people who know exactly what they want to do.

There is a general view that part-time and casual work is a useful career development tool for young people in higher education or VET. Young people said part-time work helps them figure out what they like and are good at, and also helps to develop general competencies such as communication skills and time management skills.

At risk young people are more aware of the career development support services offered by Centrelink, employment service providers and other not for profit organisations. Some of the at risk young people had already used these services and were happy with the assistance provided. At risk young people in Adelaide spoke very highly of the Flexible Learning Options (FLO) Program being run by the South Australian Government which helps at risk young people to either stay in school or get a qualification. The program provides young people with one on one career support and guidance. One at risk young person said her FLO officer has given her *'lots of information'* and also provided *'a free dishwasher, bread and other things'*.

The Indigenous young people we spoke with are aware of career development services offered to Indigenous young people, including a new mentoring program in Melbourne which partners community mentors with Indigenous young people in years 11-12 or starting university. However, these young people said not all Indigenous young people know about the program and more needs to be done to promote it within the Indigenous community. Indigenous young people in Sydney spoke positively about the Aboriginal Employment Strategy which provided them with information and contacts for various VET courses.

#### 4.8 GETTING THE RIGHT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

Young people in higher education or VET said young people need career advice at every point where they need to make a decision – in year 10 they need advice on subject selection, in years 11-12 they need advice on post school work and study options, and in higher education or VET they need advice on suitable career options.

Many of the older students in higher education and VET have *'chopped and changed'* careers, meaning they have tried a number of different courses and jobs to find out what they like. These students said young people continue to need career advice after they leave the education system. They suggested that

life coaches or *'passionate people to help you find direction'* should be subsidised by the Government and available to assist young people who are not in education.

As noted above, a small number of young people said career development should begin in high school as early as year 7 and should be integrated into the curriculum. However, this view is not shared by all young people. At risk young people said they wish they had received more guidance from an early age at home, as this would have given them better foundations to make decisions relating to their education and career.

Young people in higher education or VET want career information communicated to them in different formats, with one on one interviews and online services being the preferred modes of communication. As noted in section 4.4, young people said they want personalised one on one advice that takes into account their values and interests. They would prefer to receive this advice from someone *'younger'*, as opposed to a baby boomer, and someone with industry experience. Some young people said career practitioners are often baby boomers who have different ideas about work, and a *'job for life'* mentality.

Some young people said they are sceptical about taking advice from someone they perceive to be pushing an agenda.

*The army came to my school, members of the defence force...they spoke at you and if you entered you got a free lap top. There were really intense in trying to get people in there.*

(University student, Sydney)

Young people in higher education or VET said comprehensive career information should also be made available on the internet. Indigenous students in Melbourne said they want a website that *"lists all unis, all TAFEs....you type in 'I live in Melbourne and I want to do nursing, what TAFEs can I go to?'"* This group said having all the information in one place would be useful, and would save them having to pull pieces of information from different websites. Other students said internet resources are convenient because they allow young people to seek career information at a time and place convenient for them. Some refugees said written materials are useful for them, particularly if their English is not strong. While a small number of students said they had used interactive technologies, there is not a strong preference among young people in higher education or VET for such tools.

Some university students in Sydney said they like to receive career information through personal stories or anecdotes. As an example, one young person said his school career practitioner compiled a list of students who had graduated the year before, their Universities Admissions Index (UAI) score, and details of what they were doing. Current students were able to review the list and contact former students to see *"how it was going and if they were enjoying it"*.

*They really liked that because it wasn't the teachers who were telling them what was going on. It was the actual students.*

(University student, Sydney)

#### 4.9 THINKING AHEAD

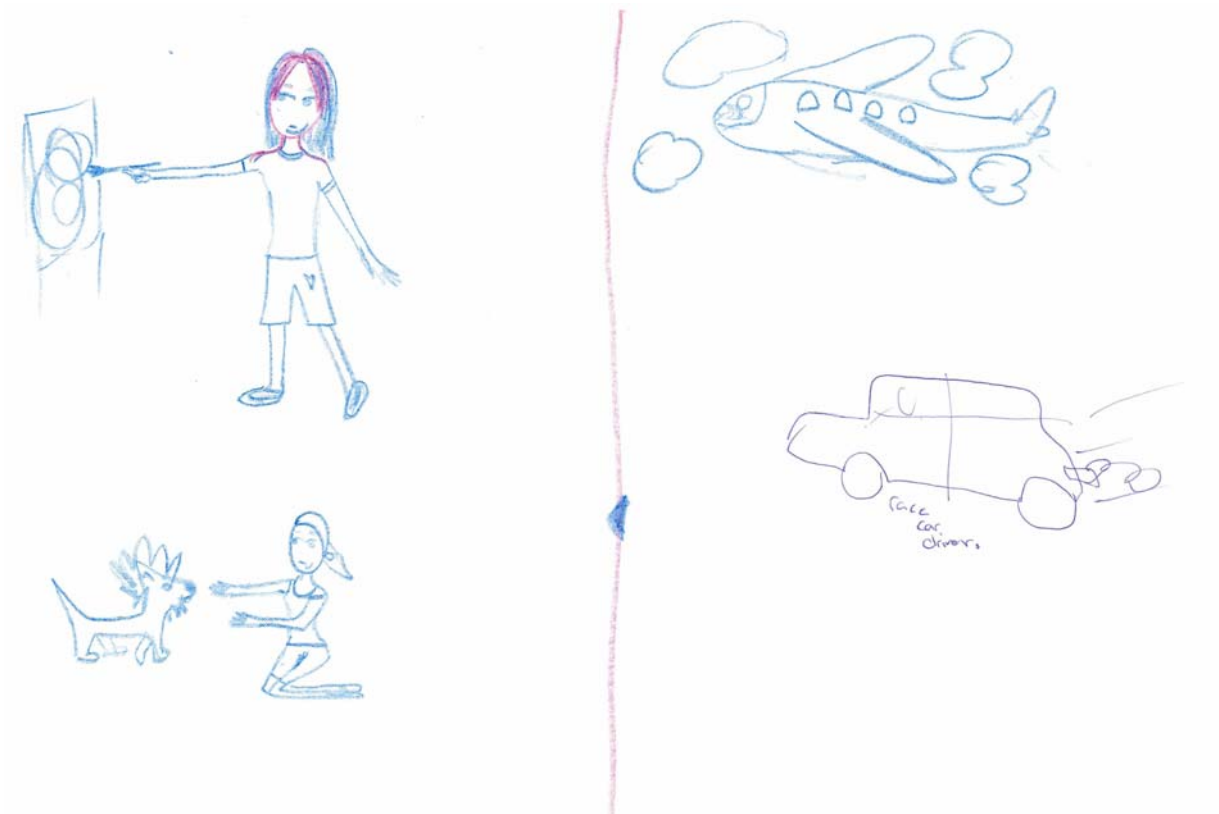
Young people in higher education or VET are generally not thinking too far into the future, and many of them do not have very firm ideas on where they will be in 10-15 years. Several students spoke about the need to keep their options open and try different things. However, there are exceptions. For example, young people studying degrees such as medicine are more likely to have a longer-term plan.

Young people have different levels of confidence about their careers. Some young people, including those that could be considered marginalised, are confident even though they do not have firm ideas on what they want to do. VET students in Adelaide, many of whom were older and had *'chopped and changed'* jobs and courses, tended to be more optimistic and confident. There is a view that work experience and work placements improve young people's confidence.

However, other young people are not confident, either because they do not know what they want to do, or because they know what they want to do but do not know if they will get there. Several university students in Melbourne said graduate positions are difficult to get, and some of these students said they

plan to stay at university to get postgraduate degrees because they do not think their bachelor degrees will be enough to get them a good job. As noted in section 4.4, some apprentices are also apprehensive. One apprentice mechanic, for example, said he is not confident he will get a job at the end of his apprenticeship because he has friends who were let go when their apprenticeships finished. Some Indigenous young people are nervous about entering the workforce and losing the support structures in place in educational institutions. Some at risk young people said they are not confident and will need motivation to enter the workforce and have a career.

# 5 Young people not in education



### Key findings:

- Many young people not in education make a distinction between a job and a career. A career is work that links to an individual's interests, aptitudes and strengths. A career is work that you enjoy and are passionate about, as opposed to a job which is a means of earning money. A career is also something long-term.
- Many say there are positive connotations attached to the word 'career', but others say it has negative connotations and can signify being stuck, tied down or locked into something.
- Some young people have clear ideas on what they want to do, however others do not have clear ideas and speak about trying different jobs before 'falling into' a job they like.
- Some young people do not necessarily see 'chopping and changing' jobs as a bad thing because they like to try new things and get 'bored' easily. Others, however, say 'chopping and changing' jobs can be destabilising.
- Young people not in education have different ideas on who is responsible for the career development of young people. Some see themselves as primarily responsible. Others say responsibility rests with a combination of young people, parents/families, schools and employers.
- Young people across the different cohorts cite many barriers to realising their career aspirations. For young people with a disability, a key barrier is the assumptions people make about what they can and cannot achieve. For young people in rural and remote areas, the barriers are money, transport and limited job opportunities in their hometowns. For Indigenous young people, prejudices and the desire to remain connected to their communities can be barriers. For young refugees, the main barrier is their command of the English language.
- Key influences in career development include personal interests, parents and family, peers, Aboriginal education workers, youth service workers, money and transport. The influence of parents varies significantly depending on the cohort of young people and SES.
- Most young people had some form of career development at school but the quality varied significantly. Young people generally say that career development in secondary schools is poor. They are particularly critical of school career practitioners working in all education sectors.
- Some young people not in education have previously studied at university or TAFE but did not use the career development services at these institutions. Some did not want to use these services. Others would have liked to but did not know they existed.
- Many young people are unaware of career development services existing outside educational structures. Others, however, say they have sought career development advice and support from the internet and Centrelink.
- Employers are not generally seen as a source of career development. Young people not in education say employers have unrealistic expectations and will not give them a go.
- Young people have different views on how they want career information and advice communicated to them. Some have a preference for one method over the other, but many say they want information through a mix of channels including one on one interviews, the internet, telephone and email.
- Young people develop firm career aspirations at different times and need to be able to access career information and advice when they figure this out, regardless of whether it is early on in secondary school, at the end of secondary school or post-secondary school.

Urbis conducted 11 focus group discussions with young people not in education across seven locations. The groups included:

- Young people aged 20-24 years in Launceston.
- Young people aged 20-24 years in Ceduna.
- Young people aged 17-19 years in Brisbane.
- Young people aged 17-19 years in Adelaide.
- Indigenous young people aged 17-24 years in Ceduna.
- Indigenous young people aged 17-24 years in Cairns.
- At risk young people aged 17-24 years in Darwin. These participants were recruited through an outreach community organisation that provides a range of services to homeless young people and those at risk of becoming homeless.

- At risk young people aged 17-24 years in Launceston. Participants for this group were recruited through several community organisations that provide a range of services to at risk young people including: services for young people involved in the youth justice system or at risk of involvement, mental health support, drug and alcohol support, social recovery programs, employment services and family support programs.
- Young carers aged 17-24 years in Darwin. These four participants all had caring responsibilities for someone in their family but did not take on the *primary* caring role.
- Young people with a disability aged 17-24 years in Melbourne. All five participants in this group have a physical disability. Three are wheelchair bound, one participant requires walking aids and one uses a 'lite writer' to speak.
- Young refugees aged 17-24 years in Melbourne.

## 5.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### 5.1.1 Defining the term 'career'

Young people not in education across the different cohorts have similar views on the meaning of career. A career was commonly identified as a job or paid employment. For some, a career offers a stable income and the potential to earn good money. Many participants said a career is more than just the work you do, it is a way of life.

*It is not just about a job it is a pathway for life.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

Across all groups, distinctions were made between a job and a career. Many young people said a career is work that links to an individual's interests, aptitudes and strengths. A career is work that you enjoy and are passionate about, as opposed to a job which is a means of earning money.

A career is also seen as long term; it can grow and develop over time. A career is '*your work for life*' and involves following pathways and taking steps in order to reach a goal. A career provides opportunities for individuals to progress or work their way up, it is '*not a dead end job*'.

Some participants described a career as '*an adult job*'. Some thought of a career as referring to the future. Others, however, said they are currently at the beginning of their careers.

*I see it [a career] more as an adult job like a teacher or a doctor or something like that.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

For a few mainstream young people the term 'career' infers aspirations.

*Career makes it sound like you have an aspiration to do something but I don't actually know what I want to do.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Launceston)

*You have to know what you want first. You have to have an ambition, that is the first step.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

A young carer from Darwin said a career is work that aligns with an individual's values and ethics. This young person is an active member of Amnesty International and the United Nations Youth Association of Australia. For him, a career is a vehicle for pursuing his interest in human rights.

Young people not in education said the notion of 'career' has changed. Nowadays, a career does not just involve paid employment. Other experiences, for example voluntary work, can contribute to the development of an individual's career. Some participants said a career requires tertiary study. One young

carer from Darwin said *'people want you to have proof; they want you to have that piece of paper'*. There is a view that the nature of the workforce has also changed; we are now a global community with global workers.

Some participants, across different cohorts, said everyone has a career. Young people with a disability from Melbourne said that everyone has the right to a career, regardless of whether they have a disability or not. Other participants were more discerning about people who have careers and people who do not. Some mainstream participants in both Ceduna and Launceston said educated people have careers, particularly those with a university education. Indigenous young people from Cairns said people who have careers are those who study for them and are dedicated to achieving them. They said these people wear uniforms or suits, or are 'tradies' who drive Utes. One Indigenous male said his 'mate' who is a plumber has a good career.

*People who have fancy cars and big houses [have a career].*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Cairns)

*People who are dedicated to achieving what they want [have a career].*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Cairns)

Most participants said they want to have a career.

*I am planning on it and doing everything I can.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*Yes of course, it is what everyone wants.*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Cairns)

All participants with a physical disability from Melbourne said they would have a career and that their disability should not be seen as an obstacle in this regard. Some said the attitudes of others, however, can act as a barrier to young people with a physical disability achieving their career aspirations.

*They assume if you have a physical disability that you also have an intellectual disability.*

(Young person with a disability, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

Some suggested it is important for people with physical disabilities who can work to have careers and obtain paid employment. One young male with a disability, who runs a public speaking business from which he does not earn an income, said people with disabilities receive pensions funded by taxpayers and, as such, have a responsibility to try and find paid employment. Conversely, a young female with a disability, who is currently doing a gap year with plans to study next year at a Centre for Adult Education (CAE), said that people with a disability should have the right to choose. She said if young people with disabilities are not driven to work then they should not feel they need to work.

Young people not in education said a career provides young people with the opportunity to: make money; have responsibility; develop skills; have financial security so they can 'settle' and support their families; and earn respect from those around them.

*It's nice to have a career. You can support yourself and you have security, you are financially secure.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*Respect. When you mention doctor there is instant respect. They have done the training and are not just a worker.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

*[If you have a career] Then you can have the best job, the best house and the best car.*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Cairns)



In addition, young people with a disability from Melbourne said a career improves their self-esteem and demonstrates to society that people with disabilities have skills and the capacity to work.

*[A career] is great for self-esteem, especially for disabled people who want to earn their own money and want to show people that they can earn their own money.*

(Young person with a disability, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

At risk young people from Launceston said that, in addition to money and security, a career provides choices and opportunities for travel and adventure. An Indigenous participant from Ceduna said a career can also lead to increased and better opportunities.

Some young people not in education said they do not think they will have a career, as the term 'career' has negative connotations. All 'mainstream' young people from Brisbane and a few from Ceduna said they would rather have a job than a career. These participants said a career is unattractive as it involves having to work for someone else and sticking to one job for life. Some said they do not want to 'serve someone else' but want a job that they do for their own personal satisfaction. For these young people, a career signifies being stuck, tied down, or locked into something. Committing to a career can limit an individual's options and people who have careers can become 'closed-minded'.

### Snapshot: The negative connotations of a career

- A young person from Brisbane who is currently working as a plumber said he does not want his job to encompass his whole life. For him, work is a means of earning money. He has aspirations to live in Europe, work on a part-time basis and be his own boss so '*I can rock up when I want and be in control*'. He feels plumbing will enable him to do this. For him a career means:

*Depression. I used to catch the train every morning to a school in the city...every person going to work on the train was sitting there upset, not smiling.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

- One young woman from Ceduna also held the view that a career involves working for someone else. This participant wants to start her own fitness business, and said in her view this does not constitute a 'career'. Others in the group disagreed with this, with one suggesting that a hairdresser working for themselves, for example, has a career.
- For one participant from Brisbane, who is currently working as a paralegal, and one from Ceduna, who has a government job, a career means specialising in one field or committing to a single line of work. They said a career means being tied down and having your options limited.

*I want to try as much as I can. Try a lot of different part time jobs. See a whole lot of different places. Do something that enables me to travel. Once I've finished studying I will do law but that is further down the track.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

*I would rather not find something to settle into, I don't want to be tied down. I plan to go around and find all different jobs and then maybe get a career later on. Keep my options open, jack of all trades, master of none.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

- One young female from Brisbane is about to commence studying art. She said she is pursuing her interest in art even though it may not necessarily lead to a career. This participant felt that a career can negatively impact on other aspects of a woman's life.

*For me, when I think of the word career I think of those women in powersuits... more than just your work, like those women who say 'I have a career I'm not going to have children'.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

- The term 'career' also has negative connotations for at risk young people from Launceston. They said a career can restrict the time they have available to spend with family and friends. Having a career can result in 'no social life' and 'no weekends'.

### 5.1.2 What does 'career development' mean?

The term 'career development' means:

*Each step you take to develop your career.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*Furthering your usefulness.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

Young people not in education said career development involves getting experience, undertaking study or training, gaining knowledge, and developing new skills. Career development also involves obtaining information, advice and guidance. In addition to this, mainstream young people from Adelaide associate career development with getting a promotion at work.

In relation to career development, young refugees from Melbourne discussed the importance of developing their language skills. They said the most important skill they will need to manage their careers is the ability to speak the English language.

At risk young people from Launceston are not familiar with the term 'career development'. Some of these participants had limited engagement with the education system and moved between numerous schools. One participant, for example, had attended six different schools. These young people said they had not seen a school based career practitioner, and have received little career guidance or education from school or elsewhere.

## 5.2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

There were varying views on who should be responsible for the career development needs and wants of young people not in education. Some participants said young people should have the primary responsibility.

*It is really what you make of yourself. Be what you want to be, go for it.*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Ceduna)

These participants said that although young people are primarily responsible, parents and school teachers have a role to play in supporting young people's ambitions, raising aspirations and providing guidance and advice.

Other participants said that the responsibility rests with a *combination* of young people, parents/families, schools and employers. Some mainstream young people from Adelaide also nominated the media as having a role to play, suggesting the media can influence the career aspirations of young people. Young refugees from Melbourne said Centrelink and other employment services as well as specialist services for refugees and newly arrived migrants also have a responsibility.

At risk young people from Launceston are more likely than other cohorts to see employers as responsible for the career development of young people. Roughly half of the participants in this group (four participants) said employers should have the primary responsibility, three said young people should have the primary responsibility and two said employment agencies should have this role. No participants in this

group mentioned parents/families or schools as being responsible for the career development of young people.

Young people with a disability from Melbourne identified Day Services (programs funded by the Victorian Department of Human Services, Disability Services) as having a responsibility to support the career development of young people with a disability.

### 5.3 CAREER ASPIRATIONS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

Young people not in education are diverse and have different career aspirations and needs. Some young people are working and some are not. Some have undertaken post-school study either at university or TAFE, others entered the workforce straight after school, and others are taking a post-school gap year to try and figure out what they want to do.

Some young people have set ideas on what they want to do. For example, a young carer in Darwin said she is the eldest of 6 kids. Two of her siblings have cerebral palsy and one of these two is a quadriplegic. Her dad is absent a lot of the time because he is deployed with the defence force. She was home schooled and played a key role in caring for her siblings. She babysat her godmother's three children in Brisbane over the summer holiday, one of whom has Attention Deficit Disorder. This job and her experience in caring for her siblings made her realise that she loves working with children with a disability, and wants to pursue this as a career path.

However, many young people not in education do not have clear ideas on what they want to do. Many young people spoke about trying a number of different jobs or courses of study before *'falling into'* something they like.

As an example, an Indigenous participant in Cairns said he worked for Subway while at school but found it interfered with his studies so left. After school, he took a year off and *'stayed at home, lazed around a bit'*. He then studied the guitar and the saxophone for 6 months and *'moved around a bit'*. He said he applied for jobs but was not successful. He eventually got a casual position at Centrelink doing administrative work which he described as *'a really big step for me'*. He worked at Centrelink as a casual for several years before *'giving them an ultimatum'* that he would leave if they did not offer him a permanent position. He was eventually given a permanent job and is responsible for working with the Indigenous community and processing ABSTUDY applications. He has been there for almost 7 years and despite enjoying the work, he said he is *re-evaluating at the moment'*.

Some young people do not necessarily see *'chopping and changing'* jobs as a bad thing, suggesting it is perfectly acceptable for young people to change their minds. Indigenous young people in Ceduna said they get *'bored'* easily and like to try new things.

*One of the guys at my [law] firm has only been doing law for 14 years, before that he was an engineer and worked for one of the biggest firms....it makes me think 'I can do whatever I want'...try different things, experience different things.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

However, *'chopping and changing'* jobs can be destabilising for some young people. As an example, one young person in Adelaide said he left school wanting to be a fireman but without a *'structured plan'* to get there. He said he thought he would work for 2-3 years to get experience before entering the service but found that he *'wandered aimlessly'* between jobs with no real direction. He eventually spoke to a family friend who told him what he needed to do (get a truck license and complete a TAFE course) and he now feels that he is on the right track. This participant indicated that the 2-3 years he spent *'chopping and changing'* was not time well spent.

Another young person said he *'chopped and changed'* in the hope he would fall into something he liked but it had not happened:

*...Lack of interest. I never really had a thought in my head at school or elsewhere about what I wanted to do, I just thought I'd see what happens when I leave school but it hasn't happened. Got my job pretty easily because my parents own the business. It's not very exciting but it pays my bills.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

Many young people not in education agree that they will need key life skills to manage their careers and realise their career aspirations. There is a general view that young people will need organisational, interpersonal and communication skills. Some young people in Adelaide said they will need motivation. Others in Brisbane said they will need good research skills to find out about different opportunities available to them. They will also need to know how to 'sell themselves' through their resume and during an interview.

While some young people not in education have career ideas and aspirations, many cited barriers they will need to overcome to realise those aspirations. There is a general view that it can be difficult for young people to 'get a foot in the door' because employers want experience, even for entry-level roles, that young people do not have. Several young people said 'it's not what you know but who you know', and said their lack of personal networks is a key barrier to them pursuing the career they want.

Young people with a disability said a key barrier to realising their career aspirations is Day Services, provided to young people with a disability by the Victorian Department of Human Services. They said Day Services staff 'think we can't achieve' and are unwilling to provide career development support. Day Services staff try to push young people with a disability into voluntary work, as opposed to paid work in an area they are interested in. These young people said Day Services staff need to change their attitudes towards young people with a disability, and need training on how to support young people's career aspirations.

*When I said I wanted to be an advocate, they looked at me and went 'uh excuse me?' and one person said 'that's a bit abnormal isn't it? Aren't you supposed to be the client and we are supposed to be the staff'.*

(Young person with a disability, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

*They [Day Services staff] just think you can't achieve.*

(Young person with a disability, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

*They [Day Services staff] are there to help us but only in small ways...I told them we are not interested in what you want to teach us, we are interested in what we want to learn.*

(Young person with a disability, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

Young people in regional and remote locations said money and transport are key barriers to them realising their career aspirations. At risk young people in Launceston said they need money for training, transport and child care. One young person in Launceston said he wants to get a motorbike license so he can be mobile, but cannot because he needs to accumulate 50 hours of driving experience and does not know anyone who will give him this experience for free. Another young person working casually said if he is asked to work at very short notice he has to decline because he cannot get a bus in time and does not have his own transport. He said because he declines work, he gets less shifts and consequently earns less money.

Young people in regional and remote locations said another barrier for them is that there are only limited career opportunities in their hometowns. For them to realise their career aspirations, they often need to move elsewhere. This costs money, which young people do not always have, and involves moving away from family and friends. Young Indigenous people in Cairns indicated that they want to maintain a connection with their community, and this makes moving away for their communities for work or study very difficult.

While Indigenous young people did not use the word discrimination, they indicated that they struggle to get the work they want because they are Indigenous.

*I think about what I look like, feel ashamed to go to job interviews, think about how people will judge me, not willing to give me a chance, give me a go.*

(Indigenous, 17-24 years, Cairns)

*People just don't give you a fair chance, don't know why that is but just the way it is.*

(Indigenous, 17-24 years, Ceduna)

*It is who you know in this town and the footy team, you have to play for the right footy team – if you play for mission [the Aboriginal football team] you can't get a job – you have to play for the right team.*

(Indigenous, 17-24 years, Ceduna)

Young refugees said a key barrier to realising their career aspirations is their command of the English language and their understanding of Australian cultural norms. Some refugees said shaking hands with interviewers during an interview is standard practice in Australia but in some cultures men and women do not touch each other. Refugees said they are working at improving their English and their understanding of how things work in Australia as a matter of priority. One refugee said in the meantime she aimed to get a job as a cashier in a supermarket because she thought her English was sufficient for this and the job was attainable.

#### 5.4 INFLUENCES IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Young people not in education have a range of career development influences that are broadly consistent with the influences cited by young people in secondary school and young people in higher education or VET. Young people not in education said the main influences in their career development decisions are:

- personal interests
- family, and in particular parents
- peers
- Aboriginal Education Workers
- Youth Service Workers
- money
- transport.

Young people not in education said their career choices are guided to some extent by the things they are good at or interested in. Several young people said they know they are good at something if they have succeeded in it (eg sport), or have received positive feedback/praise about it from teachers, parents, other young people, and the community more generally. Others said you know you are good at something if you like that thing.

Young people in Adelaide have different views on selecting a career based on what you like. One young person said she always liked art and design and that was how she knew she wanted to study jewellery design at TAFE. However, another young person said he also likes art but does not think it is a good career choice: *'I like art but what can you do with that? You can like something but it doesn't mean it's a good career path'*. There was a view among some young people that doing what you like and doing something that will provide a stable income and job can be a difficult balancing act.

With the exception of at risk young people, young people in all focus groups said their parents are a significant influence in their career decisions. For some young people, parental influence is seen as positive and for others it is less positive. Some young people see their parents as role models and want to follow in their footsteps. For example, one young person in Adelaide said both her parents are doctors and she is planning to sit the Undergraduate Medicine and Health Sciences Admission Test (UMAT) this year to hopefully follow in their footsteps. Other young people said their parents helped and encouraged them to do what they wanted to do, or gave them a job in a family business.

*I wouldn't be doing plumbing now if it wasn't for mum. She got me into the course. I don't know what I would be doing without her. She sorted it all out. I was 16 at the time.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

Young people with a disability said they rely heavily on their parents for information, because schools and the broader community make unfair assumptions about what they are able to do: *'I took into consideration the opinions of my family and my friends. They were very important because they knew I had talent. Their support was very much needed considering what I had been through with my other schools [referring to being considered unsuitable for paid work and being given limited career options]'*.

Young carers in Darwin said their families are close knit and their parents are key influences in their career decisions. They said caring responsibilities tend to make families closer, but some said their families are especially close-knit because they are migrant or defence families.

*I normally talk to mum about it she is the one who runs everything now.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*Our family is pretty close we support one and other.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

Mainstream young people in Brisbane said parents often push their children into university or down other career paths, irrespective of their children's interests and capabilities.

*My Dad is more traditional. As soon as I finished school, he wanted me to study but I didn't want to. He is still going at it – you should study, not do art...thinks about money and the future. My mum is more 'you like art so you should do it'.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

*I know someone who is doing accounting at uni. [I asked her] what do you like? She didn't know. Her whole family told her whole life to be an accountant. She didn't know what she wanted, didn't have any hobbies.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

At risk young people did not mention their parents or families as being a significant influence in their career choices. One Indigenous young person in Cairns said he followed in his parent's footsteps *'picking bananas and mangoes'* but then decided he wanted to be a cabinet maker, a decision his family did not agree with or support: *'I was shamed by my parents, I kept it to myself. They put you down. That's why I talked to my friends'*.

Some young people said other family members, such as husbands and siblings, influenced their career decisions. One young refugee said her career choices are influenced by her husband who is Australian, and understands the labour market.

The majority of young people not in education said their career development decisions are also influenced by the peers. Like parents, peer influence can be seen as positive or negative. Some mainstream young people in Brisbane said they find it helpful to speak to friends in their late 20s and early 30s because they are in the workforce and can share first-hand experience. An Indigenous participant from Cairns said he discusses his career decisions with a friend who is a plumber and clearly a role model for him.

*I talk to my good friend who is a plumber. He got his license when he was 19. Before he is 20, he will have an apprenticeship.*

(Indigenous, 17-24 years, Cairns)

A mainstream participant in Brisbane said friends influenced his decision to do a gap year. His friends went straight to university after school and *'chopped and changed'* courses because they did not know what they wanted to do. This left them with large HECS debts. This participant does not want to end up in the same position, and consequently has decided to take a year off to reflect on what he really wants to do. A refugee from Russia said another Russian family that she is friendly with provides her with significant career support. The participant said this family has been in Australia for many years, and gives her advice on where to go and who to speak with for career information. She said being able to receive this information in Russian, her mother tongue, is particularly helpful.

As noted above, not all peer influence is considered positive. An Indigenous student in Cairns, for example, said he was good at school but peer influence *'got me into trouble, let me down'*.

Indigenous young people in Ceduna mentioned Aboriginal Education Workers in school and Youth Connections officers as influences in their career decisions, however Indigenous young people in Cairns did not. Several Indigenous young people in Cairns indicated their career decisions are influenced by a desire to remain connected to their communities. One of these young people, for example, is processing ABSTUDY applications for Centrelink. He likes working with Indigenous clients, and said he makes sure he has a *'feed'* with them once a week. Another Indigenous female in Cairns said she is providing fitness training to regional Indigenous communities. She trains trainers on the exercise Indigenous men and women should be doing, and said she finds it satisfying to share her knowledge with Indigenous communities.

At risk young people said they are influenced by social workers and other government agencies they have been exposed to. As an example, one at risk young person said she wants to be a counsellor because it is a profession she sees all the time and knows a lot about. Another at risk young person wants to work in child protection because this participant had been in child protection since 4 years of age.

As noted in section 5.3, young people in regional and remote areas said money and transport are key barriers to their career development, and consequently a key influence in their career decisions. Young people who do not have a car said they need to rely on public transport to get to work, which in regional and remote areas can be intermittent and unreliable.

*[Getting the work I want] would be pretty hard....cause I don't have my license so I have to catch buses and all that.*

(Indigenous, 17-24 years, Ceduna)

Moving to another city for work or study can be expensive for the young people in regional and remote locations. Further, the need for money in the short-term can result in young people choosing not to pursue training or study, and taking any job to earn money. As an example, a young person in Launceston working in a paint shop said he was offered an apprenticeship when he left school but the money was not good. He decided to work in the paint shop, because at the time that job paid more. This young person is now four years out of school and regrets his short-term decision. He said his friends that did apprenticeships are now starting to earn *'big money'* but he has *'hit his ceiling'* and is not sure how he can progress his career.

At risk and mainstream young people in Launceston said their career choices are influenced by a desire to have their own business and be their own boss. Many of these young people have had negative experiences with local employers, who they said underpaid them and *'treated [them] like dirt'*.

Only a very small number of young people not in education said career practitioners or school teachers influenced their career decisions. Young people in Adelaide said class teachers were *'a good source of advice'* but said they also *'had their own biases'* which was reflected in the advice they gave.

## 5.5 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Most young people not in education had some form of career development available to them at school, however the type and quality of career development offered varied significantly. Although some young

people had access to positive career development, there was a general view that career development in secondary schools is poor.

Young people not in education said a mix of the following career development initiatives/opportunities were available to them at school. These opportunities are similar to those mentioned in focus groups with young people in secondary school and young people in higher education or VET.

- one on one interviews with a career practitioner
- presentations by university and TAFE representatives, people working in different careers, and school alumni
- work experience
- visits to career expos
- training in resume writing and interview techniques
- Personal Learning Plans (young people in Darwin).

The implementation of career development in schools appears to differ widely. Some schools make career development opportunities compulsory and actively engage students in career development. Other schools provide career development opportunities but do not make them compulsory, instead leaving career development up to the initiative of individual students. There was a general view in some focus groups that Independent schools are more likely to be in the former category. One former Independent school student in Adelaide, for example, said her school actively engaged parents and students by producing a monthly careers bulletin.

Despite the view that some Independent schools provide better career development, some former Independent school students criticised their schools for failing to provide students with enough *detailed* advice and for *'pushing'* young people into university. As an example, a former Independent school student in Adelaide said she told her career practitioner she wanted to study medicine. The career practitioner gave her advice on what subjects to take, but did not tell her she needed to sit the Undergraduate and Health Sciences Admission (UMAT) exam until one month before the exam, and by this time it was too late for her to properly prepare. This student said she got the required Tertiary Entrance Rank (TER) for medicine but did not get the required score in the UMAT exam (both of which are required for entry into medicine). Consequently, she has decided to take a year off, so she can sit the UMAT exam again this year with the hope of getting into medicine next year.

Another former Independent school student said she wanted to go to TAFE to study something animal-related, but the career practitioner *'really only focused on university'*.

*Everything was geared towards university....we would have a half hour talk on TAFE and a three hour talk on university.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Adelaide)

One former Government school student said his school also pushed university, but Government schools appear less likely to push students into university in the same way as Independent and Catholic schools do. One young person with a disability said his school also had a bias, but the bias was for trades and the VET sector. This participant said the school assumed all students would go on to do a trade. He ended up moving to a *'more academic school'* because a trade was not an option for him.

Several students were highly critical of school career practitioners. While this criticism was directed at all education sectors (Government, Independent and Catholic), students tended to be more critical of career practitioners in Government schools. A common complaint is that school career practitioners did not take students values and interests into account when giving advice, were difficult to access, and did not provide students with advice on various pathways. Several students said schools make students think their final grade is the *'be all and end all'* when in fact there are many routes to get to where you want to go. Young people with a disability are critical of schools more generally, and said schools try to convince parents of young people with a disability to put their children into Day Services, which effectively limits their career development options.



She [school career practitioner] *didn't try to find out what we were interested in. She had generic information to give regardless, it was like a formula.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

*There was one [career practitioner] at school but I didn't use it. They are not helpful. One of my friends went there...but the school did nothing to help her. She got no guidance on TAFE or university. They pretty much told us to leave.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Adelaide)

*They don't mention pathways....it makes you think that year 12 is the be all and end all. If you stuff up year 12 you think your life is over.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Adelaide)

*Technically [he] was the career officer, if you can call him that.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

*Work experience would have been good.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

Not all participants, however, were critical of school career practitioners. As an example, one young carer in Darwin said she spoke to her school career practitioner after she left school. The career practitioner provided personalised assistance and used her own networks to help this participant get a job and develop a pathway to a teaching career.

Some young people acknowledged that despite their school's efforts in the area of career development, they were simply not interested: *'I was 16. I didn't care to be honest. I was more interested in partying with girls'*.

Mobility appears to play a big role in the career development young people receive in school. Young people who change schools regularly appear to receive less or no career guidance. As an example, some at risk young people in Launceston who said they received no career information and advice at school had been to up to 6 schools. It may be that the schools they went to did not offer career development or it may be that these young people were so disengaged from school that they did not know or care what career development was offered. Either way, these young people left school without adequate career information and advice.

Indigenous young people in Ceduna said their school had a career practitioner, but that they sought career information and advice from the Aboriginal Education Worker: *'the Aboriginal Education Worker did the same sort of thing as the career advisor'*. Indigenous young people in Cairns also spoke about receiving support from Indigenous teachers, but this was more in the context of literacy support. Interestingly, this latter group of Indigenous students said their school participated in the Academic and Talent Aspirations Program (ATAP). Under ATAP, a series of workshops are held across the region to teach young people life skills such as self-esteem, respect and confidence building. Students said the program is *'important'*.

Young carers in Darwin said they prepared Personal Learning Plans (PLPs) at school which outlined their career goals. The group had mixed views on utility of PLPs:

*PLP ..last year of high school, not really worth it to be honest. No one really did anything – writing resumes, work experience – nothing much, a very easy subject to pass.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*Most kids did it [the PLP] but didn't take it seriously.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*You can make more out of it [PLP] if you want to, if done properly...get out of it what you put into it.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

Indigenous young people in Ceduna said *'heaps of people'* from TAFE and university came to their school to give presentations about different courses and careers. These students said this was perhaps the most *'helpful'* form of career development their school offered.

Other young people, however, were critical of presentations in schools. Young carers in Darwin said their school invited employers in the mining and engineering sectors to speak to students, but said *'they talked at you and they didn't understand that we are 16 year olds and our attention span is very short'*. Likewise, on presentations by representatives from the police and defence forces, they said *'wow see the world, you study we pay for it. They don't give you a job description, don't outline the job – look at advantages'*. This group was also very critical of careers expos which they describe as *'boring'*, a *'sales pitch'* and *'full of polish and spin'*.

Most young people not in education that had done work experience in secondary school generally enjoyed it and found it a worthwhile experience. Several students who did not do work experience said they wished they had been given the opportunity to do it.

*Work experience was helpful...a good experience... teaches you to get up at 6am in the morning for work, it's what the real world is like.*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Cairns)

*Work experience that is how I got my job. I did work experience and they called me to work.*

(Indigenous young person 17-24 years, Ceduna)

Some students, however, said they found work experience intimidating. Others said they were given menial tasks and found the experience *'boring'*.

*I wanted to do legal work experience but the positions were all full. I worked at the real estate agents...didn't show up after the first two days because they had me shredding paper. It wasn't a good experience.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

*I thought it was scary, really intimidating....used to being around mates and family all day and then have to go to work by myself and be with adults.*

(Indigenous young person, 20-24 years, Cairns)

One young carer in Darwin said she has been to school in Darwin and Melbourne, and said career development is *'very good in Melbourne and not very good in Darwin'*. She said Melbourne offers students more work experience options, and requires students to reflect on their work experience by documenting: what they learnt; what they could have done differently; and what their strengths and weaknesses are. This participant said this process of reflection enables young people in Melbourne to get more out of work experience.

Students in South Australia spoke about the Transitions Trip which involves a tour of universities and workplaces. Indigenous young people in Ceduna were positive about the Trip, with one young person saying it showcased options and contributed to a final decision to study in Adelaide. However most mainstream young people in Adelaide were less positive, saying they did not find the Trip useful.

### *Subject advice*

Some young people not in education received advice before selecting subjects for years 11 and 12, and some did not. Consistent with the comments received from young people in higher education or VET, the quality of subject advice received by young people not in education varied significantly. Some young people in Adelaide were positive about the subject advice they received. These participants used

computer-based tests to ascertain their values and interests, and identify suitable subjects. They also had one on one interviews with school career practitioners and attended 'subject' days at school. One participant in this group said even if the subject advice is good, it can be difficult for young people to pick subjects based on what they want to do post-school because a lot of them simply do not know what they want to do. This view was shared by another young person in Brisbane.

*The hard thing is you have to choose subjects in year 11 to determine uni courses...change your mind a million times in that 2 years ....you grow a lot as a person in that time.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

Another young carer in Darwin said he was not interested at the time he selected subjects and regretted it a couple of years later.

*At the time, I wasn't interested in choosing subject for the future...I should have chosen different subjects ...[I picked] PE and sociable classes...the easy pathway...muck around on the computer...didn't seem real to me...important two years later...I did the wrong subjects.*

(Young carer, 17-24 years, Darwin)

Some Indigenous young people in Ceduna said they spoke to the Aboriginal Education Worker before selecting subjects. One young person told the Aboriginal Education Worker she wanted to be a nurse and he advised her which subjects would help her pursue that career path.

Young people in Adelaide said the VET in Schools Program is good for young people that know they want to do a trade or an apprenticeship. One participant in this group, however, said she studied interior design through the Program but found it 'stupid' because 'they looked at colours and that was it'.

Several young people not in education said they either did not receive any advice before selecting subjects, or received advice they did not find helpful. Young carers in Darwin that did not know what they wanted to do were advised to pick subjects that would help them get a good mark, and that were broad enough to keep their options open.

Overall young people not in education said schools could improve career development by providing students with individualised advice that considers their values and interests, and outlines the various options and pathways available to them. Some students said this advice should not just be one-off, but should be 'continual'. Most young people said schools should offer work experience because it is a valuable opportunity for young people to get some real exposure to the world of work. Related to this, Indigenous young people in Ceduna said it would be helpful if schools provided young people with connections to industry. Some young people said schools should do more to promote the idea of gap year as a viable alternative to post-school work or study. These young people said although 'no one talks about it', it can be a good option for people who do not know what they want to do.

## 5.6 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

Some young people not in education had previously undertaken studies at university or TAFE. However, the majority of these young people had not received any advice from a career practitioner either at university or TAFE. Some participants did not necessarily see this as a gap or an unmet need, because they received the information or advice they needed from elsewhere, including lecturers or course teachers, family members, online and printed materials.

Some said they had discussed their career with course teachers at TAFE or their university lecturers. A mainstream young person from Adelaide, for example, spoke to her course teachers at TAFE who were 'really helpful' and gave her suggestions on who she should contact for an apprenticeship.

A young person with caring responsibilities from Darwin said he was not interested in accessing career services at university. 'I am very independent. I wouldn't ask anyone. I prefer to do it myself'. He said he figured out what he needed to know about his law degree by speaking to the head of the law department and seeking out information on the university website. A young male from Ceduna who undertook a

teaching degree at Adelaide University said he also did not need to access the career services at university. His mother and a number of other relatives are teachers so he was able to get the information, help and advice he needed by speaking to them. Some Indigenous young people from Cairns said their course teachers at TAFE spoke at length about careers towards the end of their courses. A few said they also read printed TAFE materials. A few mainstream participants from Adelaide said the TAFE handbooks gave them some good career ideas, while an Indigenous participant from Ceduna said it contained a lot of information and was *'very helpful'*.

Other participants, however, felt they did not receive the information, support or advice they needed from university or TAFE. A few mainstream participants from Ceduna started TAFE courses by correspondence but dropped out before completion. They spoke of the difficulties they had in contacting their course teachers and in getting work and information sent between themselves and TAFE. They said it was very difficult to get hold of course teachers, and when they did they felt they had limited time to speak with them because teachers were busy with other things. One participant said in the end he *'lost interest and that was the end of that'*. These participants said they had no knowledge of the availability of any career development services at TAFE; they had enough difficulty getting access to their teachers.

Some Indigenous young people from Ceduna also started TAFE or university courses but dropped out before completion. An Indigenous male started doing business studies at TAFE but did not enjoy it. He realised it was not for him and dropped out halfway through. He did not speak with anyone at TAFE before discontinuing the course.

Three Indigenous females from Ceduna had previously moved to Adelaide to undertake study at university, two in nursing and one in visual arts. All three had dropped out and moved back to Ceduna. While they enjoyed the course work, they struggled with living in Adelaide. They said it was difficult for them to be away from their families and they did not enjoy the metropolitan lifestyle. They found Adelaide too busy and overwhelming. They also experienced financial and transport difficulties, noting it was difficult to get around without a car or a license. The two participants who started a nursing degree had contact with an Aboriginal Employment Coordinator (AEC) at the university who they described as *'a mentor'* and whose role was to *'manage us in the course'*. Before discontinuing the course they spoke to the AEC who tried to organise study for them via correspondence. However, there were only a small number of correspondence places available and they missed out. One participant said she is hoping to try again for a correspondence place. The participants felt the AEC provided adequate support but wanted more external study options to be available in Ceduna.

Mainstream participants from Launceston also said they want more local study options. They said study opportunities in Launceston are limited, with young people often having to leave Launceston to get the training they need. Some participants said they want to an apprenticeship but there are not enough places available. Participants said the local TAFE does not provide sufficient information, guidance or advice. The TAFE simply tells potential students what places are available and leaves it to them to decide whether they want to take the place or not.

Some of the participants who had not undertaken any tertiary study, said they had contacted a university or TAFE provider for information or advice in relation to their future study plans.

Some mainstream participants from Brisbane had attended a career expo with representatives from various universities, while still in secondary school. A male participant interested in studying law said it was helpful to speak with law lecturers (especially those who have worked in the profession) and current students. It gave him an opportunity to ask questions and get their advice and opinions. The expo also provided a forum where he could compare different universities and different courses.

*I could ask 'this is what I want, is this the right course?' And they would say 'no but this one at this other uni might be better for you'.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

A young female with a disability from Melbourne interested in doing tertiary study spoke to a staff member at the Centre for Adult Education (CAE). This staff member had been designated the point of contact for current and potential students with a disability. The participant said she found the staff member to be very helpful in providing advice appropriate for her particular circumstances.

*I've had some advice from the CAE, they gave me some ideas of courses that I could do in the fields that I am interested in...when I go back to school that is where I will go.*

(Young person with a disability, 17-24, Melbourne)

One participant from Ceduna was interested in undertaking training to become a pilot but had difficulty finding an institution through which to do the training. He spoke of getting the 'run around' by a number of institutions. He contacted the Airforce in the first instance, who told him to contact some local educational providers. He then rang a number of adult education centres but said 'they weren't much help'. He ended up organising to do the training through the 'open access' option provided by a local secondary school.

Some mainstream participants from Brisbane had heard anecdotal stories from their friends who are currently studying. One participant said her friend had a 'nightmare of a time trying to call' a TAFE provider for information and advice on courses, and said their friend's mum ended up having to sort it out for them.

## 5.7 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

Young people not in education have varying career development needs. Some are working in jobs they are satisfied with and need little career development at this stage in their lives. Some have clear career aspirations and need information and advice on what to do to realise these aspirations. Some know their interests and want a better understanding of the career options available to them. Some do not have clear or specific career aspirations and need opportunities to further explore their interests and aptitudes. Some need practical assistance with finding and securing jobs.

Across mainstream and potentially disadvantaged groups, some participants said they would not know where to go for career information, guidance and advice outside educational institutions. Some participants who are aware of career development services outside educational institutions said these services do not adequately meet their needs.

*I wouldn't know where to start.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Adelaide)

*Not obvious where you would go.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

*Good help is hard to find.*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Ceduna)

Many participants, across different cohorts, mentioned the internet as a source of study and work related information. Some participants said the internet is their preferred way of seeking information. Some young refugees from Melbourne, for example, said they find the internet to be the easiest way of accessing information relating to courses of study. Some mainstream participants from Launceston said they can find everything they want to know by doing a Google search. Participants mentioned using TAFE and university websites, My Career, myfuture and Seek. Some described the myfuture website as 'pretty cool' and a useful source of information. Others said that it did not assist much with their post-school work or study decisions. Some participants had done a quiz on the myfuture website that suggests potential career options. Some said this is a useful activity, but others are sceptical. As one participant commented:

*Got things I would never consider doing. There is something impersonal about putting answers into a computer and it saying 'this is what you are like'... it didn't click with me.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

Some participants felt that these and other websites are good for information and fact finding but have limitations as you cannot ask questions or get opinions, advice and guidance. Also, when searching for information online, participants said you need to have something specific in mind. If you want to know information about a particular job or course of study, the internet is a good source for information. If not, the internet may not be the most useful place to go.

Other participants said they had not used the internet much to look for career information. A few Indigenous young people from Cairns had used the internet to look for jobs or job-related information, but said it is 'too difficult' to find the information they want. Some Indigenous young people from Ceduna said they had used the internet to search for work or study related information at school but had not done so since because they do not have the internet at home. A young carer from Darwin also said she did not have the internet at home. A young female from Ceduna commented:

*Depends if you have the internet. It's perfect for me because I sit in front of a computer all day. But some don't have internet access. [My boyfriend] doesn't even have an email address so I have to do the emailing and the faxing, he doesn't even know how to use a computer.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

Many mainstream, Indigenous and at risk participants spoke about their experiences with Centrelink or other employment services. Some said they are happy with the information and support provided, adding that employment services found them jobs or training/study linked to their interests or skills. Indigenous young people from Cairns, for example, said employment services assisted them with exploring their interests and options, finding them work, enrolling them in TAFE courses, financing the costs of their courses and preparing them for jobs (eg writing résumés). Some Indigenous participants from Cairns said they have established very positive relationships with employment service staff. Despite this group's enthusiasm for employment services, however, it appears that some participants in Cairns have three or four certificates in completely different fields (ie horticulture, hospitality, tourism, construction). It also appears that there has been no follow through to link these courses with employment.

Other participants are not satisfied with the career development provided by employment services. These participants said employment agencies do not explore with them their aspirations, needs, interests or aptitudes. They said employment services do not listen to what they want and do not try and find them work that aligns with their skills and interests.

*My experience of going to an employment agency was terrible. They put me into terrible jobs. Obviously the jobs no one else wanted to do. You just felt like you were being dragged off the scrap heap because you are on the dole.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Launceston)

Participants also said employment agencies gave them wrong information, did not communicate effectively and said they would do things but did not follow through. For example, one participant said he asked the employment service to let him know when they had sent off his resume but they never got in contact with him; he continually had to chase them up. One participant from Ceduna said her boyfriend was told by an employment service that there were no jobs available at a particular business he was interested in. He then rang the business himself and they told him to send his resume. At the time of the focus group, the business had just contacted him for an interview. Several participants said if you want a job 'you have to find it yourself'. Participants from Launceston said the employment services gave them inadequate information. One participant said employment services arranged for him to do work for a company but did not tell him he would need a drivers license. He turned up to do the job but was turned away because he did not have a license.

A key issue for at risk young people from Launceston is trust. When dealing with staff at Centrelink they want someone who they trust and have an established, long-term relationship with. When discussing work options with Centrelink staff, they do not like how staff type things into the computer without them being able to see the screen. They want to know what is being written about them. They said when staff assigned to their case change, it has a very negative impact because it means they have to speak to someone they do not know. At risk young people in Launceston are particularly critical of Centrelink for pushing them into low paying, menial work.

When discussing career development, many participants spoke about how difficult it is to enter the workforce because employers will not give young people 'a chance' or a 'fair go'. Some participants said it is important for young people to be assertive in order to secure the work opportunities they want. One young male from Brisbane is interested in being a lawyer; he called some law firms and asked them what he needed to do to realise his ambitions. One young female from Launceston is interested in doing graphic design. She looked up local businesses in the phone book. She called two local graphic design businesses and asked them what training she needed to do. She then went to university in Melbourne to undertake the training they suggested and is now working at one of the businesses.

As noted in section 5.3, a key barrier for young people is the expectations of employers. Employers want young people to enter the workforce with previous experience but participants do not know how they are supposed to get this experience. Some young people said employers expect young people to have tertiary qualifications, and suggested this is a barrier for those young people that do not enjoy studying and would prefer to get hands on experience and learn on the job. Some participants from Ceduna said it is 'not about what you know but who you know' and said without utilising personal networks it is very difficult to get employment. Participants in Ceduna also spoke of the difficulties of working in a small town where everyone knows everyone else.

*Really, really hard because if you don't have the experience they won't hire you.*

(Young person with caring responsibilities, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*Some people learn better hands on; it is not just about textbooks.*

(Young person with caring responsibilities, 17-24 years, Darwin)

*I have been knocking on doors for one year.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Adelaide)

*You really have to prove yourself in a town like this. You have to be a good worker. If you get fired once then everyone knows and you can't get a job again.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

Some young people who had done school based traineeships or apprenticeships, or had worked in part time or casual jobs while in secondary school, found the transition from school to the workforce to be relatively easy. One participant, for example, was doing a school based traineeship in retail, and when she finished school she transitioned smoothly into working 5 days a week in retail.

At risk participants from Launceston had negative experiences of work. They indicated that the job options available to them are menial, low paid and casual jobs. They had received no training or career development from employers. They felt that employers did not respect them and exploited and took advantage of them. They said traineeships are a 'rip off' because employers do not commit to making them a valuable experience for young people.

Some mainstream participants said employers are not committed to training young people or to providing any form of career development. Some young people spoke about their first jobs out of high school and told stories about employers yelling and screaming at them if they made a mistake. One young female from Launceston spoke of her job as a receptionist for a medium sized accounting firm (200 staff). On her first day she was given a desk, but no one explained to her what she was supposed to do. She was expected to know this. A young male from Brisbane, who has recently finished school, said he had worked for 8 different employers within a six month period. He said employers often have unrealistic expectations of what he can do.

Other participants had positive experiences in relation to the career development provided by their employers. One female participant from Launceston is working for Westpac, a job she got through her aunty. She said she has been there since she left school, and has done 'tons of training'. She can see there is a career path for her at Westpac. She does not want to do anything else because she likes the training and feels valued by her employer. A male participant from Brisbane said he 'lucked into his job' as a paralegal. He said usually you need to have studied law to do the job but the company said he did

not need a degree or experience because they were willing to train him up. The participant felt he had secured a rare opportunity, describing it as a *'one in a million chance'*. A participant from Ceduna who has a government job said she speaks to her boss about career development and training needs regularly. She felt there were good training opportunities in government.

As discussed in section 5.3, young people with a disability from Melbourne said Day Services do not provide adequate career development as Day Services staff have low expectations of what people with disabilities can achieve. The group said young people with disabilities should not be pigeonholed and assumptions should not be made about their skills and capabilities.

Some of the young refugees from Melbourne spoke of receiving career development from a 'pathways counsellor' at a specialist refugee service. The pathways counsellor provides information and advice to young refugees on the best pathway to TAFE or university. These participants felt the pathways counsellor gave them good advice about their careers.

## 5.8 GETTING THE RIGHT CAREER INFORMATION AT THE RIGHT TIME

### 5.8.1 *How do young people want career information communicated to them?*

There were mixed views amongst participants on how they want career information communicated to them. Some mainstream young people from Adelaide, Ceduna and Brisbane said they prefer one on one conversations, and others said they prefer information from a reliable website.

[Website] *because you can't always rely on the fact that someone is telling you the right thing face to face.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Adelaide)

Others said they want to access information and advice via a *mix* of different channels including one on one conversations, telephone, email and websites. They want to have options available to them. Mainstream young people want to speak with a range of people including people from tertiary institutions, employers or others with relevant industry experience, family and friends.

Some refugee participants from Melbourne said the internet is the easiest way for them to access career related information, particularly information related to courses of study. Other young refugees said that the internet has limitations, as you cannot ask questions. *'You can't ask a person what is your career like?'* The latter group of refugees said they would prefer to talk with someone from a tertiary institution about courses of study in person, over the phone or via email.

Young people with a disability from Melbourne said they want personalised career information, guidance and advice. They want to speak with someone in person who understands their individual circumstances, values and aspirations. They want career development from someone who appreciates their skills and capabilities and does not have negative perceptions regarding their ability to work in paid employment. Some suggested that career development for young people with disabilities should be provided by people who have undertaken training on how to engage with and relate to people with disabilities.

At risk young people from Launceston said they want to receive career information via Facebook. However, not all of them have internet access at home. They said internet access should be free so that they can receive career information and talk to people using social networking media. When receiving career development from someone in person, they want to speak with someone who they have developed a relationship with, who shows them respect, and who they trust.

Indigenous young people from Ceduna said they want to speak with someone in person or over the phone, rather than get information from online or printed materials. Some said at school they did not feel comfortable speaking with a classroom teacher. Instead they preferred to get information, support and advice from an Aboriginal Education Worker. Conversely, one participant said he had a good relationship with his physical education teacher at school and still uses this teacher as a reference for jobs. Some participants said they had positive experiences with the Aboriginal Employment Coordinator at university who helped and supported them. The majority of participants in this group also spoke very positively



about a worker at a local youth service who they go to for career support. Some participants said they just want to speak with someone who *'can give me a job'*.

Young carers from Darwin said they want to get advice and information from a source that is honest and trustworthy. They do not want promotion and spin. For example, they described career expos and presentations by representatives from the police and the defence force as *'full of polish and spin'*. They said these representatives were recruiters with a sales pitch and *'not real defence folks, you want to speak to the real people'*.

### 5.8.2 What are the critical points?

Across all cohort types, secondary school was most commonly identified as the critical point for the provision of career development. Participants said secondary school is when most young people start thinking seriously about their career options. It was also suggested that secondary school is a critical point because once young people leave school it is much harder for them to access career development services. Some young people not in education said they now regret that when they were at school they were not interested in career development, did not take their subject selection very seriously, and did not give much thought to their post-school options.

*You also have to know [what you want to do] at the right time. That was the problem for me at school I just stuffed around and had fun with my friends and now I have finished I think oh sh\*t I want to do something. I need to go back to school. But at the time I did all the subjects my friends did.*

(Young person, 20-24 years, Ceduna)

Young people develop firm career aspirations at different times, and it was suggested that young people should be able to access information, guidance and advice when they figure out what they want to do, whether this is early on in secondary school, at the end of secondary school or post school.

Notwithstanding the above, many young people identified the later years of high school as the most critical point. A few said the provision of information and advice earlier is *'useless'* because most students do not have a clear idea of what they want to do until year 10 or 11.

*I went to a catholic all girls' school, a small school. In year 8, the principal does this address to the school saying that we are going to be talking to the guidance counsellor about what you want to do. Year 8 is too early; there was only one girl out of 75 who knew what they wanted to do. She wanted to be an accountant, and I think she is doing that now.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

## 5.9 THINKING AHEAD

Some young people not in education are enthusiastic and confident about their future career options. They have clear short term and long term plans, are certain about their pathway choice and happy with the decisions they have made to date.

For example, one young woman from Ceduna started fitness instructing part time when she was 16 years old and still at school. She has been working in gyms since leaving school and has also undertaken some TAFE study. She is currently managing a gym and has plans to start her own fitness centre. One young male from Brisbane has been working as an apprentice plumber since leaving secondary school. He has plans to finish his apprenticeship, take his plumbing skills overseas, live in Europe, be his own boss and work on a part-time basis. An Indigenous participant from Ceduna has ambitions to be an early primary school teacher. She had chosen a university and figured out what she needs to do to apply for the course.

All young people with a disability from Melbourne are positive about their future career options. They all have goals, and ideas about how to achieve these goals. For these participants, the strong family support they receive is crucial for their confidence and positive attitude towards the future. For some, the support of family members is more critical because they will require physical assistance to achieve their goals.

The majority of mainstream participants from Adelaide are also confident about their futures and have short term and long term plans, which involve a mix of further tertiary study and full time employment. Many have back-up plans in case they cannot do what they want straight away.

Of the young people who know what they want to do, some know how to get there and others are still figuring this out.

Other participants are not fixed on a particular career path. Instead they see a range of options available to them and are looking forward to exploring these options. These young people do not want to feel trapped or tied down, rather they want the flexibility to try new things and adjust their pathways as their interests and aptitudes unfold. Some have made a deliberate choice not to undertake university study straight away (although they had felt pressure from their school and families to do so) instead preferring to take time out to try different things and figure out what they like.

*I want to try as much as I can. Try a lot of different part time jobs. See a whole lot of different places. .... Once I've finished studying I will do law but that is further down the track.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

*There are endless options, so many things I could do and that I would like to do, there are so many opportunities if you are willing to put in the time and effort.*

(Young person, 17-19 years, Brisbane)

*Probably get bored easy doing an apprenticeship so want to change up a bit after you finish your trade. You should try a lot of different things because you might not get the thing you want at the end and it is good to find out what you like.*

(Indigenous young person, 17-24 years, Ceduna)

Some young people are happy to let their interests guide them even if they are not sure how well their interests will translate into a career. For example, one young female is about to commence a bachelor of fine arts because that is her passion even though she knows that it 'may not necessarily lead to a job'.

Some young people, who are entering full time employment for the first time, are excited about the financial and other possibilities associated with this. Some young people spoke of being able to afford to go travelling overseas or on domestic holidays with their friends. One young female said she wants to be able to afford to rent a house and buy a puppy. One young male said his plan is to 'get the biggest TV I can'.

Some young people, however, are less confident about the future. They feel overwhelmed by the decisions they need to make and some doubt or regret the decisions they have made to date and the pathways they have chosen.

*I think I am kind of on track...I want to be a fashion designer or study psychology, so I don't know if I am heading in this direction or that direction.*

(Young refugee, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

While some refugees from Melbourne have clear ideas on what they will do in the future some remain uncertain. Some indicated that the options available to them depend on the extent to which they can improve their English.

Some young people not in education said their career options are restricted due to the limited work and study opportunities in regional locations, the need for tertiary qualifications and the high expectations of employers.

Young carers in Darwin are all still living at home and none said they have plans to move away from home in the short-term future. They said for now, they 'were going to be hanging around' and would continue to take on the caring role. In this sense, it would seem that their mobility is somewhat restricted

by their caring responsibilities. Having said this, none of the participants in this group saw their caring role *per se* as being impediment or barrier to achieving their work or study aspirations.

Some participants are currently at a crossroads. They are re-evaluating their situation because their plans have changed or been disrupted, or they have exhausted the pathway they were on. One refugee participant from Melbourne said she has to put her career plans on hold for a while due to her recent pregnancy. Another refugee from Melbourne had planned to be a policewoman in the Philippines but is now having to reconsider this career choice as the Australian police force has height restrictions, which she does not meet.

*I am kind of on track but because of the pregnancy, I thought it would be in two years, now I'll have to wait.*

(Young refugee, 17-24 years, Melbourne)

One female participant from Launceston wanted to be an accountant from a young age. She had recently done a traineeship in an accounting firm but said her employer would not invest the time needed to train her properly and eventually let her go. She is currently working in an administrative role, and trying to figure out how best to pursue her ambition of being an accountant. A male participant from Launceston worked in hospitality for four years running bars, and is now doing labouring work while re-evaluating his future options. He got out of the hospitality industry because he worked every night and weekend and could not see a career path for himself in the industry. He was losing track of friends and could not have a relationship. He had got to the top, as a bar manager, and could not see any opportunities for progression.

Some participants seemed to be a bit lost. They are not attached to a specific career. They have not yet figured out their likes and interests, and how this translates to work and study options. Some are happy to '*go with the flow*', '*take things as they come*' and '*keep an eye on what comes up*', while others feel overwhelmed by and uncertain about the future.

## 6 Parents and carers



### Key findings:

- Parents generally see their role as supporting and encouraging the career aspirations of their children, which can be a difficult for them to do. They do not know the extent to which they should push their children, engage their children, or leave them alone.
- Some parents struggle to provide career information and advice to their children, as the nature of the working world has changed considerable since parents themselves first entered the workforce.
- Some parents feel well equipped to address the career development needs and wants of their children, while other parents do not. For parents who could not adequately meet the career development needs of their children schools were seen as having a responsibility to address the gap.
- Parents expressed a desire for increased access to information. Parents want schools to communicate better with them and want greater access to career practitioners and their children's teachers. Some parents also want a 'one stop shop' for information on: local labour market demand, awards and pay rates, the top universities and university courses in the country, and the cost of tertiary programs of study to be provided by the government.
- In supporting their children's career aspirations, the financial implications are an important consideration for parents. For some, the cost of sending their child to TAFE or university is an impediment to their child undertaking the study of their choice. This is a barrier faced particularly by families from regional and rural locations.
- Parents said that career development in schools is hugely variable. Schools could improve career development by: focusing more on personal development (ie the individual likes, interests, skills and attributes of students), providing personalised and individually tailored career development services, and increasing the dedicated resourcing.

Six focus group discussions were conducted with parents and carers, across four locations. The groups included:

- parents and carers of young people in VET located in Brisbane
- parents and carers of young people in university located in Launceston
- a mini group (4 or 5 participants) of parents and carers of young people not in education located in Broome
- a mini group of Indigenous parents and carers of young people not in education located in Broome
- a mini group of parents and carers of young people in secondary school located in Darwin
- a mini group of Indigenous parents and carers of young people in secondary school located in Darwin.

This chapter details the findings of these focus group discussions.

## 6.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### 6.1.1 *Defining the term 'career'*

Parents said the notion of 'career' involves having a goal and working towards that goal. It signifies a job that allows an individual to progress and build on their skills and knowledge. A career is possible when there is a structure that allows individuals to get better at doing something over time. A career implies something long term, with parents describing it as a *'lifelong pathway'* or *'long term, stable employment'*.

Several parents said the notion of career has changed over time. Some participants mentioned this in relation to the distinction between a job and a career. One participant said the word career used to refer to white collar professions, however nowadays the term career is used irrespective of the job involved. Another participant from a group of Indigenous parents in Broome said she used to think only doctors and lawyers had careers but when she finished school she began to think differently and made a career in

administration. Parents said there is still a point of difference, however, with career signifying something long term, and a job signifying something short term.

Other participants said the notion of career has changed because there are now more study and work options available, and young people can 'chop and change' between different types of work.

*There is no one career. You can branch off.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

In contrast, parents spoke of growing up in a social environment where committing to one job for life was the norm.

*My father and grandfather did the same thing all their lives, they lived in the same house. It was normal. They didn't expect to be any different.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

*I look back on my dad and my parents; it was just working to get food on the table. We lived and worked in the bush. Dad only ever did Grade IV level of education. He was a labourer all his life.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

### 6.1.2 What does 'career development' mean?

Some parents said 'career development' means any support, guidance or resources that assists individuals to grow in their career. Others said career development involves undertaking learning, training or study in order to gain further skills and knowledge. Some participants commented on the importance of career development, noting that a person's career is often a large part of their life.

Some parents spoke of the significant changes that have occurred to the world of work during their lifetime. As such, they recognise the need for lifelong learning and the development of life skills. Parents said their children need confidence, resilience, experience, motivation, flexibility, budget management skills, and an understanding of personal responsibility to manage their career development. Parents generally said these skills and values should be taught at home.

*For me in terms of career, you instil something in your kids when they are young – a goal, a vision about being your best. I try to be consistent. I feel it is my role to do this.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

However, some parents suggested that as young people get older, they are ultimately responsible for developing these skills themselves. Parents said schools, paid employment (including part time and casual work undertaken while at school) and 'everyday things' like driving and travelling contribute to the development of these life skills.

One group of Indigenous parents from Broome said although these skills should be taught in the home, it does not always happen. Schools and youth workers need to fill the gap for young people who do not get this guidance at home. These parents said schools and community organisations are, however, so under resourced, they can not always provide the support young people need.

Interestingly, a group of non-Indigenous parents from Broome spoke of career development only in relation to the job they are currently in, without any mention of progression or being promoted to a different job. One of these parents described career development as:

*Training to help me fulfil the needs of the position I am working in.*

(Parent of young person not in education, Broome)

Another participant, who is working in the public sector, said career development means a performance management system, which identifies strengths and weaknesses and extra training required.

## 6.2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Parents had mixed views on who should be responsible for the career development needs of young people. Some participants said parents and schools have a shared responsibility in this regard. Parents and schools should work in partnership to meet the career development needs of young people.

Some Indigenous parents from Darwin said they have the *primary* responsibility. It is acknowledged, however, that not all parents have the capacity to adequately support the career development of their children. In such cases, schools were seen as having a responsibility to address this gap.

*For myself, we have taken this on ourselves. We are more qualified and experienced and we use family, people who are close and they can discuss the job that they will do. [We tell our children] that there is a choice.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

*Sometimes parents don't know what is out there. The world is changing so fast. Parents don't know. Careers advisors are pivotal.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Some parents said responsibility for career development '*started at home*', with parents being responsible for teaching their children good values in relation to work and study. Indigenous parents in Broome and Darwin emphasised the importance of being good role models for their children. Indigenous parents in Broome said children who see their parents working learn they need to work and contribute. Some of these parents see themselves as responsible for helping their children obtain part time work and for teaching them financial responsibility.

*I think the kids are listening to us. They see the nice house, the nice car. One day you can have this too if you get a good job and stick with it. We are still setting the standards for our kids....We work hard to give you everything, to set the standard for them.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

*A lot of parents drink all day and the kids see that all the time. We tell the kids, do well at school. A lot of Indigenous kids don't really have good role models at home but heaps do.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Indigenous parents said there is also a role for the extended family and other Indigenous community members to play in the career development of Indigenous young people. Aunties and uncles often have caring or parenting responsibilities for Indigenous young people, and Indigenous young people tend to gravitate towards role models in the community.

Other participants said while both parents and schools have an important contribution to make, ultimately young people have primary responsibility for their own career development.

## 6.3 PARENT'S OWN WORK EXPERIENCES

The work experiences of parents varied greatly. A few participants said they had a specific idea about the kind of work they wanted to do from an early age. One parent from Brisbane said he decided to be a truck driver when he was 12 years old, commenting '*I was mad about cars, still am*'. This participant has been working as a truck driver for many years and said he is happy with his decision. Another participant, who is working as a nurse, said she had wanted to be a nurse since primary school.

Other parents said it took a while for them to decide what they wanted to do, with some saying they only figured it out in their mid to late thirties. For these participants, deciding on a career path often involved trying different things until they found something that suited them. A number of parents from Broome said they had '*no idea what was out there*' when they left school, and stumbled into jobs until they found something they liked. For several parents, ideas about work changed throughout their lives as they gained experience and exposure to different jobs. One participant from Brisbane, for example, wanted to

be a hairdresser and pursued this when she was younger. In hindsight, she was glad this had not worked out as she realised it would have involved long hours standing on her feet.

Several parents said they still have 'no idea' about what they want to do. One participant questioned 'do we ever know?' and another commented 'I still don't know, I just drifted around'. One parent said he accidentally fell into his role as a HR manager, commenting he had a career by 'accident not by design'.

A number of contextual factors appear to have played a role in shaping the career trajectories of parents, namely gender, economic and regional constraints.

There were some female participants in all parent groups who said their work/study options had been restricted by their gender and family circumstances. One participant from Brisbane spoke of growing up in regional Queensland where young women were not expected to have careers. She left school after year 10 and worked in a secretarial role. A female participant from Broome remembered receiving career guidance at school which comprised of being told to pick between teaching, nursing or secretarial work. Other female participants said their parents did not allow them to attend university or support them in pursuits to further their education. A few female participants said they did not bother to seek out work that interested them as, at the time, they did not expect to work for very long. However in reality, these women ended up working for the majority of their lives.

*Even if I had choices I probably wouldn't have taken them, I didn't expect to work for long.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

For some female participants, the need to maintain work-life balance was a barrier to career progression. One participant from a group of Indigenous parents in Broome completed a Bachelor of Arts but dropped out of a law degree. She said she would have done more with her career but family and financial commitments made this difficult. Another participant said she had always worked in government and made a conscious decision not to apply for supervisor roles because of family commitments.

Economic considerations also influenced some participants' decisions about work. Upon leaving school, some sought out work that was financially sustainable rather than pursuing work that interested them. Later in their lives, some moved into careers that aligned with their interests, and this often involved further training or study. One participant from Broome trained as a dental nurse after leaving school because she needed a job, and when the opportunity arose she took it. She recently left the industry to take up a public service position, and is now 'much happier'. Another participant from Brisbane worked in a secretarial role for 11 years. She did not like the work but said she was good at it. Four years ago she made a shift to the hospitality industry 'which I love'.

Some male parents said their work/study options had also been restricted due to traditional gender roles. Male participants said when they were younger, they were expected to take work seriously; they knew it was a responsibility and knew it was for life. One participant spoke of declining his first job offer, a move that was not supported by his family.

*I was offered an apprenticeship as a painter. I knew I didn't want it, I couldn't see myself doing that my whole life. My parents did not get very involved but an uncle really got into me and said – 'you have to take this seriously, you need to get training and a proper job.'*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

Some parents said being unable to afford to go to university without a scholarship, restricted their career options.

*I lucked out into getting an education scholarship, I wanted to be an accountant but couldn't find a way to pay for it so took a scholarship and have had a long career as a teacher.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

For parents from the regional locations of Broome and Launceston, going to university was even more difficult because it was expensive and meant moving away from their hometown.



It appears that parents received limited career guidance or support, with some participants saying their own parents did not even get involved in their career choices. In contrast, an Indigenous parent from Darwin said his parents encouraged him to get an education and pursue a career. His parents wanted him to have better opportunities than what they had.

*My mum was taken away and put in a mission... I am one of six sons. Of six siblings I am the only one to graduate from university. My father cleared the land. He told me to get an education. I listened to my parents.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

A small minority of parents said they received some career guidance or support from school or elsewhere. One participant from Brisbane recalled receiving guidance from a career practitioner in secondary school but said he was *'immature at the time'* and did not take the advice seriously. Participants in a group of Indigenous parents in Broome identified family and government initiatives (such as Job Network) as the biggest influences in their career decisions. One participant said Aboriginal organisations gave her work and a *'toe in the door'*.

#### 6.4 YOUNG PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT WORK AND STUDY

Parents said that, in thinking about their work and study options, young people are very diverse.

At least one participant in each parent group had children who had developed a specific idea about what they wanted to do from an early age. One parent from Brisbane has a son studying music at TAFE with a view to getting into the Conservatorium of Music. His son has been passionate about music since he was 10 years old. Similarly, a participant from Broome has 13 grandchildren, one of whom has expressed firm ideas about a career. This grandchild is 12 and, after a serious accident and a stay in hospital, has decided she wants to be a doctor. A mother from Launceston commented:

*My son knew early. He always loved sport, did tonnes all year from an early age. He just got in to study sports science, it was an easy and obvious choice.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

The majority of parents, however, said although their children have ideas about the work they want to do, these are generally not firm ideas. Some parents said their children have changed their minds numerous times, and learnt about things they like/do not like by trying different jobs or courses of study. One parent from Brisbane said her daughter started studying hairdressing because her friend was doing it. She is in her last year of study now and has decided she does not like it and is not going to pursue it any further. A parent from Launceston said her daughter could not think of anything she particularly wanted to do when she left school. She travelled a lot and did different jobs to earn money. After a stint teaching English in China she has decided to study teaching.

Some parents said their children have difficulty forming a specific idea. One parent from Brisbane said her daughter who is studying at TAFE *'still has no idea what she wants to do'*. Another parent from Launceston said her 24 year old daughter is:

*Still at home with no idea or direction, they think they will find passion but they don't. I just want her to pick something, anything.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

Some parents said their children can't to decide what to wear or have for dinner, let alone what career they want.

*They don't even know what they want for lunch let alone what they will do when they leave school.*

(Parent of young person in secondary school)

It was suggested that the array of work and study choices available to young people is an advantage for those who know what they want to do, as they face fewer barriers to achieving their ambitions, but is

daunting and overwhelming for those who have difficulty forming a specific idea. A few parents also said that the expectations of young people are too high:

*kids these days, they want something that is great, they want to be happy, they want to make lots of money, they don't know what they like until they do it.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

Some parents said that young people are under too much pressure to make the 'right choice', and that less importance should be placed on this as young people do not have to commit to one job or career pathway for life. Having said this, some parents said that if young people from regional and remote communities do not make the 'the right choice', the consequences are often greater. If these young people go to university, for example, they often leave family and friends and incur considerable expenses. Other parents commented that numerous changes of work/courses of study is 'wasting time and money'.

Parents said there can be a tension between what their child is good at and what they are interested in doing. For example, one parent said her daughter excels at science in school, but hates it and wants to be a journalist. Parents said it is important for young people to understand their aptitude for jobs or courses of study. An Indigenous parent from Broome said her daughter wants to be a teacher. However, the parent questioned this idea, saying her daughter has never had any dealings with children. Another parent from Brisbane spoke of children wasting their parents' money studying courses at university they are not suited to.

Parents of young people not in education said that short term monetary considerations factor into young peoples decisions about their post school options. As one parent commented, young people 'like the idea of having the most money with the least effort'. Some parents are concerned about young people choosing employment over further study. While this may have financial benefits in the short term, in the long run it can be a bad decision. A parent from Launceston said her child chose to work instead of doing an apprenticeship because the money was attractive. The child is now working in a bank and regrets not having any qualifications.

## 6.5 THE ROLE OF PARENTS

The overwhelming majority of parents did not have *specific* career aspirations for their children. Parents did, however, express some ambitions for their children, including a desire for them to:

- be happy with their career choices and do work they find interesting and fulfilling

*I told them to pick something they are happy with; you have to do it for a long time. There's nothing worse than going to work if you hate your job.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

- be gainfully employed in a job that enables them to be financially independent
- complete year 12
- obtain tertiary qualifications

*I just want him to have a piece of paper to put in front of an employer so they will actually talk to him.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

- have a strong work ethic.

Parents generally see their role as supporting and encouraging the career aspirations of their children.

*I've had discussions with my two. I say no matter what you choose in life we will support you in whatever you want. The youngest one, she wants to do all these things and asks me which one should I be? I said you can do them all, don't limit yourself. You can be one person and do five things.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Having said this, some parents said they had actively discouraged their children from pursuing a particular path if they felt it was not a good option for them. One parent from Brisbane, for example, said he tried to convince his son to switch from bricklaying to plumbing, as *'there are no jobs in bricklaying at the moment'*. His son did not take his advice.

Other parents spoke of having limited influence over their children's post school work or study choices. One participant from Broome said her 17 year old daughter has finished school and is *'all over the place'* and does not want to listen to advice from her mother.

*They [young people] want guidance, but I know she won't listen to me, but I don't know who to tell her to talk to.*

(Parent of young person not in education, Broome)

### Snapshot: Needs and wants of parents

Parents said supporting the career development of their children is often a difficult thing for them to do. Parents do not know the extent to which they should push their children, engage their children, or leave them alone. They said it is difficult to get the balance right and they struggle to know what is the right or best thing to do. Parents said even their own children are like chalk and cheese and therefore different strategies are required for each. An example of this was given by a participant who has twin girls: one twin knew from an early age what work she wanted to do, while the other still has no idea. Some parents also struggle with the changing nature of the working world and the different expectations about what their children can achieve (compared with their own experiences of work).

*I find this is the hardest stage of being a parent. Choices, decisions, not knowing what is the best thing to do.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

*I find it hard to advise my daughter.*

(Parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Some parents said they do not feel well equipped to give information or advice to their children. Many parents spoke of a desire for improved access to information on: local labour market demand, awards and pay rates, the top universities and university courses in the country, the cost of tertiary programs of study and so on. They expressed a desire for information to be in a centralised place (ie a 'one stop shop'). They said this information is currently not easily accessible and involves considerable time and effort to source. Parents expressed a preference for this information to be provided by the government, indicating they do not trust information from private employers.

Parents also want schools to better engage and communicate with them (discussed in section 6.6.1).

In supporting their children's career aspirations, the financial implications are an important consideration for parents. For some, the cost of sending their child to TAFE or university is an impediment to their child undertaking the study of their choice. The out of home living costs required by young people to relocate to metropolitan centres to attend university can be very expensive and unsustainable for some families from regional and rural locations. One participant from a group of Indigenous parents in Broome said she is actively discouraging her third child from going to university because it is *'too difficult financially'*. She wants her third child to go straight into the workforce and build a career that way. Her two eldest children had gone to university and had struggled to pay for tuition, rent and general living expenses. *'My daughter ended up in financial run after university. I don't recommend it'*.

Another participant said she also discouraged her son from pursuing university as an option because of financial reasons. *'My son has been at school for 12 years still doesn't know how to study or do homework and he thought he would go to Bond uni. I sat him down and said how much it would cost for the 3 years? How are you going to pay for that?'* Her son has now decided to undertake study at TAFE.

## 6.6 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS

Parents said the provision of career development in secondary schools is hugely variable. They have differing views on the quality of career development received by their children. Experiences across schools and even within the same school can be varied. Some parents with more than one child at the same school said their career development experiences were different for each child. Some parents said students do not get enough access to career practitioners. They said career practitioners should be more proactive, and that it should not be up to individual students to seek them out. Many parents said the quality of career development provided by school based practitioners is lacking.

*Not much advice or assistance, largely voluntary. If they were motivated plenty of assistance, but young people have other things on their mind.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

*There is plenty of access to information but the competency of people giving the advice is not always that good at school. Depends on the individual some are very good and some are hopeless.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

*My son went to the career advisor and he rang me and he was angry, he said 'mum she's an idiot'. She doesn't know what she is talking about. He was furious and really, really upset. She didn't know her stuff. She was telling him he couldn't do what he wanted to do but he had researched this and it is a lot more complex than it appears. He said 'mum she didn't even listen to me'.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Other parents, however, are satisfied with the quality of the career information and advice provided by schools. They recognise the challenges and limitations faced by schools in this regard. Some parents said it is difficult for teachers to focus on career development in addition to addressing the behavioural and educational needs of students.

*Schools do fairly well, it is a tough thing to do.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

*Guidance counsellor was very good, she bent over backwards. She was willing to work to further his education and was genuinely interested in his future. She could compromise, and get things done.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

*Very, very good. With my son they could see what he was good at, and recommended things for him. My daughter was a different story she still doesn't know what she wants...good at science but she hates it. The child has to have a reasonable idea of where they want to go, otherwise it is hard for guidance counsellor.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

In relation to the provision of career development, Indigenous parents from Darwin said it is important for people working in schools to not make assumptions about what their children can and cannot achieve. One Indigenous parent from Darwin said that in the provision of career guidance at school his child attended, the Indigenous students were separated out from the non-Indigenous students.

*My main thing is that my boys don't dumb down. They are under a lot of pressure at school, they don't fit in. My son feels like he is a square peg in a round hole.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

*Because you are Indigenous they will put you in a lower class so there is less opportunity.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Parents spoke about a number of career development activities in schools, most commonly: work experience, the VET in Schools Program, career expos and Job Guide.

If done well, work experience is seen as valuable for young people. Many parents said work experience in their child's school is informal and unstructured. In some cases parents said it was up to them to find work experience opportunities for their children as the school did not always do a good job of this. To be effective, work experience needs to be linked to a young person's interests and skills. Employers also need to take responsibility to ensure it is a worthwhile training and learning experience.

Parents generally said the VET in Schools Program is a good initiative. There is a view among parents from regional locations, however, that schools need to provide more choices to students participating in the Program, and have more employers on board to offer different kinds of work.

*In small towns, sometimes you just get placed wherever an employer will take you.*

(Indigenous parent of young person not in education, Broome)

*Schools are just filling the gaps, they are not taking the interests of the kids into account.*

(Indigenous parent of young person not in education, Broome)

There were mixed views on school students attending careers expos. Some parents do not trust the information provided, viewing it as spin or simply promotional. Other parents said that young people are overloaded with information at expos so that by the end of the day '*kids brains are fried*' and they do not take much in. Conversely, some parents described career expos as '*wonderful*'. They give young people an opportunity to speak with different people and it '*opens up their minds*' to the range of options available. One parent from Brisbane said his son was able to do a hands-on bricklaying demonstration at a careers expo, which was a very useful exercise.

Some parents said Job Guide was a very useful resource; it can be helpful in broadening parent's own exposure to the range of job options available. Some participants said getting access to Job Guide and other printed materials depends on the school sector.

*[My son] came home with a book, the JobGuide, it was great. I thought it was brilliant. You can go through and see what's there, I'd never heard of some jobs.*

(Parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

*The private schools make it [Job Guide] available, everyone got a copy to keep.*

(Parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

### *Subject selection*

Parents agree that the main influences in their children's subject choices are family, what their friends are doing, their interests, considerations of what they want to do post-school, what subjects are easier, and what subjects are available at the school.

Some parents said their children had a discussion with and got advice from a career practitioner when choosing their subjects, while others did not. A few parents said their children did not follow the advice given to them by the school. One participant from Broome said her daughter was advised to do chemistry and physics. Her daughter did not want to push herself too hard and knew she did not require these

subjects to do nursing. Six months later, she decided she was interested in forensic medicine but this option was closed to her as she had not picked the right subjects.

In some cases, parents were involved in the process and some had attended a meeting at the school where the parent, child and career practitioner discussed subject selection together. Other parents said they were not engaged in the process. Some parents said they were well equipped to advise their children in relation to subject choices, while others were not. One parent said she was not engaged by the school but felt well equipped to sit down with her grandson and pick subjects from the list. Other parents commented:

*I took the school's advice but I had a hands off approach because I didn't know the details. It's very complicated.*

(Indigenous parent of young person not in education, Broome)

*It was a bit over my head, things change a lot from year to year.*

(Indigenous parent of young person not in education, Broome)

Some parents said their children's choices are limited by what is available at the school. One parent from Broome said her daughter was interested in art but the school did not have an art teacher. Another parent from Brisbane said their child was good at French and enjoyed doing it but the course got dropped because there were not enough students enrolled.

#### 6.6.1 How can schools improve career development?

Parents said schools need to better communicate and share information with them. They want more and regular information so they can more effectively support the career development needs of their children. One-off parent/teacher nights and careers nights do not give them the information they need. Some parents said schools could more effectively use email as a channel of communication. Parents want greater access to career practitioners and their children's teachers, and they want these people to *listen* to what they and their children want.

*I tried all last year to talk to the careers officer. I left messages. I went to try and see them. I'd gone to the school two or three times and left lots of messages. My son was going to be leaving school, I wanted to discuss what he was doing. I never got to see her. He is now unemployed. He now has to go to Centrelink. He left school with no direction or plan and is unemployed.*

(Parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

*A careers officer? I don't think XX school has one. I've never been advised.*

(Parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Parents also want greater involvement in decision making. One participant from Broome, for example, said she did not find out about work experience the school had arranged for her son until the Friday before the work experience started, and by then it was too late for her to change anything.

Parents commonly suggested career development in schools could be improved by an increased focus on personal development, as everything else is predicated on that. This involves greater exploration with young people around their individual likes, interests, skills and attributes. Young people need to understand their interests and strengths before they consider their post school options. Due to the changing nature of the working world, whereby young people are likely to have numerous jobs or career paths, parents said career development should focus on broader life skills rather than just channelling specific career options.

*Round them out as good employees and pitch to what is going to make them happy, give them basics, life skills.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

Parents said career development in school needs to be better tailored to the individual needs, aspirations and interests of young people. One parent from Broome, for example, was frustrated that the career practitioner gave her son work experience in a childcare centre and enrolled him in community service, when he told them he wanted to be a mechanic. Some parents stressed career development in schools needs to explore a broad range of pathways and options, instead of simply pushing young people into higher education.

Parents said the resourcing of career development in schools needs to be improved. They said one career practitioner for a large number of students is not sufficient, nor is a 15 minute appointment with a career practitioner enough time for young people to properly explore their options. One participant commented:

*Career education seems to be slotted in as a nuisance in the curriculum, but it should be the most important thing.*

(Parent of young person not in education, Broome)

Career practitioners also need to be appropriately qualified. As one parent commented '*they have our kids future in their hands. They need to be damned good at what they do*'.

Parents also said the timing of career development activities is not well coordinated. For example, university open days are often held during the school exam period, and consequently many students miss out.

## 6.7 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

Parents said the transition from school to further study is difficult for some young people. This was particularly emphasised in discussions with parents from regional locations. Parents from both Broome and Launceston said their children often find it hard to move away from home to attend university because it involves leaving their personal networks which can be destabilising. An Indigenous parent from Broome whose daughter went to university said '*there were lots of walls put up, particularly financial barriers*'. Her daughter could not get financial assistance and could not use Centrelink services.

Parents had limited awareness of what career development services are provided at TAFE. Indigenous participants from Broome, for example, said they do not know if the local TAFE even has a career practitioner. The group said TAFE needs to communicate better with students and parents regarding services available.

Parents that were aware of career development services in TAFE had mixed views on their effectiveness. Some parents said their children had '*no major problems*' and were '*reasonably satisfied with the advice they received from TAFE*'.

*They helped her out, told her where to go, guided her all along the process.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

*I think TAFE is great, once kids are geared to TAFE and kids know how to do it.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

Other parents said they had significant problems with TAFE. They said navigating the TAFE system is '*very hard*'. Parents told stories of their children being put in the wrong class or being directed to the wrong courses and subjects. One parent said the teachers at TAFE decided to move his child from a Standard English class to a Communications class because the enrolment numbers for Communications were low. The parent was not aware this change had taken place until he received his son's report card.

Parents also suggested that staff are unresponsive to their needs. They spoke of getting the run around and commented that the customer service staff '*don't have any idea what is going on*'. Parents told stories of staff being unable to answer their questions and being continually transferred to other departments, and of leaving phone messages or sending emails and receiving no response.

Parents were not familiar with the career development services available at universities. Parents did however express a desire for university courses to be linked to labour market demands and for up-front information about the employment prospects for particular courses of study. A participant from Launceston said her daughter undertook three years of a teaching degree before learning that there would be 300 graduates but only 17 teaching places available locally. Her daughter discontinued the course and now regrets not having any qualifications. Another participant from Brisbane commented:

*Training is an industry within itself. They are churning out hairdressers but there are not even enough jobs for them, it is a joke.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

Some parents said taster courses at universities would be helpful for students to gain a better understanding of what the course involves and their suitability for it. Parents said industry placements are a good initiative but more places need to be made available. To be effective employers need to be committed to making it a worthwhile learning experience.

## 6.8 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

Parents said some of their children found transitioning to the workforce challenging.

Parents spoke of employers having unrealistic expectations of young people in the workplace.

*I have a daughter who works for a finance company and graduated from uni. They expect her to know everything, but she still needs to learn the basics. Just because she has gone to university they took it that she would know everything.*

(Parent of young person in VET, Brisbane)

Parents said it was a 'different culture' when they were young.

*I got a job right away when I left school, in a scrap metal yard. There's still plenty of work around today but its hard for kids coming out of school, they need so many qualifications.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Parents said they could start a role without any qualifications and progress to higher levels through on the job experience. Parents spoke of getting workplace training and getting mentored. They said this occurs less frequently nowadays. Some parents suggested that employers should network and coordinate with schools, youth organisations and Indigenous organisations to promote appropriate entry-level jobs to young people.

Parents had mixed views on the value of young people doing a gap year. They said it is a positive experience for some young people, but it exacerbates problems for those who have no direction. Some parents do not want their children wasting the year and give them the ultimatum of working or studying.

*Best to make them work, kids have too many things given to them, all too easy, mine had to work [family business is a fish farm] hard, unpleasant work or had to study. They preferred to study.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

Most parents were aware of career development resources available to young people not in education. Participants mentioned online resources as well as Centrelink and other employment services. Participants said that employment services such as Centrelink are problematic though, as they only give support or advice to young people who are unemployed.

Participants said that young people not in education and wanting career information or advice need to be proactive and know where to go. Some said that with the exception of using 'Google', young people



generally do not know where to seek out relevant information. Indigenous parents from Broome said young people are not aware of the Indigenous specific services and resources available.

*So many people have no idea about [career development] resources, even Indigenous resources. This includes people that have been in Broome their whole life.*

(Indigenous parent of young person not in education, Broome)

## 6.9 GETTING THE RIGHT CAREER DEVELOPMENT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

### 6.9.1 *How do young people want career information communicated to them?*

Young people want individualised career information and advice that is linked to their values, needs and circumstances. Parents said their children often prefer speaking to somebody in person. Young people want to speak with someone who understands, respects and will listen to them.

Many young people have a preference to speak with someone who has done the type of work they are interested in. Parents spoke of using personal networks and contacts to put their child in touch with someone who is doing or who has done the job they are interested in.

Although face to face is often preferred, one group of parents said it is helpful for this to be backed up with written materials. They said written materials can '*trigger new ideas*', however they acknowledged that young people do not always read the written materials given to them. Indigenous parents said packs of information '*were useless, they just get thrown in the bin*'.

Indigenous parents in Broome agreed that one on one interviews and interactive activities are the best ways for Aboriginal young people to access career information. One participant said one in 10 Aboriginal families do not have the internet, and people can not assume that Aboriginal young people can access career information via the internet.

Indigenous parents in Broome said Aboriginal young people would probably relate better to an Aboriginal person giving career information or advice, but said there is no issue with non-Indigenous people giving advice provided it does not come across as '*white people talking down to them*'. It was suggested that Aboriginal young people in rural communities, however, would be more likely to want advice only from another Aboriginal person.

Indigenous parents from Darwin said it would be useful to have Indigenous school based career practitioners who can engage better with Indigenous parents and their children. Non-Indigenous school based career practitioners should also undertake cultural competency training. They said this is especially pertinent in locations such as the Northern Territory given a large percentage of the student population is Indigenous.

*There needs to be more Indigenous careers advisors to better equip parents and the kids.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

*It's a combination of both. Without parental support, you won't get anywhere. We need the best teachers and it would be better to have Indigenous career officers. I am not satisfied with the training careers officers get in schools.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

Indigenous parents from Darwin said their children learn more effectively through storytelling rather than facts or other information. These parents said they use their extensive family networks to identify suitable people to share personal stories about their work experiences with their children. These parents also tell their children personal stories to teach and demonstrate capabilities such as flexibility and resilience. Parents said personalised learning through family is important for Indigenous young people but it needs to be enhanced by high quality and accessible career development in school.

*Stories are a way of maintaining connectedness. Our kids love stories, they laugh and it is not so boring. If you can bring it into a family conversation, I just feel it is more comforting for them. When you are relaxed that's when kids pick things up.*

(Indigenous parent of young person in secondary school, Darwin)

### 6.9.2 What are the critical points for career development?

Parents had mixed views about the critical points for the career development of young people.

All parents agree it is important for young people to begin developing general skills and competencies from primary school age. In relation to linking skills and aptitudes to career options and providing career guidance, some participants said this needs to start in year 7 and continue throughout high school.

*You need to plant the seed early.*

(Parent of young person not in education, Broome)

*If we are lucky we only have 16 years to shape them and their decisions.*

(Parent of young person in university, Launceston)

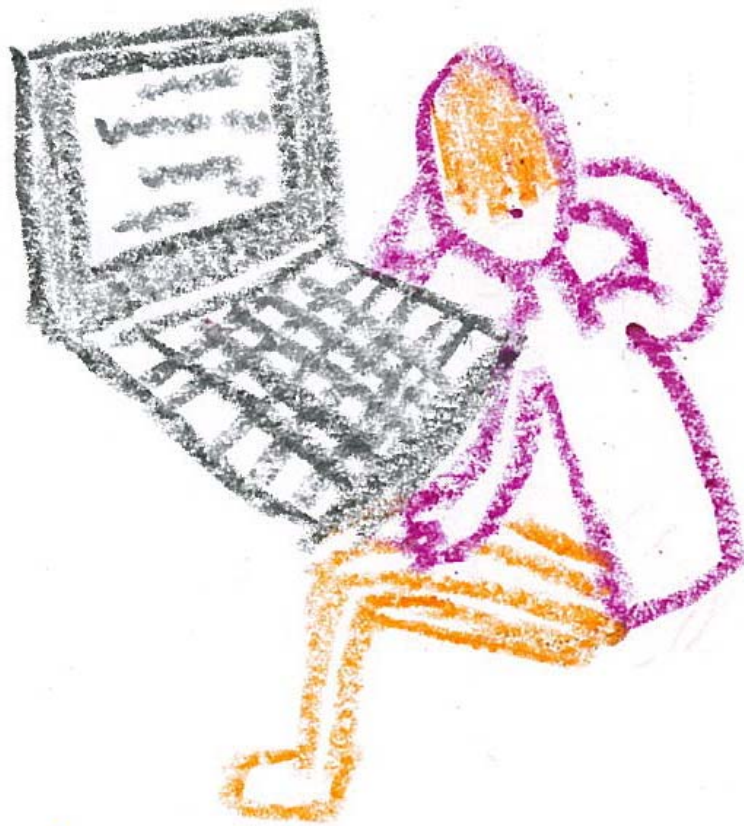
Other parents said young people need to start thinking about and discussing what they want to do in year 10 so they can match their subjects accordingly.

In relation to the timing of career development, some parents said it is important to take the individual needs and circumstances of young people into account. Some Indigenous parents from Broome said family issues need to be taken into consideration when deciding the best point in time to give information and advice. Some Indigenous young people are required to leave school and get a job early for family reasons, and therefore information and advice needs to be given to them earlier.

*Every family situation is different. Sometimes kids need to go and get a job. Aboriginal kids don't grow up with books.*

(Indigenous parent of young person not in education, Broome)

## 7 Teachers



### Key findings:

- Primary schools have a role in introducing children to the world of work, broadening their horizons, developing general competencies, and linking classroom teaching to careers. Primary teachers make a distinction, however, between these forms of career development and the provision of career guidance.
- Most primary school teachers say there is no need to provide career guidance as primary school should be about broadening children's ideas and keeping doors open, not narrowing their ideas or steering them in a particular direction.
- Primary teachers disagree on the adequacy of career development currently provided in primary schools. Some said that current provision is satisfactory and not in need of significant changes. Formalising the teaching of career development would potentially limit flexibility and make it overly prescriptive. Others described the current provision of career development as patchy, informal and inconsistent. Further structure and support for teachers from external services and through professional development would assist with ensuring consistency and the dedication of resources.
- Time restrictions, overcrowded classes, and a crowded curriculum are key barriers to quality career development in primary school.
- The provision of career development in secondary schools is variable.
- Career practitioners in secondary schools can play an important role, but their effectiveness depends on their ability to provide high quality information, guidance and advice.
- To be effective career practitioners need to spend one on one time with students, provide information and advice that matches their individual needs and wants, be adequately trained, and have access to high quality resources to support them.
- Subject teachers also play an important role by linking teaching to careers, broadening horizons, developing general competencies and providing information and advice on subject selection and post school options.
- Secondary teachers want increased access to information from sources external to the school (eg website). They also want career practitioners to share information and communicate better with them.
- The branding of career development services at TAFE may be a barrier for young people, particularly young males.
- Career practitioners at TAFE are perceived as lacking links with industry and therefore credibility.
- TAFE customer service staff need professional development to improve the quality of advice provided to prospective students.
- TAFE career development services suffer due to limited funding and resources.
- TAFE teachers said TAFE should consider introducing 'ambassadors', a head teacher in each course with good links to industry that students can go to for career advice.
- Although the majority of primary, secondary and VET teachers said the bulk of career development should occur in secondary school, there are mixed views on when it should kick in. Some suggested the later years (years 10,11 and 12) are paramount as this is when students seriously consider their post-school options, while others suggested career development needs to occur earlier to provide students with exposure to a range of options and an understanding of their skills and aptitudes before subject selection. Many primary teachers said the primary school years are critical for developing foundational skills and knowledge in children.
- Teachers generally agree that accessing career development services is most difficult for young people not engaged with an educational institution.

Urbis held 7 focus groups with teachers across four locations. The teachers taught across all education sectors, including the Government, Independent and Catholic sectors. Teachers also had different levels of experience; some were new to the profession and some had taught for over 30 years. The groups included:

- primary school teachers in Brisbane
- primary school teachers in Sydney
- primary school teachers in Melbourne
- primary school teachers in Cairns
- secondary school teachers in Melbourne
- secondary school teachers in Cairns
- VET teachers in Sydney.

## 7.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### 7.1.1 Defining the term 'career'

Teachers primarily define 'career' as paid employment. They also generally agree that a career is something long term, describing it as a lifelong '*journey*' or '*path*', and that education and ongoing learning are part of this journey. Teachers said a career is something you have to work at and involves the development of skills and knowledge over time. A career also provides opportunities for individuals to progress, succeed and prosper.

Some teachers see a career as something you plan for and something that involves making deliberate choices. One teacher described it as your '*chosen path*' and another said is not '*something you just walk into*'. Many felt a career is linked to an individual's passion and what they are good at.

There was a prevailing view that the notion of career has changed over time. Some felt that job opportunities have increased significantly in the past decade. Teachers said a career is now impermanent and involves options, change and transition. Rapid advancements in technology have contributed to the changing nature of the working world. Young people now need to be more technology savvy. One primary school teacher commented '*we are preparing kids for jobs that don't even exist yet*'. Other teachers said the labour market has become more competitive and that employers now have higher expectations of their young employees.

Having said this, several teachers spoke of a career in the traditional sense. For them, a career means full-time, *stable* employment rather than temporary work or doing different '*bits and pieces*'. Some commented that voluntary work or being on the dole does not classify as a career. Others said a career primarily relates to '*professional*' jobs or work that requires qualifications.

### 7.1.2 What does 'career development' mean?

Broadly speaking, teachers see career development as something that opens doors and gives people further options or opportunities. Career development means improving or '*not staying where you are*'. Teachers said career development can occur through both formal (eg. specific study or training) and informal (eg. mentoring or on the job training) learning.

Most participants spoke of career development in terms of gaining the skills and capabilities necessary to do a particular job. A few participants also understood career development as encompassing broader life skills and competencies, eg. personal development skills. A primary school teacher from Sydney said people need to develop self awareness before they can think about their future career.

Some teachers said career development means different things depending on a person's stage in life. For children and young people, career development means fostering ambition and direction, and equipping them with the life skills necessary to achieve their career objectives. One secondary school teacher from an Independent school in Cairns said part time work plays an important role in the development of these

life skills in young people. For adults, career development means progressing in their current career or changing to a new career.

## 7.2 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Teachers have mixed views on who should be responsible for the career development needs of young people. Some said parents and schools have a shared responsibility, a view most commonly held by primary school teachers. Having said this, many primary and secondary teachers said parents should have *more* or the *main* responsibility.

*I think in an ideal world parents, but the reality is schools have a big part to play.*

(Secondary school teacher, Government school, Cairns)

*My concern is that all accountability is with the teachers. I think parents should be responsible also. If government is keen on having career development, we think where are the parents in this? Why doesn't the government create programs for parents to help their kids, why is it always the teachers? Because we can't do everything, we are not the parents.*

(Primary school teacher, Independent school, Melbourne)

Interestingly, primary and secondary teachers from Government schools were more likely than other teachers to nominate schools as having the primary responsibility. However, teachers across all sectors felt schools had a responsibility to address the gap where parents are uninformed or unengaged in the career development needs of their children.

*In an ideal world there's a parent teacher partnership, but in reality we have an eclectic group with different types of parents who have different views.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Melbourne)

Primary, secondary and VET teachers agree that *secondary* schools have more responsibility than primary schools for the provision of career development, as young people usually begin thinking seriously about their careers in their teenage years. School principals, classroom teachers and school based career practitioners were said to be responsible for career development in secondary schools.

Secondary school teachers were just as likely to nominate young people themselves (as opposed to parents or teachers) as having primary responsibility for their own career development.

*I would say the student at 17 years of age has a large part of their own development they would manage.*

(Secondary school teacher, Government school, Cairns)

Two primary school teachers (both working in Independent schools) nominated the government as having the greatest responsibility for the career development of young people.

*Government and policy makers who create the opportunities for kids [are responsible].*

(Primary school teacher, Independent school, Melbourne)

This view was disputed by another participant:

*I don't really like the idea of governments having that much to do with career development in a way because I feel that governments have their own ends that they want to achieve and may push certain careers for their own outcomes, like defence, etc.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Melbourne)

Others identified that responsibility for the career development of young people includes; peers and friends, extended family members, role models in the community and sporting clubs. A primary teacher from Cairns said it is important for Indigenous children to receive career information and advice from Indigenous role models in the community.

## 7.3 YOUNG PEOPLE'S IDEAS ABOUT WORK AND STUDY

### 7.3.1 Children in primary school

The prevailing view among primary school teachers is that a minority of primary children have clear and specific ideas about their career, but that the majority are not focused on post-school work or study. Although children do start to think about careers early, usually when they are 7 or 8 years old, their ideas are generally fantasy based and short-lived.

*One of my girls told me 'I want to be a vampire when I get older'; she is one of my brightest students unfortunately.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Brisbane)

Teachers said children in primary school are not thinking seriously about the reality of work or the pathways to particular jobs, and that thinking seriously usually begins to occur in year 9 or 10. Some teachers try to encourage students to think about careers suited to their skills and aptitudes, but they said children are *'not interested'* and are attracted to jobs they perceive to be glamorous and exciting. Teachers said children are often aspirational and *'dream big'*. As they grow up they begin to understand that dreams will not always come to fruition.

*Some of the boys in Year 4 are very good at maths; I encourage them, tell them they might want to be an engineer in the future but they just want to be football players.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Brisbane)

Teachers identified three main influences in primary school children's ideas about work and study: their parents and other family members, their teachers and school based activities, and the media.

Teachers said children's ideas about work and study are largely influenced by the knowledge and views of their parents. Children will often talk about having the same job as their parents because that is what they have been exposed to. Children's ideas also come from the jobs promoted by their parents.

*The kids will say 'I want to be a policeman like dad or I want to be a doctor because mum says you make a lot of money'.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Brisbane)

Children's ideas about work and study are also influenced by their classroom teachers and school based activities. In kindergarten, lots of children want to be teachers because it is the only job they see. Teachers acknowledged their own power to sway the views of their students, by showing jobs in a positive or negative way. Teachers said people who come to the school and speak to the class about their career are also influential.

#### **Snapshot: Primary school children - "want to do what they know"**

A primary school teacher from a Government school in Brisbane had an Antarctic explorer who studied whales speak to her class. *'All the kids wanted to be Antarctic explorers and were drawing whales for a year'*. Similarly, a primary school teacher from an Independent school in Melbourne had science teachers *'come in and do all the blow up experiments. From that moment they all wanted to be scientists'*.

Aside from family and school, teachers agree that the main influence in the limited post school thinking of primary school children is the media. Teachers said there has been a proliferation of media technologies and the media now plays an increasing role in the lives of children. Teachers said their students are

captivated by *'whatever is popular at the time'*. Sporting stars were frequently mentioned as being influential, as were television shows such as *Junior Masterchef*, *Bondi Rescue* and *Glee*. Some teachers said exposure to jobs through the media can be a positive influence. Role playing different scenarios they see on television is part of how children learn. One primary school teacher from a Government school in Brisbane incorporated her students' interest in *Junior Masterchef* into a lesson on careers. The class had a *'cook a thon'* and discussed the different jobs associated with cooking.

According to teachers, traditional gender roles are often evident when younger children speak about careers. Girls speak about being hairdressers, teachers and nurses and boys speak about being doctors and sports stars. Teachers said these gender stereotypes become less prevalent as young people get older. Several teachers said by the time young people are in secondary school, females tend to be more focused and strive higher than males. It was, however, suggested that there are more job opportunities for males who do not perform well academically, compared with females.

*Boys are laid back. Even low achievers can get a trade, even if they are not a good reader they know that they have options, they can get a job. If girls are below average what are they going to do?*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Brisbane)

SES was also thought to influence children's awareness of and attitudes towards the world of work.

*Nowadays kids travel all around the world, kid's parents travel. Their world is just so big, everything is open to them now.*

(Primary school teacher, Independent school, Melbourne)

*I'm from the other extreme, the kids I teach are from war torn countries. They have come here with parents without an education or careers...the younger ones don't really see what is out there or have exposure to what's possible.*

(Primary school teacher, Independent school, Melbourne)

### 7.3.2 Young people in secondary school

All teachers agree that young people generally start thinking seriously about careers during their secondary school years. Young people, however, are all different: some young people will form a specific idea on what they want to do from a young age; some will form general ideas in their teens and will seek further information and experiment with different things to refine these ideas; and some will not develop any specific career ideas.

Secondary school teachers said some students will begin having ideas about the work they want to do based on their interests, but will often not have a clear understanding of the specifics of the job (eg, the difference between psychology and psychiatry), or the requirements and pathways to achieving their aspirations.

Other students will not form specific ideas while in secondary school. Teachers said some young people are not in a hurry to decide on a set path. Instead, they may prefer to take a gap year, earn some money and go to university as a mature age student. Some young people will embrace the options available to them and may never settle on a concrete path, choosing to *'chop and change'* as their interests unfold. Conversely, others feel overwhelmed by choices and are *'daunted by the idea of having an idea'*.

*That's what I say to my kids 'don't worry I don't know what I want to be after this as well'. I reassure them that it's okay not to have so much of a plan.*

(Secondary school teacher, Independent school, Melbourne)

The main influences in secondary students' ideas about post school work or study identified by secondary school teachers are similar to those identified for primary school students, and include parents and other family members, schools, and the media. Other influences, specific to secondary school students, include an understanding of their abilities and how these relate to work/study requirements and a consideration of labour market demands.



Similar to primary school students, secondary teachers said the ideas of secondary school students are shaped by the jobs their parents do and their parents views towards certain careers. Several teachers spoke about young people following the same career paths as their parents. One teacher from a Government school in Cairns said unless young people have a particular passion or are highly motivated to achieve a certain career goal, they will tend to '*follow the path of least resistance*'. Another teacher said students with fathers working in trade jobs often undertook a school based VET course and went on to get apprenticeships.

Ideas can also be influenced by the subjects secondary students do at school, which can peak their interest in a particular field. An understanding of the grades required to study particular courses at university, and their perception of their ability to achieve these grades, can also shape young people's aspirations.

An understanding of local labour market demands is also an influencing factor. This was mentioned predominately by teachers in regional and rural locations, where work options are more limited.

Secondary school teachers said they notice the influence of the media in the career aspirations of their students.

*When all the CSI programs started all the kids suddenly wanted to be pathologists now there is Masterchef they want to be chefs... whatever is the current thing.*

(Secondary school teacher, Government school, Cairns)

Some teachers said young people are attracted to jobs in the media because they perceive them to be glamorous, but they lack an understanding of labour market demands or the requirements for doing different jobs. For example, students aspire to be pathologists but do not realise there are very few specialist pathologists employed in Australia and that becoming a pathologist requires a Bachelor of Medicine plus a minimum of 5 years post graduate training. Participants said teachers and parents have a responsibility to explore these issues with young people by asking them '*what do you need to do to get there? How many places are available?*' They said, however, that information relating to the labour market and the current and future demand for certain jobs can be difficult to access. Teachers are also cautious of discouraging young people, noting that giving young people a '*reality check*' can sometimes act as a negative catalyst.

#### 7.4 THE INFLUENCE OF PARENTS

There was a general view among all teachers that parents are hugely influential in shaping their children's ideas and aspirations about post school work or study. They said the influence of parents can manifest itself in two key ways: some parents can lower the career aspirations of their children, while others can foster unrealistic expectations. The cultural background and SES status of families can be influencing factors in this regard.

*Students from certain cultural backgrounds are skewed in different ways. Some students do school seven days a week, Latin once a week, are under excessive high pressures to perform and sometimes you get kids from lower SES backgrounds with lower aspirations.*

(Secondary school teacher, Government school, Melbourne)

If parents do not have high expectations for their children, it can lower their children's career aspirations and limit their options. Teachers working in schools with students from disadvantaged or low SES backgrounds said if parents do not work, their children may have an expectation that they will not work either. If parents are '*job hoppers*' young people may not think in terms of a career and may look for '*surviving jobs*' with an attitude of '*I'll be ok because mum and dad survived*'.

Teachers said parents also play a role in fostering a value for education and a strong work ethic, or lack thereof, in their children. Teachers said if parents do not place a high value on education or work, their children may have limited career aspirations. If parents do not lead by example, children may adopt bad attitudes and habits from an early age.

*If there is no push from the parents, there is little incentive for the kids to push themselves.*

(Primary school teacher, Sydney)

*If parents have no aspirations, no hope, it is not going to get passed on.*

(Primary school teacher, Independent school, Cairns)

#### Snapshot: The influence of parents

- A primary school teacher from Sydney said she had a student who could not read well. His father was a truck driver and could not read so this student thought he could do the same.
- A primary school teacher from Cairns recounted an experience her husband had when working in an Indigenous community in The Cape. A young child said to him *'why are you doing that job? It is hot and horrible, why would you want to do that?'* The husband said it was so he could earn money, to which the child replied *'yeah but you could be getting the dole'*.
- A primary school teacher from Brisbane taught at a school with a high Polynesian population. He said these parents asked *'how was their [children's] behaviour not did they get an A'*. These parents focused on getting their children through school rather than academic excellence.
- One teacher spoke of her own experience. *'My mother used to say to me you can't go to uni, you're too dumb for that. I didn't go to uni until I was 30 because my mother had totally convinced me I was too dumb to do that'*.

On the other hand, teachers said some parents have unrealistic expectations. They pressure their children to be high achievers or push them down a particular career path. This was often mentioned by teachers working with: students from high SES backgrounds; in schools with a selective or gifted and talented stream; students from particular ethnic backgrounds.

Many teachers spoke of children from Chinese, Korean and Vietnamese backgrounds who are pushed by their parents to be focused, driven and high achieving from a young age. Some teachers said some of these students complained to them about being beaten for not getting good enough report cards. Teachers said these parents are often not educated and do not have professional jobs themselves. They place considerable pressure on their children to be successful because they want them to have better opportunities than they had.

While most teachers said 'pushy parents' are a negative influence, some said that, even if misguided, pressure from parents can encourage positive outcomes. Some participants said children of pushy parents tend to work hard and perform well academically, which provides them with a good foundation for future career options.

## 7.5 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS

### 7.5.1 Primary school

Primary teachers generally said there is a role for primary schools in introducing children to the world of work, broadening their horizons, developing their general competencies, linking classroom teaching to careers, and fostering a positive attitude towards work and study.

Teachers said children are introduced to the world of work in primary schools through activities such as:

- excursions to local workplaces for in-depth demonstrations of different jobs
- classroom talks by people working in a range of different professions
- curriculum topics such as Work in the Community and Products and Services

- role play activities whereby children dress up and redesign their desk (ie make a shop sign) to represent a workplace
- cooking demonstrations or gardening activities followed by a discussion of related jobs
- identifying *'what I want to be when I grow up'* in a textbox in their school report.

Participants agreed that such activities/initiatives are useful.

All primary teachers spoke of developing general competencies in their students, with a group of teachers from Cairns referring to it as *'the hidden curriculum of being a teacher'*. The development of general competencies is not explicitly linked to career development as teachers feel these skills are important for young people to manage their lives more broadly. They teach it *'naturally as part of their day to day work'*.

*...see this in every day running of class, there is a duty roster and kids learn that they are responsible and when they do something they are rewarded.*

(Primary school teacher, Independent school, Sydney)

Some teachers from all locations said their schools have formal programs for teaching general competencies (ie the You Can Do it Program, Leadership Programs, Student Representative Councils). In some Catholic schools, these programs are tied in with religious education (ie the Virtues Program).

Teachers identified a range of competencies that children need to develop, with the most important being resilience, social/communication skills and confidence. Other competencies mentioned were; flexibility, strong work ethic, IT skills, time management and organisational skills.

Teachers think resilience is an essential skill for children to have. They said many children are afraid to *'have a go'* or try new things. They need to learn that it is okay to make mistakes, and that just because things might not work out the first time, it does not mean they should not try again.

*I find myself saying a lot at the moment 'it doesn't matter if you get it wrong, if you spell the word wrong or get the sum wrong, as long as you try, I am going to get cross if you sit there and do nothing'.*

(Primary school teacher, Cairns)

Some said when teaching resilience, it is important to frame it around reinforcing positive thinking, rather than introducing the notion of failure into the discussion.

#### Snapshot: The need for resilience

- One teacher from a government school in Cairns with a predominantly Indigenous population recounted an incident whereby two of her students were afraid to undertake a spelling test. *'I've got two boys who have literacy problems and they both totally refused to write anything. We started a spelling test and they both sat there and wrote nothing. One of them sulked on the table and the other one, I didn't even realise he wasn't writing because he was pretending to write, he would look down and then look back and smile at me'.*
- A teacher from an Independent girls school in Melbourne *'had a little girl last year who was terrified of doing the NAPLAN. She said to me 'I woke up early in the morning to write all these affirmations to face my fears', she's eight and she is using that bounce back language'.*

Confidence and a positive self concept are also thought to be important, with children needing encouragement to believe in their talents and abilities. The need for confidence building was talked about with particular reference to children from low SES or disadvantaged backgrounds.

Although building confidence is seen as important, teachers from all locations spoke of needing to get the balance right between raising aspirations and reinforcing realistic expectations.

*Children and parents burst into tears when the kids get Cs. They have unrealistic expectations.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Melbourne)

Teachers said children also need to develop social and communication skills. Teachers spoke of some children coming to primary school without knowing how to behave appropriately in a social situation. They do not know how to relate to the teacher, to follow instructions, to join in on a game, or to share toys. Teachers often felt there was a tension between what they taught and what was acceptable for the child to do at home. One primary teacher from Sydney said she made a distinction between home language and school language. She hoped in the future students would be able to make a similar distinction between what is acceptable in the home environment and what is acceptable in the workplace.

Some primary teachers spoke of linking classroom teachings to the world of work. One teacher from Sydney said that when she teaches a unit of work, she tries to make it relevant to everyday life. If, for example, she is teaching students about money she will set up a shop scenario and ask questions like *'how do you get this money?'* so that students understand they have to work to earn money. Another teacher from Sydney said if she is teaching maths she will link it to different jobs ie. *'if you are a carpenter you need to be good at measurements'*.

Primary teachers made a distinction between career guidance and other forms of career development (as previously discussed). While some primary teachers said there is no harm in providing career guidance, especially when children demonstrate a particular ability, the majority said they do not think there is a place for career guidance in primary schools. Primary school should be about broadening children's ideas and keeping doors open, not narrowing their ideas or steering them in a particular direction. Teachers said children should have opportunities to be curious, free thinking, creative, and to play, learn and discover without being *'pigeon holed'*. Teachers said problems can arise when guiding primary children down a specific path as they have not yet reached their full potential and key skills and abilities may emerge later on.

*Primary kids are 10 years away from establishing a career and it's a big journey to take, so its about awareness and skilling up as the whole person. But to be driven in any particular track, its way too early.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Melbourne)

*I think let kids be kids, play around, discover, especially little kids, they need the variety. Let them find out what they're good at, what they enjoy. Don't push to be this or that.*

(Primary school teacher, Government School, Melbourne)

Views on the adequacy of career development currently provided in primary school were polarised. Some teachers, most commonly from the Melbourne and Sydney groups, said career development is satisfactory and not in need of significant changes. They argued against formalising the teaching of career development or incorporating it into the national curriculum, as this would limit flexibility and result in career development teaching becoming overly prescriptive. These teachers said there are many ways in which children are informally exposed to the world of work in primary schools (ie. by reading a book), that do not necessarily need to be labelled as teaching careers.

*I don't necessarily agree with integrating it. Even though I love it that guest speakers come in and we explore that and goal-setting, it goes in incidentally. But for the early years, I would balk at that. They should be what they want to be, if you want to be captain underpants, then go for it. I think it would be too prescriptive to be in the national curriculum.*

(Primary school teacher, Government school, Melbourne)

Others, most commonly from Brisbane and Cairns, described the current provision of career development as patchy, informal and inconsistent (even though these teachers appear to undertake similar initiatives and activities as schools in Melbourne and Sydney). A group of primary school teachers from Cairns said that primary schools are currently very ill-equipped to provide career development. It was suggested that career development is often not a specific focus of the school; but is instead driven by the individual teacher. Participants said teachers focus on the curriculum and include other things, like the teaching of

careers, at their own discretion. As a result, quality and access even within the one school can be variable.

*I do it but nobody else does it in the school, it's not mandated.*

(Primary school teacher, Brisbane)

Some teachers said supporting strengths and aspirations can be difficult for classroom teachers to do, and that career development is often only provided if *"it came up"* in the context of other teaching. Teachers said principals are hugely influential and, without their support, programs to encourage career development will simply not happen. Overcrowded classes also limit the ability of teachers to give personalised attention to students.

Some teachers said mandating career development would assist with ensuring consistency and the dedication of resources. Teachers from Brisbane and Sydney said professional development for teachers could help them better provide career development to their students. Most teachers, however, said time and an already crowded curriculum were huge barriers. They were *'sceptical about whacking more things in for us teachers to do'*. Some suggested an external specialist service could visit primary schools to provide career development to students.

### 7.5.2 Secondary school

Teachers said the provision of career development in secondary schools is variable. Some schools are committed to the provision of career development and dedicate a lot of time, resources and activities to it. Other schools, however, do very little.

Discussions with teachers indicate that school based career practitioners perform a variety of tasks including:

- providing advice on subject selection and post school work or study options
- providing information on university and TAFE courses
- holding individual interviews with students as well as class or group activities
- conducting personal development activities (setting of career goals, aptitude testing)
- liaising with parents on the career development of their children
- teaching practical skills (CV writing, interview techniques)
- providing advice on industry and the labour market. Some secondary teachers said their schools work with local businesses and employers in the following ways: having industry representatives come to the school and speak with students, organising for students to attend career expos, assisting and encouraging students who have clear career aspirations to contact prospective employers to ask them questions, and organising work experience placements.

It was generally agreed that school based career practitioners can play an important role in the career development of young people, but their effectiveness depends on their ability to provide high quality information, guidance and advice.

*Young people definitely find career advisors in schools helpful, but it does depend on the quality of the advice given.*

(Secondary school teacher, Government school, Cairns)

Secondary teachers have different views on the quality of career development currently provided by school based practitioners. Some teachers said, at their school, students have sufficient access to appropriate and high quality career information and advice.

*I think we have the best career counsellor in the world, her skills, her knowledge, what the kids need to do in terms of subjects, we have a ripper. Everyone wants her and they're not getting her. She starts with a personal development program in year 9, showing the kids all the different options and subject selections. Once a fortnight for the kids, on a one to one basis, she does enormous work, she provides information, she seeks out alternate pathways and courses, liaises with the parents. But her own general knowledge is enormous anyway.*

(Secondary school teacher, Catholic school, Melbourne)

Having said this, most teachers said access to and quality of career development could be improved.

It was suggested that to be effective, practitioners need to spend enough time with students to get an understanding of their individual needs and circumstances. However, this requires dedicated resources. In some schools career practitioners are working full time, in others they are working part time, and in others career development is taught by an untrained classroom teacher. One teacher from Cairns said the career practitioner at her school retired last year and had not been replaced, suggesting the school does not consider career development a high priority. Even if a school has a dedicated career practitioner, if it also has large student population it can be difficult for the career practitioner to give adequate attention to all students.

*Careers teachers don't often know the students and helping them to identify a career is all about knowing.*

(Secondary school teacher, Independent school, Melbourne)

Teachers said information relating to university requirements, available courses, and industry is constantly changing. Career practitioners need to be appropriately qualified, have ongoing professional development, and good support materials and resources, to give young people current and up to date knowledge and advice. This, however, requires sufficient funding. Some teachers commented that career practitioners do not always have up to date knowledge.

Teachers recognise that the needs of young people are so diverse, and that this is a challenge for career practitioners. They said it is not realistic to expect career practitioners to know the ins and outs of all available jobs and courses, which is why it is important they have access to high quality resource materials and the skills to locate such materials. One teacher from Melbourne suggested rotating a couple of practitioners within the one school to eliminate bias: *'take the pressure off... other people to come up with new ideas'*.

Career practitioners can also face challenges engaging with students who are not interested in career development. Some teachers spoke of needing to make students understand the relevance of it, *'this is your life we are talking about'*. Some said young people are often focused on the present and not thinking about the long term. Career development activities do not go on their report card and do not influence their grades. Some students do not perceive career development as having immediate outcomes for them and therefore do not want to engage.

*The kids say to me 'I just do whatever comes up at the time Miss I don't need all this planning'.*

(Secondary school teacher, Cairns)

Participants said classroom teachers play an important role in the career development of young people. Several teachers spoke of the need to link classroom teachings to the world of work and everyday life. Teachers said this is useful for broadening student's awareness, and giving them an understanding of the opportunities available to them. Some teachers said they need to justify their subjects to the students so they will take it seriously:

*.....especially something like maths, kids feel they're not going to use it. And they probably won't use 'quadratics', but often you need to get through it as a stepping stone to be an architect or whatever. And if you have a maths background it's quite valuable to employers, it shows you can problem solve and think logically. We do spend a lot of time justifying our subjects.*

(Secondary school teacher, Melbourne)

Teachers spoke of linking classroom teachings to careers in varying degrees. Some said they have *'lengthy discussions'* with their students about future career paths, others said they only speak about career paths if it happens to come up in the context of other things. Some said they will only explain the relevance of a subject at the start of the year, while others said they try to promote this throughout the year. Some teachers said linking subjects to careers is best undertaken from year 9 onwards as before this point students are too young and not mature enough to understand.

Participants said that classroom teachers, career practitioner and other school staff have a role to play in broadening young people's horizons by raising expectations, showing them their options and all *'the different branches'* related to one line of work. One secondary teacher, for example, who teachers at a sports academy school said students are often committed to being professional sporting careers. He said it was the responsibility of teachers and coaches to discuss other career options and focus on the development of other skills *'in the event of not becoming the worlds best soccer player'*. Secondary teachers said they use the Bullseye posters in discussing career options with their students.

*Bullseye posters are fabulous. They provide the whole range of jobs across the spectrum.*

(Secondary school teacher, Government school, Cairns)

Participants also saw it as the role of both teachers and career practitioners to support the development of general competencies in students. One teacher from Melbourne, for example, said the career practitioner at her school starts with a personal development program for students in year 9, which was thought to be a useful initiative. One teacher from Cairns told the story of her student who wanted to do a cabinet making apprenticeship. The student *'thought it was all too hard, that it was the impossible, so he wasn't even going to give it a try, he had thrown in the towel before giving it a go'* the teacher encouraged him to apply and he was offered the apprenticeship. This participant said that teachers have a role in raising expectations and fostering skills such as confidence and resilience.

Teachers spoke of formalised activities (usually information sessions or parent/teacher nights) undertaken to inform students selection of subjects. Some schools have a *'careers week'* and set up booths for different subjects. Students visit the different booths to get an understanding of the different subjects and how they might relate to their post-school aspirations. Some schools have similar activities which involve parents, giving them an opportunity to speak with teachers about their child's suitability for certain subjects. While participants generally said these are valuable activities, they said teachers sometimes try to *'sell their subjects'* to students, especially high performing students. The focus then becomes on what is in the best interest of the teacher or the subject department, not what is in the best interest of the student.

Some participants said students often have expectations of teachers regarding the provision of career information and advice that teachers cannot meet. For example, students will expect to be able to ask a science teacher about science-related career options but the reality is the science teacher may have never worked in the science industry. Participants said teachers can give students the wrong advice (eg you need x maths to study x course) because they are not experts on post school options.

There is a view that, even if teachers are not qualified in the area of career development, they need to know how to point young people in the right direction and to facilitate their access to relevant information. Teachers expressed a desire for increased access to information. Some said they want online information about career pathways and options, what universities and TAFE's offer, entry scores, local labour market demands, skills shortages, subject requirements and so on. Many teachers said they had used the internet to access this information in the past, identifying sites such as Careerjet, OneSchool, MyCareer and Job Guide. Some teachers said they had visited websites but could not specifically recall what websites they were. Some teachers said the provision of career information online is currently fragmented - *'there are thousands of websites'* and not one centralised spot for all career related information. Some teachers said many of the websites they referred to were inadequate. A gap that was particularly identified was information relating to labour market demands and job security projections, where the skills shortages will be over the next ten years and how young people can link their skills and career aspirations with these shortages.

Teachers also want career practitioners to share information and communicate better with them. Teachers spoke of having various levels of access to student's career reports and other documentation (ie results of aptitude testing, documented career goals etc). There appears to be few examples of

processes or systems for information sharing across the school. It was suggested that improvements in this regard would enable teachers to be better informed and would assist them when speaking with students and their parents about subject choice and future career options. One school in Melbourne has a comprehensive process whereby every subject teacher comments on each student's performance and abilities on a form that is then compiled and circulated by the school career practitioner. When teachers at this school meet with parents, they have complete and accurate information to share.

High quality teachers are seen as imperative to quality career development. Teachers who are appropriately qualified and passionate about what they teach can be instrumental in inspiring young people, sparking their interests and shaping their future aspirations. Having a good quality teacher can be the difference between a student liking and excelling in a subject or not. Participants said teachers need higher salaries and continuing training. This will ensure high quality people, that will *'give kids every opportunity'* to succeed in life, enter the profession. Teachers said the focus should not just be on funding specialist career development services.

Some teachers said work experience is the most useful career development activity for secondary students. It gives young people an opportunity to try new things, to test out their ideas and their suitability for certain jobs, and to gain a better understanding of the realities of working life. Some teachers said work experience helps students mature and they often come back from their placement with a different perspective. The value of work experience, however, depends on the support provided by the employer. If students have someone who takes an interest in them, and is willing to teach and mentor them, it will be a positive experience. It also depends on whether students are given the opportunity to make the most of the work experience rather than *'going to dad's office'*. It was suggested that schools should network with a wide range of employers to facilitate worthwhile work experience placements for students.

Teachers said the VET in Schools Program is a positive initiative, with some describing it as a *'godsend'*. It provides young people with opportunities to learn new skills and can open up pathways for non-academic students. However, to be effective, it should not be seen as a *'dumping ground'* for non-academic students, and placements should only be given to students with a genuine interest.

There were mixed views on the usefulness of career expos. Some teachers said they can be helpful for those who have a clear idea of what they want to do as it gives them direct access to someone working in the industry. Others said that students often do not take expos seriously and treat them as a competition to see who can *'get the most sweets'*.

## 7.6 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN THE VET SECTOR

VET teachers said students decide to study at TAFE for a range of reasons, including; as a pathway to an apprenticeship, as a pathway to university, as an alternative to secondary school, to be eligible for the dole or youth allowance, or to obtain a certificate to join the police force.

VET teachers said young people often begin studying at TAFE without a clear understanding of what the course involves, which contributes to the high drop out rates for some courses. VET teachers said students are attracted to courses perceived to be glamorous, without having a comprehensive understanding of what the course entails.

### Snapshot: Reasons for drop-out in TAFE

- One teacher said carpentry students often drop out because they do not realise there is more to carpentry than using their hands, and that it requires an ability to do calculations.
- Another teacher said students from non-English speaking backgrounds are often not aware of the language requirements and drop out of mainstream courses because their language skills are not adequate.
- Another teacher said nowadays the construction industry is highly specialised, with people specialising in windows or stairs for example. Consequently, students only want to know how to make windows or stairs. They are not interested in the broader learning and drop out.



There is a view among teachers that some young people have a poor understanding of their own skills and aptitudes for particular courses or jobs. Many students find themselves at TAFE because they are pressured by their parents and have nowhere else to go. These students sometimes have very little knowledge of what the course is about and if it is suitable for them. With the exception of students who undertake work experience or work placements in their chosen field, young TAFE students often do not know what they are training for until their first day on the job. This makes it difficult for them to effectively judge their suitability for the job.

On the other hand, VET teachers said there are some students that are focused, aware of their skills and aptitudes, and have a clear vision of the direction they are heading in. VET teachers said while the drop out rate for some courses is very high (ie for commercial cookery), retention rates for other courses (ie marketing/Public Relations and English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) are good.

There were a number of issues raised by VET teachers about the provision of career development in TAFEs, including:

- the branding of career development services
- career practitioners' perceived lack of links with industry
- professional development of customer service staff
- funding and resources.

Some VET teachers said the branding of career development services may act as an access barrier, because TAFE has 'counsellors' that provide both career counselling and personal counselling. Several teachers said the use of the term 'counselling' is problematic. Students, particularly trade students, are too embarrassed to see a TAFE counsellor for career information or advice in case their peers think they are seeing the counsellor for a personal problem.

*The perception is if you go to a careers counsellor you have real problems.*

(VET teacher, Sydney)

TAFE counsellors are often seen as lacking links with industry, which undermines their credibility. Counsellors can refer students to online services or give general advice but this does not always meet their needs. Teachers said TAFE counsellors do not have the knowledge or resources to provide students with advice on '*where they could go, where the branches are, what their options are*'.

Consequently, course teachers find they spend '*a large percentage*' of their time providing students with careers information and advice. This can be beneficial to students as course teachers generally know their industry and have links with employers. However there are some limitations. It can lead to biased advice as course teachers can only give advice on their particular area of expertise, not on the complete range of options available. While most agree that TAFE teachers have good links with industry, one PR and marketing teacher said he had not been directly involved in the workforce for 15 years, so any advice he gave on the labour market was likely to be dated. Participants said TAFE should consider introducing 'ambassadors' - a head teacher in each course with good links to industry that students can go to for career advice.

One VET teacher in Sydney spoke of the Try-a-Trade initiative that had been held at two locations in Sydney recently. This was a partnership event between TAFE's, schools, local councils, and other government and non-government services. Schools took students to the expo, where they were able to speak directly to TAFE teachers, have hands on experience and learn practical tasks relevant to the trade. VET teachers in Sydney said this was a '*fantastic*' initiative, and want to see more funding for multi-disciplinary events that present students with a range of options and direct experiences.

For prospective TAFE students, customer service officers are the first point of call and often act as career counsellors. Participants said these officers need to be properly briefed on the courses offered, but also need to make people feel comfortable and confident about their ability to do a course. VET teachers said although there are some good customer service officers within the TAFE system, it is '*a bit hit and miss*'. They said TAFE can do more to better train these staff.

## 7.7 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

Teachers generally agree that accessing career development services is most difficult for young people not engaged with an educational institution. Many teachers have limited awareness of what is available for young people not in education, or where these young people would go to get information, support or guidance. Some teachers said that young people most commonly use Google or job placement providers to get advice. Some teachers said that career related websites could be *'really bad'*, and said there is a need for information to be better quality and more easily accessible.

One teacher from a Catholic secondary school in Melbourne said the careers practitioner at her school continues to provide career development services to students who have graduated from the school: *'our kids still come back. Our careers counsellor gets calls from the kids a year later seeking advice'*.

## 7.8 GETTING THE RIGHT CAREER DEVELOPMENT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

### 7.8.1 *How do young people want career information and advice communicated to them?*

Overall, teachers agree that young people want personalised career development. Young people want career information and advice that is relevant to their individual needs, circumstances and aspirations. Teachers said that a one size fits all approach does not work.

#### **Snapshot: The need for individualised advice**

A secondary school teacher in Cairns recounted her experience of teaching a career development class once a week with Year 10 boys. The lesson consisted of playing a career game with cards outlining scenarios and activities, such as filling in a job application. She described some of the boys as *'immature'* and unwilling to take the game seriously, while other students were reluctant to participate in a group activity. The game also involved a considerable amount of reading and students with low literacy skills (including some Indigenous students) struggled. Students with advanced literacy skills completed activities early and got bored waiting for others to catch up. The game only worked well for the high achieving, independent students. The teacher described the class as *'frazzled'* and *'disjointed'* and said in the end the *'lesson fell apart'*.

Teachers said young people want career information and advice from a source they deem knowledgeable, trustworthy and credible. Young people, for example, often prefer to speak with someone with first hand experience doing the job or course of study they are interested in. One secondary teacher from a Government school in Cairns said students want to talk to someone who understands their skills and strengths (ie a parent or teacher) as well as someone with specialist knowledge on pathways, industry, requirements etc (ie a career practitioner).

Young people also want to talk to someone with whom they feel comfortable. One secondary school teacher said, at her school, the career practitioner is not effective as the students do not feel comfortable approaching him and would generally seek information or guidance from the Year 12 coordinator instead.

While teachers felt that internet based resources are good for some young people, they said other young people prefer to speak with someone face to face and some young people only have limited internet access.

For primary school students, information needs to be age appropriate and communicated by someone who knows how to engage with children. Hands on, interactive activities; the use of computers and other technologies; and picture based resources were suggested as effective ways of communicating with young children.

*Don't have the boring 'bring your parents in and talk about your job'; they don't know how to relate to kids.*

(Primary school teacher, Brisbane)

A number of primary teachers said having a specialist, external service visit schools could be an effective approach. The provision of information by someone other than the teacher can be exciting for young children, who *'get sick of listening to the teacher all the time'*. The visit could then be followed up by classroom based discussion. Several teachers said the Healthy Harold Life Education program is a good example of how this is done.

It was suggested that exercises that enable students to communicate information to their peers can also be effective. One primary school teacher from Brisbane recounted an activity he undertook with his students where they pulled out a card from a pile. Each card had a different job on it, including some *'weird and wonderful'* things to make the exercise fun. The students had to research the job and give a presentation to the rest of the class. The teacher said the *'kids enjoyed it... hearing from other kids, in their own language'*. A secondary teacher from Melbourne said *'we get a broad spectrum of former students, industry representatives. That's fairly successful. The kids tend to align with former students more than with someone from industry'*.

### 7.8.2 What are the critical points?

There was a prevailing view amongst primary, secondary and VET teachers that the bulk of young people's career development should occur in secondary school. They said career development should focus on secondary school years as this is when young people:

- Are required to select subjects. This is the first opportunity for young people to have input into the future direction of their education and work options. Up to this point, the shape of their education is largely determined by the curriculum, their parents and teachers.
- Get their first experience of work, in the form of part-time/casual jobs or school based work experience.
- Get their first exposure to tertiary education, in the form of school based VET placements, apprenticeships or traineeships.

Teachers said targeting young people in school is critical, because school is an easy and effective way of gaining direct access to all young people. Once young people have left school, it can be considerably more difficult to access them to provide career development services.

Although teachers agree that secondary school is the critical point, there are mixed views on when in secondary school career development should kick in. Some suggested the later years (years 10,11 and 12) are paramount as this is when students seriously consider their post-school options, while others suggested career development needs to occur earlier as young people need to have exposure to a range of career options and a clear understanding of their skills and aptitudes before selecting their subjects. Some teachers said if career development is left till the later years, students who complete school in year 10 will potentially miss out.

Participants said it is important for young people to have good information, guidance and advice at key transition points, which include: when leaving school, when starting tertiary education, and when entering the workforce. Teachers said getting good advice and information about TAFE and university courses before leaving school can reduce course drop out rates.

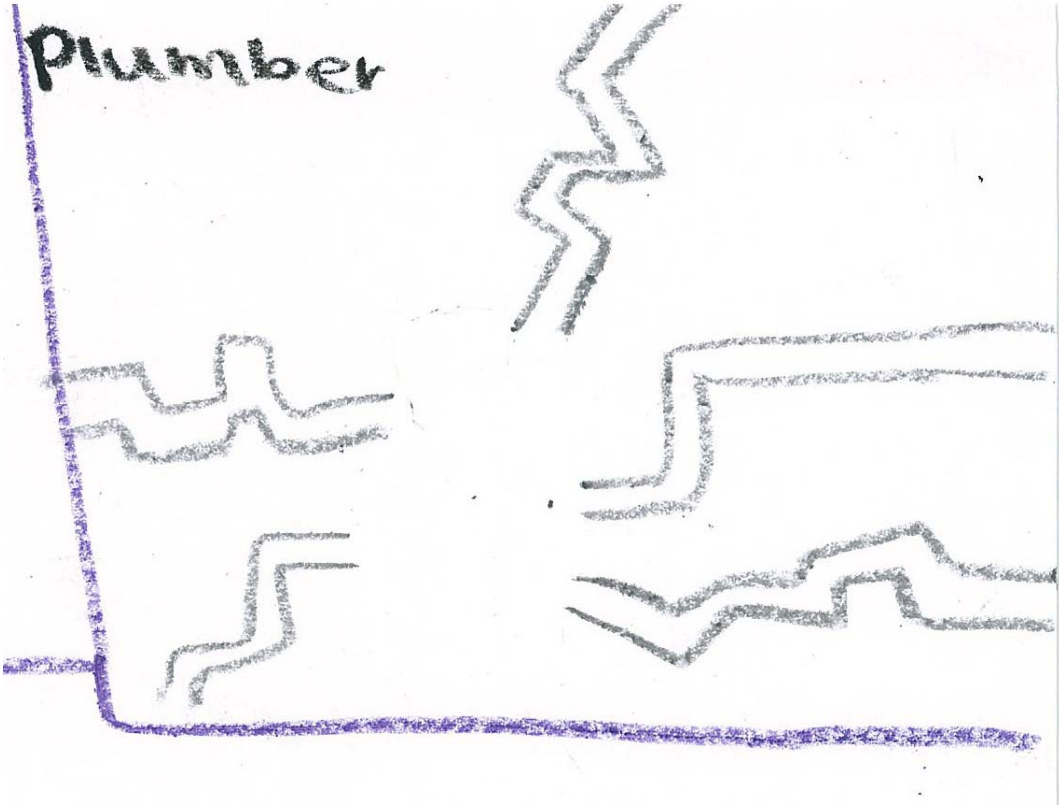
Although secondary school is seen as having the main role when it comes to career development, many primary teachers said the primary school years are critical for developing foundational skills and knowledge in children.

*What happens early on can make a considerable difference to what a kid is going to be like in 10 years time.*

*(Primary school teacher, Cairns)*

Secondary school teachers are less convinced there is a role for primary schools in the provision of career development.

8 Career practitioners



### Key findings:

- Understanding of the term 'career development' in the education sector and in industry is poor but improving.
- Parents are key influences in young people's career development from a young age, but are not equipped to provide accurate career information. Schools need to effectively engage parents.
- Young people need basic career development in primary school. It should focus on exposing children to different jobs and encouraging them to think about their self-image, values and what they like.
- Most career practitioners think career development should start earlier in secondary school and should focus more on developing general competencies and life skills.
- The quality and accessibility of career development varies widely in all sectors. Primary barriers to quality career development include: inadequate resources (funding and staff); poor commitment to career development (eg by principals); underqualified career practitioners; and competing priorities in the school curriculum.
- Independent and Catholic schools generally provide better career development to students because they are better resourced.
- The quality of career development in higher education and VET was generally said to be good, despite being under resourced. Access to services was identified as an issue, however, with young people often not being aware of the services available.
- Young people not in education are provided with limited career development options.
- Some level of qualification and ongoing professional development is necessary for career practitioners and, to some extent, teachers given their level of day to day interaction with students and ability to integrate career development into classroom learning.

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

Urbis undertook 15 one-on-one interviews with career practitioners working in:

- secondary schools – two from Government secondary schools, two from Independent secondary schools and two from Catholic schools
- tertiary institutions – three from universities and two from VET institutions
- the private sector – three in private practice.

Career practitioners were selected from lists provided by the Career Development Association of Australia (CDAA) and the Career Education Association of Victoria (CEAV). Career practitioners interviewed are from a mix of metropolitan, regional and rural locations.

Career practitioners were asked about:

- their understanding of career and career development
- the quality and accessibility of career development currently provided to young people in schools, higher education and VET, and those not in education
- the information and assistance young people want and when they need it
- how they think career development can be better provided to young people.

This chapter details the findings of these interviews.

## 8.2 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

### 8.2.1 *Defining the term 'career'*

Career practitioners working across different sectors, share similar views on the meaning of the term 'career'. A career is generally seen as an ongoing, life-long process. The majority of career practitioners said a career is comprised of many stages and transition periods. Several mentioned moving through pathways and towards goals as being characteristic of a career.

All career practitioners agree that a career includes formal education and paid employment in the traditional sense. There is, however, a view that society's understanding of 'career' has changed in recent times, and that a career now also includes unpaid or voluntary work and informal training or learning. Several practitioners said an individual's career encompasses not only their professional life, but also their personal life, and includes hobbies, interests and experiences.

### 8.2.2 *Defining the term 'career development'*

Career practitioners are less unanimous in their understanding of the term 'career development'. Some career practitioners were able to very clearly distinguish between 'career' and 'career development', whereas others were unsure about the distinction. A small number of practitioners were unable to define the term career development. These were generally practitioners with limited or no formal career qualifications.

Personal development emerged as a key feature of career development, with terms such as '*growth*', '*reflection*' and '*learning*' commonly used by career practitioners in defining career development. Developing the ability to identify opportunities, make decisions, respond to events and learn from setbacks were all identified as being part of an individual's career development. Several career practitioners described career development as a very personal process or cycle that individuals continually experience over time. They also spoke about career development as a lifelong phenomenon.

Career practitioners said career development includes the development of skills necessary for particular jobs and for securing employment (ie interview skills, resume skills, and an understanding what employers are looking for). A few career practitioners said understanding the labour market is another aspect of career development.

#### *Changing understandings of the term 'career development'*

Career practitioners consider 'career development' to be a fairly new term that has come in to use in the last decade. Several career practitioners said their own understanding of the term has changed over time. Some career practitioners compared 'career development' to more traditional terms such as 'career guidance' or 'career education', and said the latter have negative connotations because they imply giving advice in a '*paternalistic*' manner. The terms 'career guidance' and 'career education' are also seen as lacking the whole of person, action based approach that is thought to characterise 'career development'.

Career practitioners have mixed views on how well the term career development is understood. There is a general view that awareness and understanding of the term in the education sector and in industry is poor at present, but is improving. Career practitioners said career development and the work of career practitioners is not well understood or valued by society as a whole, with many people still associating the term with employment only.

*We need to brand ourselves more broadly.*

(University sector)

*We need to professionalise the industry and make people more aware of what it is we do.*

(VET sector)

*The [career] industry needs to advocate itself better so people understand why it's important and deserving of funding.*

(University sector)

Career practitioners said understanding of career development in schools varies widely, with some schools understanding and implementing career development better than others. They said career development is sometimes poorly understood in schools because teachers with no formal careers qualifications are given responsibility for career development. Career practitioners are very much of the view that people need to be properly qualified to deliver career development in schools. This point is discussed further at section 8.6.

There is a general view, largely among career practitioners working in secondary schools, that understanding of career development is improving in secondary schools, and in some primary schools. One career practitioner from an Independent secondary school credited the Australian Blueprint for Career Development<sup>9</sup> and the establishment of national bodies such as the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA), CDAA and CEAV as being instrumental in this shift.

Some career practitioners, generally those in the schools sector, said universities and VET providers focus more on getting students in to jobs than on career development. A career practitioner from the higher education sector, however, said career development in higher education is better understood and easier to implement, because the student population is older and better able to grasp the higher level, more long term concepts around career development.

Career practitioners' views on industry's understanding of career development vary and there are no particular trends by education sector or background. Some practitioners said industry understands career development well, particularly bigger companies with dedicated careers staff. However, others said industry and employers could engage in better career development. Career practitioners surmised that reasons for industry's lack of commitment to career development include that it's *'too time consuming'*, that they're *'overwhelmed with information'* and that employers perceive young people's employment as likely to be short lived. One private career practitioner said industry *'has the notion that young people won't stick around and so they don't do a lot of career development'*.

Several career practitioners said industry's commitment to career development can vary by location. One practitioner working in the higher education sector said industry's level of involvement *'depends on the community'*. Two practitioners said industry in smaller rural communities is more likely to understand and be committed to career development.

*Industry in [town], in a small community, has embraced career development whole heartedly with industry breakfasts where they try to have a range of stakeholders including schools and higher education. It works because [town] isn't that big.*

(Catholic secondary school)

However, others career practitioners disagree. A private career practitioner working in a practice in a rural location said that career development is not considered necessary by industry because young people leave town to find work. Another career practitioner working in a Government secondary school in the same location as the practitioner quoted directly above said:

*Employers and industry don't care about career education. They just want people that are prepared to work hard and are literate and numerate. There are not many companies that truly focus on career development unless they are having huge staff turnover... they see career development as rising through the ranks.*

(Government secondary school)

---

<sup>9</sup> MCEECDYA, 2010 *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, prepared by Miles Morgan Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Available at: <http://www.blueprint.edu.au/>

### 8.3 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Most career practitioners see young people's career development as *everyone's* responsibility. Practitioners across sectors generally agree that responsibility for young people's career development extends beyond career practitioners and the education system to include teachers, parents, peers, the government and media:

*Everybody. The education system can only go so far. The education system is given more and more responsibility and no more resources. We cannot be working with young people without their families... I don't believe attitudinal things should be the school's role. This needs to come from the families.*

(Government secondary school)

*It's everybody's role – government, parents, schools. It's an ongoing process that everyone should be involved in. It's not just up to people like me because that's a very narrow version of career development.*

(VET sector)

Interestingly, the responsibility of the young person themselves was raised by only two career practitioners, both working in private practice. One practitioner said, *'young people are incapable of doing it themselves because the time horizon is too long'* whilst another said *'the individual is responsible, with tools to be provided by teachers, advisors and parents'*.

Within the education system, career practitioners said an integrated, whole of organisation approach to career development is important. While career practitioners play an important role in schools, teachers/lecturers and principals should also be involved.

*In schools, it's a whole of school responsibility, not just the one dedicated person.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*It's a whole school priority. It's not just to be given to the careers person.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*Unless it's valued within the school, it doesn't happen.*

(VET sector)

*Career development is a whole school approach, definitely driven from above. The board and the principal can pass it through the school.*

(Independent secondary school)

It was noted many times during interviews with practitioners that teachers should provide career development in the classroom as part of everyday learning.

*Career practitioners should educate teachers on how they can provide career development to their students through their classroom work. If teachers can be providing career development as part of their classroom, we can achieve much greater reach amongst the student population.*

(Catholic secondary school)

However, many career practitioners are concerned about the ability of teachers to provide rounded, unbiased career information. Career practitioners criticised teachers for focusing too heavily on their own discipline and on university study rather than TAFE and other pathways:



*Teachers advise students to go to uni because that is what they did. They did the uni pathway and that is what they focus on.*

(Government secondary school)

*We're relying on teachers to provide guidance but they don't have full information. Teachers often come from university and so don't publicise TAFE and the VET sector. It's an inbuilt bias that crops up.*

(VET sector)

#### 8.4 INFLUENCES IN YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Career practitioners identified a number of influences in young people's career development including parents, peers, teachers and the media. The level of influence of each of these sources on a young person's career development is thought to vary by individual and their circumstances. Interestingly career practitioners were not mentioned as being one of the key influences, with one participant saying career practitioners influence young people *'least of all'*.

Career practitioners identified parents as having significant influence in the career choices and career development of young people. Three types of parental involvement emerged from interviews: parents who are interested in helping their children but are unsure how to assist; parents who have set ideas about the direction their children should take; and parents who have little or no interest in their children's career development.

Career practitioners said parents influence children *'passively'* from an early age by instilling cultural norms, attitudes and ideologies in them, and giving children their first exposure to jobs (often those they work in). Parents also play a key role in developing early learning skills such as literacy and numeracy. Career practitioners agree that parents continue to be influential in the career development of children as they get older, although as children get older parental influence applies more to career choice than career development.

The issue of parental pressure to follow a particular career path was raised on a number of occasions. Career practitioners said some parents, often those of Asian or Islander backgrounds, have pre-conceived ideas about what jobs or level of education their children should have, irrespective of their children's interests or capabilities. One career practitioner said this can cause *'huge emotional stress and conflict'* in families.

*Arguing between a parent wanting something and child knowing they don't have the ability is an horrific experience.*

(VET sector)

There are few practitioners who see parents as playing no role in their children's career development. However, one career practitioner working in the private sector said some parents assume the education system will take care of their children's career development needs, and consequently remove themselves from the process.

*It's very rare that I meet a parent that actually cares.*

(Private practitioner)

Career practitioners raised concerns about the ability of parents, peers, teachers and the media to accurately inform young people of their career options. Career practitioners said parents often advise young people on the basis of their own outdated experiences of work. As noted above, teachers were criticised for focusing too strongly on their own disciplines or providing inaccurate information. Peer influence was also generally thought to be negative in terms of providing incorrect advice. One practitioner said that peers can have a particularly strong influence when young people are not getting adequate career development from the school.

Career practitioners across education sectors generally agree that parents and teachers should be involved in the career development of young people, and that both parents and teachers need to be better educated about careers and career development. Career practitioners said schools need to better engage parents on career development, and gave examples of successful techniques that have been used, including targeted pamphlets, one on one meetings and invitations to careers nights:

*Our role is to work with parents so they can be given good and solid career advice.*

(Private sector)

## 8.5 MEETING THE NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN PRIMARY SCHOOL

All career practitioners agree that career development should be introduced in primary school, although career practitioners said at this early age, career development activities need only be basic. It should focus on exposing children to different jobs and encouraging them to think about their self image, values and what they like. The need to raise children's awareness of jobs beyond the conventional (eg fireman, policeman, doctor, teacher) was highlighted by several career practitioners.

*There is limited occupational knowledge in primary school. Kids know about teachers and policemen but there is a limited knowledge of the diversity out there.*

(Government secondary school)

Career practitioners said it would be straightforward to incorporate career development into primary school teaching, suggesting teachers could put what is being learnt into context and link class activities to different jobs. Workplace visits and presentations by parents working in different careers are also seen as valuable ways to help children think about careers and career development.

*All education should be linked to 'why we're doing it', even at a very early level.*

(Catholic secondary school)

Some career practitioners said career development should be made a part of the national curriculum for primary schools, and one said the Australian Blueprint for Career Development<sup>10</sup> was effective in helping achieve this. They said primary school teachers also need to be educated on how to deliver career development.

Career practitioner views on the provision of career development in primary schools vary significantly. Some practitioners said career development is not taught in primary schools due to a lack of time and resources such as computers. Conversely, other career practitioners said career development is integrated into many primary schools though existing personal development and skill building activities, even though these activities may not be labelled 'career development' per se.

Career practitioners were unsure of the quality of career development in primary schools, with two noting that it is difficult to measure whether skills and general competencies are successfully instilled in children of a young age, particularly when these skills take years to develop.

## 8.6 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SECONDARY SCHOOL

Unlike in primary schools, career practitioners said career development in secondary schools is commonplace.

---

<sup>10</sup> MCEECDYA, 2010 *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, prepared by Miles Morgan Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Available at: <http://www.blueprint.edu.au/>

### 8.6.1 Quality of career development in secondary schools

When asked how well secondary schools currently provide career development to students, career practitioners said it is difficult to generalise, adding that the quality of career development in secondary schools varies significantly:

*I think it varies from school to school, and from teacher to teacher. It's very hard to generalise. It also depends on the nature of the child and willingness of teachers to persist and be open and handle difficult students.*

(VET sector)

*It's ad hoc – some do it well and others don't.*

(Government secondary school)

One career practitioner working in the university sector said it is difficult to judge whether career development concepts have been successfully instilled in young people.

*We're talking about things that are vague and fluffy. How do you measure it? What's the outcome?*

(University sector)

Some career practitioners (generally those in Independent schools, private practice or higher education) said Independent and Catholic schools generally provide better career development than Government schools, due to smaller student numbers and better funding. One practitioner working in the VET sector said *'the system is stacked against state school students'*.

Some practitioners working in private practice and higher education institutions said career development is not being provided successfully in secondary schools and thought this is indicated by the high drop-out rates in the first year of university.

*Kids dropping out in first year uni suggests they're in the wrong course.*

(University sector)

*There's a 25% drop out of uni in first year which suggests something's wrong. Either they're being pushed into courses where they don't have an interest or they don't have the skills.*

(VET sector)

A number of career practitioners, in particular those in government schools or the VET sector, said schools often place far too much emphasis on university and not other post-school options.

*Career practitioners often speak about TAFE as a second option, a default if students don't get in to university.*

(Government secondary school)

*It doesn't sound like they [students in secondary school] get very balanced career info, too much info on university and not enough on VET.*

(VET sector)

The majority of practitioners agree that career development in schools focuses too strongly on the practical aspects of careers (eg interviewing, CV preparation, course selection, job attainment etc.) rather than the development of general skills and competencies. They said this happens because the concept of career development is difficult to convey to young people who are often uninterested and unable to conceive the long term nature of career development. It also happens because some schools are more concerned with *'ticking the box'* and getting marks and a good reputation, than on developing students' life skills:

*Students just don't understand those [general competencies] as well. You need time to get it across in a way they prefer... it takes a while to stick.*

(VET sector)

*Schools are focusing on marks not on competencies...careers is an add on.*

(Private practice)

One career practitioner from a Catholic school referred to the Lost Talent report<sup>11</sup> which found that if students do not have a career plan in place, their educational outcomes are limited. This practitioner said students need to develop goals so they have something to aspire to, and to make them want to put in effort at school. She said it does not matter if young people's goals change. The fact that they have developed a goal and are working towards it is a useful exercise, particularly for young people from low SES backgrounds

### 8.6.2 *Barriers to providing quality careers guidance in secondary schools*

Career practitioners identified a number of factors that affect the quality of career development in schools, including: the priorities of the school and school leaders; the availability of resources and funding; the ratio of career practitioners to students; time dedicated to career development in the curriculum; and the qualifications and ongoing professional development of career practitioners.

#### *Limited resources*

Most career practitioners across all sectors said career development is poorly resourced in most schools, in terms of time, funding and staff. They said limited funding and too few staff are key barriers to quality career development. This is particularly the case for Government schools and schools in remote areas. Career practitioners said the ratio of career practitioners to students is often too small, with as little as one career practitioner expected to meet the needs of hundreds of students.

*It's a time factor, there are two of us here and we've got 500 kids.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*Career practitioners need to be better supported with better resources.*

(University sector)

#### *Commitment from higher levels*

Career practitioners working in schools where career development is delivered effectively in their opinion (generally Independent and Catholic schools), said their work is supported by high level staff through the provision of adequate funding, staffing and time in the school day. The commitment of the school principal is seen as crucial for quality career development in schools.

#### *Securing time in the curriculum*

Securing time within an already crowded curriculum to ensure career development is extended to all students is another challenge for career practitioners in schools. Several career practitioners said career development needs to be incorporated into the secondary school curriculum and the school timetable.

---

<sup>11</sup> Joanna Sikora, Lawrence J Saha; *Lost talent? The occupational ambitions and attainments of young Australians*; 12 January 2011; ISBN:978 1 921809 55 2

*Build it into the curriculum, it's the easiest and most cost effective way... students should understand more fully why they're learning what they are.*

(Independent secondary school)

*Career development should be embedded into every subject.*

(Private practice)

*I would like it to be seen as important as Maths, English and Science but it isn't. It's treated as a second class subject.*

(Government secondary school)

### *Dedicated career practitioner*

Several career practitioners said the school career practitioner role is sometimes wrongly assigned to a teacher with free time, regardless of the teacher's interest in, or knowledge of, career development. Career practitioners said schools need a 'centralised', dedicated career practitioner who is passionate, qualified and committed to their work.

*There are some schools that dump it on a teacher who hasn't got enough classes and their heart isn't in it. You need to be interested at the very minimum, passionate is even better.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*What happens in secondary schools here is whoever has free time on schedule gets the pathways planning job. Often this means those responsible for delivering career development to students have no qualifications or training.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*Make it a policy where there is a trained professional career advisor that has ongoing professional development in every school.*

(University sector)

*A particularly good advisor can be an important advocate and driver to all of school and staff.*

(University sector)

A career practitioner in the university sector described the dual role of some school career practitioners, being the roles of personal counsellor and career counsellor, as 'impractical'.

### *Qualifications for career practitioners and teachers*

The issue of career practitioners and teachers being underqualified was raised by several career practitioners. They said provision of career development would be improved if formal qualifications (for example, Certificate IV as a minimum) and ongoing professional development were made compulsory. One career practitioner working in a Catholic secondary school said it should be the State/Territory Government's responsibility to provide such professional development. Several practitioners said compulsory training requirements should also apply to private practitioners.

*We are promoting life long skills, we should practice it as well.*

(VET sector)

*Career practitioners need ongoing career development and need life skills in general. You need life skills to advise others.*

(Private sector)

Career practitioners said secondary teachers need at least some training to be able to appropriately and accurately incorporate career development into everyday learning.

*Every student studying to be a teacher should study a career development subject.*

(Private practice)

### 8.6.3 Equity of access to career development in secondary schools

Career practitioners had differing views on the accessibility of career development to different groups of young people in schools. Some career practitioners firmly identified groups of young people who are missing out on quality career development. Conversely, others considered career development to be generally accessible to all and potentially even more accessible to disadvantaged groups, based on the perception that resources are specially developed for and directed toward them. These differing views are explored below. It is noted however, that those who considered career development to be accessible to all generally had limited experience in dealing with disadvantaged young people.

Career practitioners said there are a number of groups potentially missing out on quality career development in Australia, including: young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, Indigenous young people, young people from low socio-economic families and young people with a disability. They said these young people, particularly young people with a disability, can also face discrimination when seeking work after finishing their education. One career practitioner working in the VET sector said students from all backgrounds are missing out on quality career development because there are simply not enough career practitioners available to assist.

The majority of career practitioners said young people from non-English speaking backgrounds, including international students and CALD students, can have difficulty accessing career development services because of language barriers, poor literacy and numeracy, and cultural differences.

*The culture is very different. They don't understand the Anglo-Saxon work ethic... Most of the career development program is written with Anglo-Saxon middle class values in mind.*

(Private sector)

*A lot of the materials out there have a presumption that students have a good grasp of English.*

(Catholic secondary school)

Indigenous young people were also seen as facing barriers due to cultural differences, with one practitioner from a Government secondary school saying *'the wider Australian community doesn't understand how Indigenous communities work'* A career practitioner in a Catholic secondary school said more time and resources needs to be dedicated to assisting young Indigenous people. This practitioner said the majority of existing career development programs in schools do not adequately cater to Indigenous young people's needs.

One career practitioner working in a Government secondary school said getting some disadvantaged young people to attend school, let alone participate in career development can be a challenge. There was a view that *'chronic absenteeism'* (used specifically in relation to young people in rural or remote areas and Indigenous young people) disrupts the continuum of learning and undermines young people's development of a work ethic. Some career practitioners said young people from families *'with generations of unemployment'*, can be a particular challenge as they have not had exposure to work and do not appreciate the value of work.

As mentioned above, some career practitioners have different views on the experiences of special needs young people and argued that these groups receive targeted, well-resourced assistance:

*Students at risk, students with a disability, Indigenous students in my experience, have had and are more aware of a lot more career development services than the average student... because they can be targeted in specific ways.*

(University sector)

*People with special needs generally do very well. Resources are pretty huge.*

(Private sector)

It is noted however these practitioners are generally those working outside of schools or in schools with little disadvantage and this may mean they have an incomplete understanding of the experience of marginalised groups. One career practitioner acknowledged this in her comment:

*Less than 1% of the school has a learning disability so I'm not in a good position to answer for all schools, but those students at risk are really well looked after and given every opportunity.*

(Catholic secondary school)

## 8.7 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

Career practitioners have mixed views about career development in tertiary institutions. Like the provision of career development in secondary schools, some practitioners across different sectors said the quality and accessibility of career development in tertiary institutions varies based on the staff providing services and the resources available.

*It just depends on the resources and the people that work there... It's a bit like schools; ad hoc.*

(Government secondary school)

*It depends on the staff there. The problem is the number of students accessing them.*

(Private practice)

*Quality varies. In some institutions it's an important role, in others its not.*

(Independent secondary school)

Some career practitioners said career development in universities and VET institutions is good:

*There are excellent student services in TAFE and it's available before enrolment. It's underfunded and there's often a wait, but generally does well.*

(VET sector)

*I can't speak too much about TAFE, but career services are very accessible in higher education from my experience.*

(University sector)

*Guidance is fairly accessible and good. In the VET sector, TAFE is pretty lucky but a lot of the other providers' don't have that back up.*

(VET sector)

However, one practitioner working in a Government secondary school observed that often TAFE takes a narrow view of career development as encompassing employment only and with most students already enrolled in a course for a specific line of work, do not consider career development to be necessary:

*Some tertiary organisations don't see career development as their role... I'm not sure TAFE sees itself as having a pivotal role because they are often training kids that are in jobs already.*

(VET sector)

The issue of career development being under resourced again emerged with respect to the tertiary sector. There was a view that career practitioners working in universities are often too busy to deal with the number of students and their diverse needs. Some career practitioners said young people in tertiary institutions need to be made more aware of the services that are available.

*It's a matter of students knowing that the services are there and understanding what they can access these services for.*

(University sector)

*Kids don't realise it's there.*

(Catholic secondary school)

One career practitioner suggested:

*Career development should be embedded into every [higher education and VET] course.*

(Private sector)

## 8.8 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

Most career practitioners across all sectors said career development services for young people not in education are lacking. Career practitioners said post-education career development services are 'an ignored area' and young people not in education are 'the group missing out the most'.

Other career practitioners, however, said there are career development services for young people not in education but young people need to be made more aware of them.

*There is quite a lot out there, people just need to be made aware of it.*

(Independent secondary school)

Career practitioners identified private practitioners, the internet, family and friends as possible sources of career development for young people not in education. However, a private practitioner said private practitioners are expensive and are generally only an option for those young people who went to good schools and already received quality career development. Some practitioners said young people considering a tertiary education are able to access career information and advice as part of the enrolment process (eg in TAFE), and some workplaces offer young people the chance to try various roles within the business. Career practitioners from high school were identified as another source of career development for some young people not in education, with some schools having a program for past students.

Career practitioners said young people not in education need 'drop in centres' or opportunities for one on one meetings with a career practitioner. Two practitioners said young people already working and considering changing jobs are most in need of such a service.

*Students interested in further study can go and talk to TAFE or Uni, but just changing jobs is hard.*

(VET sector)

Young people not in education were thought to access the career development sources outlined above in a 'haphazard' way. One career practitioner working in a university said a lot of career development happens 'informally'. Another said schools and other educational institutions should be responsible for ensuring young people leave their institutions knowing how to find the career information that they will need in later life, simply because there are limited career development services available to these students once they leave educational institutions.



## 8.9 GETTING THE RIGHT CAREER DEVELOPMENT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

### 8.9.1 *How do young people want information communicated to them?*

Career practitioners agree that young people in education should be provided with a variety of opportunities to participate in career development and source information. One career practitioner working in a Catholic secondary school said *'it's important to give them choice'*. A combination of methods is thought to be most effective in ensuring young people's career development needs and wants are met.

Career practitioners said young people do not have one preferred method for receiving career advice, adding that preferences vary by student and education levels:

*It's highly dependent on the student, their needs and their preferred learning style.*

(University sector)

*Need to structure things differently according to the year group and the activity, and information needs to be timely and appropriate to the year.*

(Government secondary school)

One on one meetings and small group sessions are highly regarded by a number of career practitioners across education sectors. Small group sessions are considered good for *'stimulating ideas'* while one-on-one meetings are seen as better for *'students who might be embarrassed by talking about their goals in a group'*. A career practitioner working in the university sector said career development *'is about the human connection'*.

One career practitioner said young people prefer to be treated as an individual when receiving advice and assistance.

*Students need structure but they want to be treated as an individual. Schools homogenise students so it's hard to individualise.*

(Private practitioner)

Career practitioners said other effective career development activities in schools include presentations by past students, and visits from universities and TAFEs. Two practitioners, including one from a private practice, noted that students often respond better to advice provided by an outsider than a teacher or a career practitioner, because of an *'us and them mentality'*. Career practitioners also stressed that schools should engage parents in the career development of their children to ensure they are providing accurate information and are involved in their children's decisions. A few practitioners identified methods where they had used parents including targeted pamphlets, one on one meetings and invitations to careers nights.

Electronic resources such as the myfuture website are popular with some career practitioners. However, one practitioner said online resources are sometimes *'difficult to navigate'* and are generally only used by *'proactive kids'*. Some career practitioners admitted to never using online resources when working with young people, for a number of reasons. Some favoured *'the human connection'* in providing career development, while others said some students don't have the computer skills or don't have adequate access to computers and internet facilities.

### 8.9.2 *What are the critical points that information should be provided?*

All career practitioners agree that young people should be given career development advice and assistance in the later years of secondary school *at the very least*.

Career development is seen as particularly important at key transition or decision points in years 10 and 12. Year 10 is seen as important because this is when young people start thinking about subjects for years 11 and 12:

*Years 9 and 10 should focus on skills so students can best pick subjects for year 11.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*It's at this point [year 10] where if they had more information they may make better long term choices.*

(Independent secondary school)

*Year 12 - need to spend a lot of time with the kids looking at options for first year out of school.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*Year 12 - it's a critical point...if you want to make choices about uni you are locked into decisions at certain points*

(VET sector)

Some career practitioners said year 11 is an important year that is neglected by many schools.

*Year 11 is very important and often missed... All [resources are] spent on 10 and 12.*

(Independent secondary school)

*When young people start dropping subjects in year 11 is a critical point. There is a need to educate kids on which subjects you need for which careers.*

(VET sector)

Many practitioners agree that career development should not be left until year 12, and should start earlier in secondary school. One practitioner working in the VET sector said career development should be introduced to young people *'the moment they walk in the door in year 7'*, while another in the University sector said it is important to have career development *'the whole way through'*. Several career practitioners said years 8 and 9 are the best years to first introduce career development concepts in secondary school because:

*It helps them understand the relevance of subjects they choose and what they might want to do later on.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*Its better to do it [career development] beyond critical points as well to encourage forward thinking.*

(University sector)

As noted in section 8.5, career practitioners said basic career development should start in primary school.

Career practitioners generally agree that young people continue to require career development support during the transition from secondary school to higher education and employment. Many said schools could provide better transition support.

*It's not done well.*

(Private practitioner)

*Transition still needs work.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*Variable depending on the school, the state system and on the individual within the system.*

(University sector)

*The sectors are too siloed. There is no transition support.*

(University sector)

Some practitioners said the transition from school to higher education can be particularly challenging due to the difference in the culture and teaching styles in these institutions and were critical of schools for not teaching young people how to find information on their own or be able to adapt to different contexts:

*The transition from secondary school through to a tertiary institution, whether a TAFE or University, is very difficult. There are some students who move into tertiary and fall by the wayside because the difference is so dramatic.*

(Catholic secondary school)

*We do the best we can but we focus too much on the academic rather than the social aspects.*

(Government secondary school)

*A lot of students leave schools without the independent learning skills they need to tackle TAFE or uni. Research shows that students from a state high school do better once they get to uni than independent school students who are very teacher dependent. They lack initiative.*

(VET sector)

The transition from school to employment was generally thought to be less challenging than the transition from school to higher education because many young people already have part-time jobs and have therefore been exposed to the world of work. Work experience and the VET in Schools Program are seen as effective in providing young people with some idea of what to expect in the world of work.

9 Employers



## Key findings:

- Young people have high levels of confidence that are often not commensurate with their ability and experience. One of the biggest challenges for employers is managing young people's expectations.
- Small to medium employers and approximately 50 per cent of large employers think young people are ill-equipped for the workforce and have a poor work ethic. These employers say young people lack 'soft skills' such as initiative, flexibility, communication skills and self-awareness. Small to medium employers say young people lack basic literacy and numeracy.
- Young people generally lack career direction and do not know where they want to be in 3-5 years. They do not stay in the one job for very long. Large employers say the average tenure for young people is between 2-3 years.
- Parents and peers are viewed by employers as the main influences in the career development decisions of young people. The labour market and tax system are also important influencers, particularly in non-metropolitan areas.
- Large employers see themselves as jointly responsible for the career development of young people, whereas small to medium employers do not see themselves as having this responsibility.
- Large employers are more likely than small to medium employers to speak about careers in terms of developing skills and qualifications to achieve certain goals. Small to medium employers are more likely to speak about income when discussing notions of career.
- Some employers, particularly small to medium employers, have a limited understanding of the term 'career development'.
- Small to medium employers say because they have limited resources, career development should be dealt with at an industry level. Industry bodies should seek incentives from government for small to medium employers to employ young people full-time and provide them with career development opportunities.
- Career development discussions between employers and young employees generally take place after the young person has started work. However, large employers say they try to give young employees as much information about the job, including career prospects, during the interview process.
- Quality career development programs generally deliver positive results to young employees and the organisation as a whole. Career development keeps young people engaged and allows them to develop new skills and grow as a person. It also increases job satisfaction and improves retention rates.

Urbis held one-on-one interviews with 8 large employers, including 2 companies that are among the top 10 companies by revenue in Australia. Large employers have between 280 and 85,000 staff in Australia, and are involved in the retail, higher education, banking, hospitality and professional services sectors. Most large employers said less than 30% per cent of their workforce is aged between 17-24 years. However, large employers in the retail and hospitality sectors said 60-75 per cent of their workforce is aged between 17-24 years. Large employers said young employees are employed in a range of entry-level positions, depending on their skills and qualifications. However, young people still studying, or without a higher education, are more likely to be employed in general administration and sales roles. Large employers in the retail and hospitality sectors said when they employ young people, it is generally their first job, whereas employers in the higher education, banking and professional services sectors said they are more likely to employ a young person with prior work experience. Large employers employ young people on a full time, part time and casual basis.

Urbis also held a focus group with eight small to medium employers in Launceston. Small to medium employers have between 2 and 90 employees, and work in the retail, health services, hospitality and trade sectors. Six of the 8 small to medium employers employ young people in entry-level sales and hospitality roles. One small to medium employer employs trade apprentices, and another employs young

people to carry out health assessments. Small to medium employers substantially employ young people. They do so on a casual basis, and offer very few young employees full-time permanent work.

## 9.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Employers generally said 'career' means the '*work that you do*' or '*the field of work that you're in*'. Employers see a career as something long-term, and something you want to do or are interested in. Large employers spoke about careers in terms of developing skills and qualifications to achieve certain goals. While some small to medium employers spoke about careers in this way, the majority did not. Unlike large employers, small to medium employers spoke about income when discussing notions of career. They said a career enables you to earn a good income.

Small to medium employers spoke about career development in terms of training and developing new skills to do the particular job you are employed to do. While large employers agree that career development involves training for the job you are doing, they tend to take a broader view and also see career development as building an employee's broad skill-set so they can remain '*up to date in the industry*' and achieve their career goals.

## 9.2 VIEWS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS

Most employers agree that while young people have high career aspirations, they do not often have a clear idea on their career direction and are, more often than not, ill-equipped for the workforce.

Employers said young people need to have more realistic expectations about work. They said one of their biggest challenges is managing young people's expectations about what sort of work they will do, how quickly they will be promoted, and their remuneration. Some employers said society has created a generation of young people that have high levels of confidence which in a workplace are not always commensurate with their ability and experience.

*...I don't know if they [young employees] are as good as they think they are. I have been involved in research on generation Y and it says we have created young people who have high levels of confidence because in the family environment they have been consulted and given a voice. When I grew up, it was 'be seen and not heard'. It's different now. We invite views and opinions from young people from a much earlier age. They have high career expectations because of society. What they lack though is exposure to the business world. I read a lot about the damage constructive criticism has on young people and this worries me because in our desire to instil confidence in young people, we can shy away from some of the tougher conversations which are perhaps a reality check. The business world is tough and competitive.*

(Large employer)

*You have the feeling they have the attitude that they should be running the place in three weeks.*

(Small to medium employer)

*...the biggest concern is their expectations about what a job will offer them and how quickly they will climb the management ladder.*

(Large employer)

*Young people are unrealistic...they have stars in their eyes about what work is.*

(Small to medium employer)

*...the older young people, those aged 19 and in their early 20s tend to be cocky, they have an over-inflated confidence.....but they don't have the experience.*

(Large employer)

It is clear the employers interviewed have different expectations about what young people will be able to do in the workplace. Some employers expect to train young people *'from scratch'*, and others expect young people to enter the workplace with more advanced knowledge and skills. Notwithstanding these different expectations, the prevalent view among small to medium employers and half of the large employers is that young people are ill-equipped for the world of work.

Many employers think young people need to develop better 'soft skills', such as initiative, flexibility and communication skills. They also need greater self-awareness and an ability to understand their strengths and weaknesses. Some large employers said the absence of such skills sometimes only becomes evident when young people start working because they are so confident that they are able to *'say all the right things'* and *'sell themselves'* during the interview process. However, others said the absence of such skills is evident from the application stage.

*I see young people as deteriorating in preparedness. They don't understand what work is about and what is required of them when going for an interview. They have limited knowledge around the requirement to prepare a resume. Often they don't even attempt to prepare one. It is not until we call them up and say 'you have applied for this job but you haven't given us a resume' that they go 'oh ok' and we get the information we need.....and they turn up to interview in really casual gear, like thongs and shorts. We don't need them to wear a suit but we do expect them to have put some effort into their appearance. They should be presentable...if they haven't put in any effort, it really signals a 'who cares' attitude.*

(Large employer)

While many employers are critical of young people's 'soft skills', a smaller number are also critical of their 'hard skills'. As an example, one large employer said young people have poor IT skills despite common assumptions to the contrary.

*If they [young people] have been to uni or even school, it would be common to assume they are therefore computer literate. However, they don't know how to use programs like excel and they even struggle with some email systems and more complex telephone systems.*

(Large employer)

Small to medium employers think young people lack basic literacy and numeracy, and they blame the education system for this. Small to medium employers see the problem as so bad that some are now automating as many functions as possible so they do not have to rely on the literacy and numeracy of young people. Large employers did not identify young people's literacy and numeracy levels as a key problem. This may be because literacy and numeracy levels vary across the country, including across metropolitan, regional and remote areas, or it may be because large employers see other deficiencies in young people, such as attitudinal deficiencies, as bigger issues.

*there are big gaps in education.....there is really poor literacy and numeracy.*

(Small to medium employer)

*In a number of hospitality jobs, kids have to write things and they can't write legibly and can't spell.*

(Small to medium employer)

While many employers said young employees have unrealistic expectations and are ill-equipped for the workplace, four large employers thought young people have unrealistic expectations but are well-equipped or *'pretty well-equipped'* for the workplace.

*They are reasonably well-equipped but their expectations are slightly out with what happens in reality. The majority are reliable, punctual and follow instructions. They definitely have IT skills and have communication skills.*

(Large employer)

*They are well-equipped...their communication and IT skills are good. Their core skills are good. If we have any difficulty, it is in managing expectations.*

(Large employer)

The majority of employers think young people generally lack a good work ethic, an attribute they see as critical for a fulfilling career. Some said young people think they can 'pick and choose' what work they will do and what hours they will work (if they are casual employees). Two large employers said some young people spend too much time focusing on their social lives when they should be focusing on work.

*There is a real mix here. Some [young people] have good business sense – they understand you have to get results for the business, you have to be productive, you have to deliver what is expected of you. But there are some, and they seem to be increasing in proportion who focus on the social aspects of work, but are not focused on 'I need to get this done or my boss is going to be disappointed in me'. They just have a 'who cares' attitude.*

(Large employer)

*...generally speaking, young people are ill-prepared for the world of work and need to learn from scratch. This is reflected in their work ethic. They place greater emphasis on their private life and are less likely to engage in the workplace. While it varies from young person to young person, it is difficult to get employees to be more committed to the job when they are younger or the earlier they are in their careers.*

(Large employer)

A small number of employers said culture and family values play a role in a young person's work ethic. If young people come from a family that does not value education or work then they will be less inclined to push themselves in the workplace. Some employers said young people from certain ethnic backgrounds, such as Asian backgrounds, tend to be more focused on work and education.

Small to medium employers said it is rare to meet a young person and think 'this kid has got it' – 'it' being a work ethic, reliability, willingness to learn, and responsible behaviour. One small to medium employer, who offers trade apprenticeships and a permanent career path to young people in a town with seemingly few permanent positions, said it is very difficult to get a pool of good young people to choose from. Small to medium employers said they highly value young people who have worked for McDonalds, KFC, Woolworths or Coles because they said these are 'hard employers' that train young people well and seek to instil a work ethic in them. Employers said they are less inclined to support the career development of young employees if they cannot demonstrate a good work ethic.

Employers think the lack of work ethic in young people is related to the fact that most, but not all, have no clear career direction and do not stay in one job for very long. Some large employers said they ask young people in interviews where they expect to be in 3 to 5 years, and while some young people know where they want to go, a large number do not. Large employers said the average tenure for young people is between 2-3 years. For small to medium employers, the average tenure is often less because young people are employed on a casual basis, and will change jobs depending on where they can get more or better hours. There is a view that young people see themselves as having choices, and are prepared to exercise those choices. One large employer said the global financial crisis had got some young people thinking about job security, but when the worst of the crisis was over young people quickly developed the confidence to move to different jobs again.

Employers said young people change jobs for a number of reasons. Some young people work in retail, hospitality and general administration roles while studying, and move on to do something different when they obtain a qualification. Other young people change jobs because they do not like the industry they are in and make a strategic choice to move into another industry. Many young people, however, change jobs because they do not know what they want to do. Employers said career development for young people needs to be a 'continuing thing' and should not only be available to young people in educational structures. One large employer provides young employees with a career *toolkit* which they can use to identify their interests, strengths and weaknesses. However, career development tools which focus on interests and values are very much the exception rather than the rule.



*They have no clear idea on what they want to do. It's common to ask them in interviews what they want to do in 3-5 years, most of the time they don't know or aren't set on a goal.*

(Large employer)

*Most people have no idea what they want to do.....some do but the majority don't.*

(Large employer)

*The tenure for young people in the business is lowest for all demographics. The average tenure would be 2 years.*

(Large employer)

*...when you're young and haven't thought much about your career, you will chop and change.*

While the majority of employers said young people lack career direction, there is a view that young people with a qualification are more inclined to focus on their careers and set short and long term goals.

*Professional people have generally invested a lot in their career and have some sense of where they see their career going and want to know what an employer can offer them.*

(Large employer)

### 9.3 WHO IS RESPONSIBLE FOR CAREER DEVELOPMENT?

Employers agree that responsibility for the career development of young people is shared by families, schools, universities and TAFEs, and young people themselves. Some large employers said this responsibility increasingly shifts to young people as they get older. A key difference between large and small to medium employers is that large employers see themselves as jointly responsible for career development whereas most small to medium employers do not. Small to medium employers offer career development opportunities, but generally do not see themselves as *responsible* because they have limited resources and capacity.

Most employers are not aware of what career development is offered in schools. When interviewed by Urbis, several employers reflected on their own poor career development experiences at school and assumed young people today have similar experiences. Employers said schools have an important role to play in teaching students the general life skills they will need to manage their careers, such as resilience, time management, reliability and communication skills.

Large employers said universities and TAFEs should be connecting young people with traineeships and graduate job opportunities, and facilitating introductions to industry. Universities and TAFEs also need to educate young people about the career paths that are best suited to their interests and levels of achievement. There is a view among some employers that TAFEs do career development better than universities because they have a more practical focus and closer links with industry.

Large employers said universities and TAFEs should be responsible for making graduates more job ready by managing their expectations. Some large employers said it is often the highly educated young people that have the most unrealistic expectations.

*People who have a degree have better communication skills and research skills, but there is a gap in expectations and perhaps higher education could do more to make people job ready by managing expectations. But academics aren't the right people to do this. It's hard because it's not the academic's role. There is a gap and I don't know how well universities meet the gap.*

(Large employer)

As noted above, large employers generally see themselves as jointly responsible for the career development of young people. Large employers want their employees to grow and improve, and accept

that they have a responsibility to facilitate this. Large employers stressed, however, that career development needs to be to the benefit of *both* the employer and the employee.

There is a general view that the quality of career development provided by large employers is '*patchy*'. Some large employers have structured graduate programs with extensive training and development, and other large employers offer more basic mentoring services. One large employer said bigger and more prestigious companies are more likely to have advanced career development programs, because they see the size and quality of their program as indicative of the success of the company.

Large employers generally agree that they have a responsibility to give young people as much information about the job before they start the job, including information on career prospects. They said they normally do this during the interview process. Large employers also agree that they have a responsibility to work with young people to ascertain their interests, goals, strengths and weaknesses and, where possible, to facilitate opportunities to meet each young employee's career development needs. Large employees see themselves as responsible for developing both 'hard' and 'soft' skills of young employees.

As noted above, small to medium employers generally do not see themselves as responsible for the career development of young people, despite the fact that some of them provide career development opportunities to young people. Large employers have some sympathy for small to medium employers in this regard, and said in reality small to medium employers cannot be responsible because many of them simply do not have the resources to take on the role.

*...it's really hard, especially for small businesses that really don't have the capabilities to provide new skills to employers.*

(Large employer)

*Smaller workplaces don't always have the resources to assist young employees. The bigger the organisation, the more chance there are specialists that can provide necessary advice and guidance.*

(Large employer)

*Big employers generally provide good career development to employees. They have a dedicated HR system and have structures in place. Small employers struggle because they have tighter margins and systems for career development.*

(Large employer)

#### 9.4 INFLUENCES IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE

Employers generally said parents and families are the main influence in the career development decisions of young people. Some employers said if parents are aspirational, then their children are likely to be more aspirational. One large employer, for example, who had worked in a law firm said she worked with many young lawyers who had followed in their parent's footsteps. On the other hand, if young people have parents who do not value education and work, they are less likely to show initiative and push themselves in the workplace. Employers agree that parents play a key role in instilling in their children key life skills and a good work ethic.

Several large employers said the influence of parents is stronger in certain cultural groups. Parents from some cultures have high expectations for their children and push them to succeed in the workplace. Parents from other cultures have lower expectations, particularly with respect to female children.

*Different ethnic groups have different expectations and pressures...Asian cultures have really high expectations...other cultures say the role of a female is to have kids.*

(Large employer)

*One of my team members is from an Asian family and she is very influenced by what her family wants her to achieve. Career progression is important to her and her family. This is typical of the Asian community. If you compare her to an Anglo person of the same age, there is not the same pressure.*

(Large employer)

One large employer said his company employs many young people under the age of 18, and the parents of these children have a huge influence because they have a right to make decisions for their children. This employer engages parents in all aspects of the young person's employment, including recruitment, training and development, and any disciplinary action. This employer said parents of his young employees generally have a positive influence on their children's work because the company engages and communicates effectively with them.

Small to medium employers are critical of parents. They said parents give their children too much. Consequently, their children do not understand the value of things and think *'they don't need to work for anything'*.

Peers also appear to influence the career decisions of young people. Employers said young people often find out about career options and job opportunities through their friends. Small to medium employers said retail work has a bad reputation among young people in Launceston. Consequently, these young people are more likely to look for work in hospitality (such as bar work) rather than retail.

As noted above, few employers are aware of any career development offered in schools. As such, employers generally said they do not think schools have a big influence in the career decisions of young people. One employer said teachers are influential when it comes to part-time work. This employer said teachers have their own ideas about youth employment and employers in the market *'are not scared to give their views'*. Approximately 75 per cent of this employer's workforce is aged between 17-24 years. This employer said his company has partnered with some schools in the Hills District in Sydney to create and promote job opportunities for school students. However, he said his company could do more with schools, universities and TAFEs to promote part-time work, and clarify the expectations the company has of its young employees.

While employers generally think parents and peers influence the career decisions of young people, small to medium employers said external factors such as the structure of the labour market and the tax system are very influential. The majority, but not all, of small to medium employers in Launceston have a casualised workforce. One small to medium employer has 52 employees and 48 are employed on a casual basis. Small to medium employers said young people are working more than one casual job to make up a full-time working week. If a casual employer can only give a young person a small number of hours work a week, and the job is considered the young person's second job for taxation purposes, the young person often leaves the job. This is because second jobs are taxed at a rate of 50%, and young people think it is not financially worthwhile for them to work the small number of hours they are offered.

The structure of the labour market and the tax system were not raised by large employers as influences in the career decision of young people. This could be because large employers are based in major cities where more full-time permanent jobs are available. The small to medium employers are based in a regional town where job opportunities are more limited.

## 9.5 SUPPORTING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE

All employers said they support the career development of their young employees, but it is clear they do this to varying degrees. Large employers, for the most part, provide better career development opportunities, because they are more committed to the idea of career development and are better resourced.

Most large employers have a performance management system, which requires a periodic review of staff performance and the identification of training and development needs. Some large employers address these needs through in-house training and some send staff to external training providers. Most large employers also have a formal or informal mentoring program for young people, and encourage supervisors to give young people regular feedback on their work.

One large employer offers young people one on one interviews with an internal career development manager, and also provides young people with a career development tool kit. This career development, however, appears to be the exception rather than the rule.

*We have a career development toolkit. It's an assessment of what is important to you and what you like and value. It's about 40 pages long. Some of it is quite confronting because you really need to look inside yourself. This is a really useful tool for people what don't know where they want to go....it's a good start to look at what you are like and are good at.*

(Large employer)

Another large employer provides young people with eLearning training modules. This employer said the company hopes to have these training modules available through iPhones shortly.

*It works well with young people. They love anything eLearning. We are moving away from books and written material.*

(Large employer)

Two large employers said they have programs in place to identify young people with high potential. One of these employers offers high performers a traineeship, and the other offers individualised and intensive training courses. Approximately half of large employers said their training seeks to develop general competencies or life skills in young people. The other half said their training focuses on the skills young people need to do their jobs, but that this training often touches on or contributes to the development of general life skills.

All small to medium employers said they provide career development to young people, although some appear to have a fairly limited understanding of what career development is. Although small to medium employers highly value young people who have work experience in a supermarket or fast food chain, they said when they employ young people they look for a good attitude and a strong work ethic, because they assume they will need to train them 'from scratch'.

However, when probed, it became evident that only 2 of the 8 small to medium employers provide what would generally be considered quality career development. One of these small to medium employers has a family owned high-end carpentry business. He does not like to take young people with carpentry experience in case they have picked up 'bad habits'. His preference is to provide young people with extensive training and set them up for a long-term career with the business. The other of these small to medium employers undertakes health assessments. She said most employees in this industry are aged in their 50s and, to balance this, she has had to actively recruit young people and provide them with extensive and specialised training.

*We have got to get young people in and we have to invest in them and we have to train them and pay them well. You reap what you sow in this. If you show them a good attitude, you will get it back in spades.*

(Small to medium employer)

These two small to medium employers were, however, very much the exception. Most small to medium employers provide very limited career development to young people. One small to medium employer said his career development involves giving young people an induction manual, and telling them to read it in their own time so that he can test them on it at work.

The drivers for providing career development differ depending on the employer. The main drivers appear to be (1) a desire to see young people grow and develop knowledge and skills for their own benefit and for the benefit of the business and (2) necessity – because the young person does not have the skills for the job.

Most small to medium employers fall into the second category. In fact, one small to medium employer said the main driver for his training programs is the protection of expensive equipment. He makes sure young people are trained in how to use the equipment so that they do not damage it. Some small to medium employers question the value of providing career development to young people because they

generally lack loyalty, are not committed and have a short tenure. Some small to medium employers see it as a 'waste'.

While small to medium employers' lack of commitment to career development can be attributed to their views on young people, it can also be partly attributed to the labour market, lack of financial and human resources, and lack of understanding of career development. As explained under section 9.2, young people in Launceston often work more than one casual job to make up a full-time working week. If their second employer can only give them a small number of hours work each week, they will often leave their second job because it is taxed at 50% and it is not financially worthwhile for them to keep it. Small to medium employers see this as a lack of loyalty and another reason why they should not provide career development to young people. Small to medium employers expect their casual staff to be available for work at different hours and at short notice. The reality, however, is that the labour market makes it difficult for young people to meet these expectations.

One small to medium employer said another barrier to career development of young people is the fact that the Government does not recognise Australia has a '24/7 economy'. This small to medium employer used to own a bakery but closed it when Work Choices was abolished. He said he could not afford to pay his staff penalty rates, let alone provide them with career development.

Some small to medium employers said because they have limited resources, career development should be dealt with at an industry level. These small to medium employers said industry groups, such as those representing the hospitality and retail industries, need 'to sell their sizzle' to government. They need to argue that their industries are major contributors to the economy, and seek incentives to employ young people full-time and provide them with career development.

Some large employers agree that small to medium employers need incentives to provide better career development to their young employees. These large employers said 'how to guides' backed up by career development advisers would probably be most beneficial.

*Small to medium business could really do with some assistance such as simple 'how to' tools that they could easily access. They aren't cumbersome and are easy to implement...and behind this some advisory people to give them advice on how to put these [career development] systems in place.*

(Large employer)

*Small business toolkits would be helpful. I am not sure that grants are the answer. A tool kit that gives them basic frameworks would be useful...it would need to be practical because a lot of small business don't have HR functions and so owners are not trained and don't know how to have career development discussions with the young people. But if there was a toolkit with, for example, questionnaires telling them how to ask the right question - that would be helpful.*

(Large employer)

Some large employers said even though they have greater capacity to provide career development to young employees, government incentives such as mentoring programs or financial assistance would enable them to provide *better* career development to young people.

All employers said work experience is extremely valuable to young people because it introduces them to the world of work, gives them hands-on practical experience, and lets them 'turn theory into practice'. All large employers said they offer work experience and that students generally respond well to it. However, one large employer said her workplace now only takes work experience students on a 'limited basis'. This employer said following the global financial crisis, people are now doing more with less resources, and it is a 'big ask' to expect staff to take on a work experience student. Several large employers said they initially give their work experience students administrative tasks, but give them more substantive work or allow them to shadow someone *if* they show an interest and have capacity. One large employer said her workplace actively tries to give work experience students a mix of interesting work:

*We don't want to give them filing for 5 days as they are not going to get anything out of that.*

(Large employer)

While small to medium employers all agreed work experience is very valuable, only a handful of small to medium employers actually take on work experience students. One small to medium employer said he only takes work experience students if he can interview them first. This employer said schools do not like this and prefer to just 'dump' students on him, but he will not allow it because his work experience students have to deal with the public. Another small to medium employer said he will only take work experience students if they can show they have a genuine interest in the work.

Large employers and the two small to medium employers that provide better career development all agree that career development delivers positive results to the individual employee and the organisation as a whole. It keeps young people engaged and allows them to grow and develop. It also makes young people better equipped to do their job, which gives them greater job satisfaction and improves retention rates. The two small to medium employers that provide quality career development are also less negative about young employees when compared to small to medium employers that do not provide quality career development.

*Good career development keeps young people engaged. Happy employees equals happy customers which equals more money....so it comes back to the bottom line.*

(Large employer)

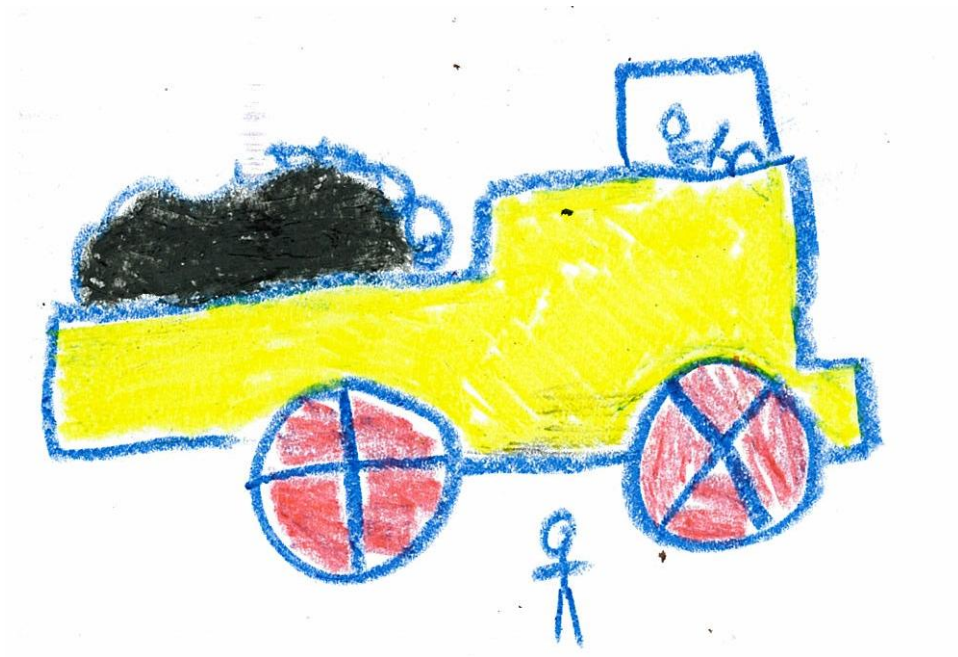
*Career development delivers more self-confidence and a greater feeling of self-worth.*

(Large employer)

*If people feel they can learn and develop in an organisation, they may be more likely to stay.*

(Large employer)

## 10 Stakeholders



### Key findings:

- The biggest gap in career development in Australia is the lack of a national strategy, which has led to 'patchy' career development across and within states and territories and also within education sectors.
- While some schools have outstanding career development programs, most are not engaging in effective practice when it comes to career development. This is often due to a lack of resources, the influence and commitment of principals, the quality of staff delivering career development in schools, and poor data collection and evaluation programs.
- Marginalised and special needs groups need flexible work and study options. They also often need individualised advice, early intervention and case management.
- Some states/territories are of the view that a Certificate IV in career development is a sufficient qualification for career practitioners providing career development in schools. This view is not shared by all stakeholders and is not reflected in CICA's *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners* which will come into effect in 2012.

Urbis interviewed 23 stakeholders identified by DEEWR and Urbis. Stakeholders had varying degrees of responsibility for career development and worked for the following:

- State and territory government departments (or bodies)
- school associations
- higher education or VET associations
- career industry associations
- not for profit organisations.

Stakeholder interviews were held in the preliminary stages of our research in order to:

- inform our thinking and approach to career development
- identify and inform themes and issues to pursue as part of this project and incorporate into research instruments
- give stakeholders an opportunity to contribute their views.

Element 1 of the NCDS project involves an evaluation of existing Australian Government state and territory career development initiatives, and some of the stakeholders we consulted for Element 2 have already provided input to Element 1. Element 2 stakeholders were asked about notions of career and career development, the needs and wants of particular cohorts of young people, and the career development system in Australia more generally. Stakeholders were also asked to identify useful published and unpublished research on career development, as well as issues Urbis should raise during focus group sessions with young people, parents, teachers and employers. This chapter identifies the key themes and issues that emerged during stakeholder interviews

## 10.1 NOTIONS OF CAREER AND CAREER DEVELOPMENT

The prevalent view among participants is that 'career' means '*your life*' or '*your life journey*', and that 'career development' means '*lifelong learning*'. Participants agree that notions of career and career development have changed. Baby boomers do not think about careers the way young people do currently. Unlike the majority of their parents, young people are likely to have several different careers over the course of their lives. Career development is therefore about equipping young people with the knowledge and skills to manage the transitions they will encounter during their lives. Career development needs to give young people the ability to identify their interests, strengths and weaknesses, and the many opportunities available to them.



*...your career is the overarching umbrella for everything you do because it's essentially about the person, it's about who you are.*

(Government department)

There is a view among participants that the terminology 'career development' is appropriate because it implies developing skills so young people can manage their own careers. The term 'career guidance' is seen as being outdated because it implies a more paternalistic approach to career development, or a notion that young people will be guided into something as opposed to developing skills to guide themselves.

## 10.2 NATIONAL STRATEGY ON CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Participants said the lack of a national strategy is the biggest gap in career development in Australia. While state and territory participants refer to the same reference materials, including the Australian Blueprint for Career Development (ABCD)<sup>12</sup>, delivery of career development in Australia varies widely across and within states and territories, and also within education sectors (Government, Independent, Catholic). Some participants said a lack of coordination between the Commonwealth and state/territory governments leads to duplication and gaps.

Participants said there needs to be a national strategy on career development which takes into account the diverse career development needs of young people. As an example, one participant said some young people know what they want to do, others have no idea and others simply do not know or care. Any national strategy needs to cater to these three groups of young people.

*Every state delivers career development differently....there is a need for national consistency.*

(Career industry association)

*A huge weakness is the lack of a national strategy.....but we are moving in the right direction, there is now more of a willingness to work together.*

(VET association)

*State and territories have their own objectives and then the Commonwealth has its own objectives. There is some duplication of services between the Commonwealth and the states.*

(Government department)

*The difficulty is that every state has a different approach even though they all use the same source documents and reference materials ...we would like to see career development built into the new curriculum. It needs to be specific about what to do in the early years, the middle years etc. Career development should be built into the way teachers deliver material.*

(Government department)

## 10.3 VIEWS ON YOUNG PEOPLE'S CAREER ASPIRATIONS AND NEEDS

Participants said the career development needs and wants of young people vary depending on their age, whether they are in education, and whether they are from a marginalised or special needs group.

### 10.3.1 Primary school

The prevalent view among participants is that young people in primary school should be exposed to the world of work. They need to understand why they have to work and the broad range of jobs available to them. Participants said it is important for primary schools to broaden the horizons of students and, in

---

<sup>12</sup> MCEECDYA, 2010 *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, prepared by Miles Morgan Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Available at: <http://www.blueprint.edu.au/>

doing so, combat gender stereotypes about what work 'boys' do and what work 'girls' do. Participants agree that primary school children enjoy hands-on experience, and said visits by students to workplaces in the local community, or visits to the school by people engaged in different careers, are effective ways to teach young people about different jobs.

Participants also agree that primary schools have a role to play in developing the competencies outlined in the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development (ABCD)*. Primary school is seen as an important time for young people to start learning life skills such as time management, self-awareness, resilience and flexibility.

The majority of participants said career development should be incorporated into the curriculum in primary school. They said this is in fact already happening in some schools, where career education and visits to local workplaces are being incorporated into social science (or the state/territory based equivalent).

*We want to give young people a sense of excitement about the future and open their eyes to a variety of work, people and lifestyle issues.*

(Career industry association)

*We need to help them develop broad self-awareness and general competencies. We also need to introduce kids to a range of occupations.*

(Government department)

*They need to have ideas opened up to them...they need to explore options.*

(Government department)

*They need a broad brush understanding of work.....what employment is and the value of work...this should be done in the HSIE [Human Society and its Environment] curriculum.*

(School association)

While the majority of participants have similar views on career development in primary schools, one participant from a school association had a different view. This participant stressed that while career development is important, it should not be a 'major component' of the primary school curriculum saying:

*...the core business of primary schools is literacy, numeracy and social science.*

(School association)

### 10.3.2 Secondary school

Participants said the needs of secondary school students differ depending on what year they are in. Most participants said students in years 7-9 need to continue to learn about the world of work, and develop general competencies and life skills. One participant from a not-for-profit organisation said students start looking for part time work from year 8, so schools could assist students from year 8 with practical things like resume writing and interview techniques. Part-time work is seen by government and non-government participants as important because it gives young people hands-on work experience and helps them to develop the general competencies they will need to manage their careers.

Participants said students in years 10-12 have greater career development needs. Firstly, they need to understand what their interests, strengths and weaknesses are. Secondly, they need information about their options and help navigating this information from a qualified career practitioner with an understanding of industry. Many participants said one on one interviews with a career practitioner are very important. Students need to be able to 'tell their story' to someone, and obtain individualised advice on the various pathways available to take them where they want to go. Several participants from government departments said students in years 10-11 need to document their career goals and the way they plan to achieve those goals in a pathway plan or career action plan. In some states/territories,

secondary school students are required to prepare such plans to be eligible for a secondary school certificate (or state/territory equivalent).

*They need help exploring the gamut of information out there. Some people get too much information and others don't get enough. They need to explore and understand the information and work through the various options. They need one on one interviews with career practitioners, particularly at the end of year 10 and years 11-12.*

(Government department)

*...secondary students need to document and articulate a pathway plan.*

(Government department)

*...a lot of kids don't know what they want to do...schools need to work on transition planning and providing students with options.*

(Government department)

The prevalent view among participants is that work experience is extremely valuable to secondary school students. Like part-time and casual work, work experience introduces students to the world of work, and allows them to explore the sectors and industries they are interested in. One participant from a school association said years 9-10 is the best time for work experience, as this was when students are thinking about subject choices, and are linking subjects to careers.

*...students need work experience around years 9-10 when they are trying to choose subjects for years 11 and 12 and are thinking about uni and apprenticeships. The opportunity is invaluable ... it may not be the career they choose to pursue but it enables them to work with people, use equipment and develop PR [public relations] and customer relations skills. It's an important aspect for career path development.*

(School association)

Participants also feel that VET in Schools is a valuable program. It is practical and an effective way of connecting students with the workforce. It gives students the opportunity to work in a particular area and see if they like it, and helps them build relationships with employers.

### 10.3.3 Higher Education and the VET sector

Participants had a more limited knowledge of career development in the higher education and VET sector, because many of them were largely engaged with the school system. Notwithstanding this, participants said students in higher education and VET also need access to professional career practitioners that have an understanding of, and access to, industry. One participant from a school association said this is important because careers are emerging and disappearing very quickly. Participants said career practitioners in the university and VET system need to work with students at risk of dropping out due to poor course choices. They cannot just assume that these young people 'have the luxury of family to help them out'.

Participants said university and VET students want access to employers so they can build contacts and employability skills. One participant from a school association said these students are more mature than they were at school, and want to engage in internships and other types of integrated learning. As with school students, participants said university and VET students need to be able to reflect on themselves and understand their own interests and values.

### 10.3.4 Potentially disadvantaged or special needs young people

Participants were asked to specifically comment on the needs and wants of the particular cohorts of young people identified by DEEWR as possibly having more or different career development needs. These cohorts included:

- young people at risk
- Indigenous young people
- CALD young people
- young people with a disability
- humanitarian refugees
- young people with caring responsibilities
- young people in regional, rural or remote locations.

Participants agree that, generally speaking, when dealing with these cohorts of young people *flexibility* is the key. These groups need flexible learning and work options. They also often need more individualised advice, early intervention and case management. Effective case management requires a holistic approach, including cooperation and communication between government agencies. Several participants said the latter is not done as well as it could be.

### *At risk young people*

Most participants agree that at risk young people are one of the most vulnerable cohorts, and have the greatest needs. They are often difficult to identify, reach and engage, and many of them have a range of social and mental health issues that need to be addressed before their career development needs and wants can be addressed.

Participants agree it is essential to try and keep at risk young people in school, so they will at least be engaged in a formal structure and can access career and personal counselling. Schools need to provide more individualised advice and possibly mentoring services to these young people.

*...we need to try and keep these kids at school....if they don't finish school, they are more likely to become disengaged and can remain this way for many years.*

(Not-for-profit participant)

At risk youth who are not in education, because they have either left or finished school, are seen as a 'hard core challenge'. When discussing their career development needs, participants focused primarily on employability and transition skills. They said they need to be engaged and given information and advice on opportunities and pathways available to them. They also need practical advice on how to behave in a workplace. Some participants identified government employment agencies and non-government organisations (NGOs) as best placed to provide this advice but said, to be effective, these organisations need to work with at risk young people to identify their values and interests, and set short and long term goals. These organisations also need to work effectively with each other and coordinate their activities.

One participant from a career industry association said employers need to be more willing to take at risk young people on and give them a chance.

*They have very intense needs....it's very difficult to engage with these kids. Finding them is tough and engaging with them is tougher.*

(VET association)

*They need a higher level of individualised support so they can figure out how to overcome their own barriers.*

(Government department)

*The causes of disengagement need to be looked at first. When this is sorted out, we need to expose them to the world of work, gain their trust, teach them practical things like how to behave in a workplace...we need to engage them so they understand what they like and dislike, can set goals and can figure out how to get there.*

(Government department)

*Employers need to take them under their wing and help them to succeed. It's incredibly worrying that many young people don't have access to this.*

(Career industry association)

### *Indigenous Young People*

Participants said Indigenous young people cannot be viewed as a homogenous group, because on the issue of careers and career development, there is a big variation between Indigenous young people in urban areas, and those in regional, rural and remote areas. Participants largely commented on the needs of Indigenous young people in regional, rural and remote areas because they were seen as having greater needs.

Some participants from states/territories with high Indigenous populations said '*relationship-building*' is essential when providing career development support to Indigenous young people in rural and remote locations. These young people generally do not like to speak on the phone, do not have access to the internet and are shy when speaking to strangers. They need to be engaged one on one by someone they trust. They also need career advice which is culturally sensitive, and recognizes the challenges they face in moving away from their community for work or study (eg financial pressure).

Participants said an Indigenous young person's family and community need to be consulted in the provision of career advice. One participant from a government department said Indigenous young people living in rural and remote areas often face '*two world views*', and queried whether community elders can be better engaged to help Indigenous young people '*marry the two worlds*'.

One participant from a not-for-profit organisation said Indigenous young people are becoming disengaged at transition points when their mentors, or people responsible for providing them with advice and information, change. This participant said more should be done to maintain successful mentoring relationships so that Indigenous young people do not '*fall through the cracks*' at transition points.

Two participants were critical of the whole career development framework, which they said does not cater to the Indigenous community. One of these participants said there are very few people in Australia that have the training and expertise to provide career development to Indigenous young people, especially those in rural and remote areas.

*...mainstream systems don't meet the needs of Indigenous kids where they are at – it doesn't mean anything to them.'*

(Career industry association)

*...young people and their families from cultures grounded in community, spirituality and family are challenged by the assumptions that underlie many career education programs. This includes children from Aboriginal communities.*

(Government department)

### *CALD Young People*

Participants said a key barrier in the career development of CALD young people is the expectation of parents. For some ethnic groups, these expectations are high and for other groups, expectations are low. In both cases, however, there is a disconnect between the career development options being presented to CALD children at schools and those being presented at home. Several participants said schools need to better understand various cultural perspectives, and engage more closely with CALD parents and local communities on the career development of their children.

### *Young People with a Disability*

When asked about the career development needs of young people with a disability, participants focused on the barriers to these young people having a career. They said the biggest barrier is access. Young people with a disability need better access to industry, work placements and public transport. Another barrier is the attitudes and assumptions made by schools and employers about young people with a disability. If schools believe in the young person's ability then they may provide good career advice. However, the reality is many schools do not have high expectations for young people with a disability, and consequently many young people with a disability are not ending up where they want to be.

### *Refugees*

Participants said many refugee young people in Australia came from very deprived backgrounds. They and their parents have often had no exposure to the world of work, have limited literacy and numeracy, and social and emotional issues. Government agencies, NGOs and schools need to understand where refugees are coming from, and build refugees' understanding of work and the labour market in Australia in a culturally sensitive way. One participant from a government department said workplace learning is invaluable for refugees because it exposes them to an environment they often know nothing about.

*They often have social and emotional issues, often have different concepts of what work is compared to mainstream Australians...ability to integrate and make a start can be difficult. Community mentors are very important in this regard.*

(Career industry association)

Several participants said gender and cultural issues need to be considered in the career development of refugees. One participant from a school association said many young Afghan women, for example, have fled extreme trauma, have never been to school and have no expectation of having a career – *'their minds are in another place'*.

### *Young people with caring responsibilities*

Few participants were able to comment on the career development needs and wants of young people with caring responsibilities. Those that did comment said young carers are often very isolated, and are difficult to locate and reach. One participant from a not-for-profit organisation said internet based resources are helpful for this cohort, but are not enough. Young carers need *early* one on one support. Otherwise, there is a risk they will delay their entry into higher education and/or the workforce which will erode confidence and make the transition more difficult. Financial assistance and adequate home help are seen as key barriers to the career development of this group.

*...in the south of Melbourne there is an incredibly high number of young carers that are falling under the radar because they need to help their parents. Getting to these people is an enormous challenge.*

(Not-for-profit organisation)

### *Young people in regional, rural or remote locations*

Participants said young people in regional, rural and remote locations need better access to careers advice and work opportunities. However, geographic isolation makes this very difficult. A large number of students in this cohort go to small schools that provide limited subject choices and opportunities for work placements. They are also less likely to have access to someone who can provide quality careers advice. Dissemination of such advice online is not necessarily the answer, because these young people do not always have internet access. Young people in this group who want to attend university generally have to move to another place which is expensive and often not a financially viable option.

## 10.4 INFLUENCES IN CAREER DEVELOPMENT

Participants agree that parents are generally the biggest influence in the career development of their children.

*...parents are a key factor in most of what children think and believe.*

(School association)

*...parents are often the primary movers and shakers.*

(Government department)

*...there is lots of data to suggest that parents are the most significant guidance counsellors.*

(VET association)

*...parents play a primary role – they are the first educators for their children.*

(School association)

Participants said while most parents want the best for their children, they are not always well-equipped to provide the career development support their children need. Some parents who, for example, have never worked do not understand the concept of career development and the options and pathways available to their children. One participant from a school association based in a regional area said in low SES areas, some parents encourage their children to leave apprenticeships and take a full time job at the local supermarket because the pay is better. These parents are not able to see the pathway and the longer term benefit of training. On the other end of the spectrum are 'pushy parents' who push their children into careers that their children either do not like or are ill-suited to. Participants said schools have an important role to play in mitigating advice received by parents, and introducing young people to the options available to them.

Participants agree that schools need to better engage parents on career development, and need to do this early. Two participants, one from a government department and another from a school association, said parents should be engaged as early as primary school. Schools need to identify the particular needs of parents and cater for these needs. Some parents, for example, need information about the labour market, career options and pathway programs, while others need more basic advice on how to have a discussion on career development with their children. Schools need to be particularly aware of cultural issues, and the fact that in some cultures parents consider their children's career decisions to be a group or family decision rather than an individual choice. Participants said careers advice should be available to parents through a range of sources including one on one conversations with a career practitioner, online material and school magazines/newsletters.

While participants saw parents as the main influence in the career development of young people, some participants said peers, the broader community and the mass media were also important influences.

## 10.5 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN SCHOOLS

Participants said career development in schools, particularly secondary schools, is '*patchy*' or '*hit and miss*'. It is inconsistent across and within states and territories, and also within different education sectors (Government, Independent and Catholic). Some schools are committed to career development and do a '*fantastic job*', whereas other schools see career development as an '*add-on*' and not a priority.

Several participants said career development works best in schools that embed career development into the curriculum and have a separate career counselling program. The latter is most effective when it is implemented by a *team* of trained people, and caters to the individual needs of students and parents through the provision of advice in a range of different formats (eg. one on one interviews, online material, interactive technologies). Participants said where career development teams exist in schools, they are generally comprised of a mix of careers advisers, teachers, mentors, pathway planners and other support staff.

Participants said the majority of schools, however, are not following effective practice when it comes to career development. While schools allocate resources to career development, the delivery of career development programs is vastly different. Many schools provide one on one advice to students on subject

choice and career options, and the opportunity to do work experience. Some schools teach topics such as 'enterprise' or 'studies of society' which introduces students to a range of different jobs. Some schools encourage teachers to link other classroom learning to the world of work. Some states/territories require students to document a pathway plan or a career action plan.

Participants said schools try to empower young people to develop key competencies, or the life skills they will need to manage their careers. These skills include, for example, literacy and numeracy, communication skills, resilience, time management skills, and an ability to deal with change. Teachers seek to develop these skills in everyday classroom teaching, and not solely through career development programs. For example, if a teacher sets an assignment with a deadline, then this helps develop students' time management skills. One participant from a career industry association said schools are now developing competencies '*much better than they used to*'.

As noted above, participants generally agree that the VET in Schools Program is a very valuable program. One participant from a school association said students in Independent schools sometimes have less access to the Program compared to public school students. This is because in some states, Independent schools have to pay for their students to participate in TAFE courses, whereas Government school students are able to do these courses free of charge.

Despite its popularity, some participants said there is still a '*stigma*' attached to VET courses. Some schools push the university pathway because it is seen as more prestigious.

*...there is a stigma that if you do a VET course, you are not as smart and not as likely to be successful.*

(Career industry association)

Participants said the lack of consistency and quality of career development in schools is largely due to: the influence of principals; resources; qualifications of and training provided to school staff; and a lack of reliable data on the outcomes of various career development initiatives.

The lack of a national framework means schools themselves have a huge influence in how career development is delivered. Participants said for a school to have good career development, buy-in from the principal is essential.

*Unless principals support career development and education, it won't happen. Career development really comes down to how committed the principal is and how much he or she values career development.*

(School association)

*Schools operate according to guidelines but under the discretion of the principal.*

(Government department)

*While there are some things schools have to do, principals play a huge role. They are always looking for different ways of doing things. They are the driver.*

(Government department)

On resources, participants said funding is a big issue. Career practitioners in schools often have other responsibilities, such as teaching responsibilities. Some school counsellors have the combined function of career development and personal counselling. Overlapping responsibilities mean teachers and career practitioners in schools have less time to focus on career development. One participant from a government department said existing career education resources focus largely on young people in the 15-19 year age bracket, and do not cater to students in the 5-14 year age bracket.

An added complication is the quality of staff giving careers advice. It is clear from participant interviews that some have postgraduate qualifications, others have a Certificate IV in career development, and others have no qualifications beyond their bachelor degree in education. One participant from a career



industry association said, in the past, responsibility for careers was often given to teachers who struggled in the classroom irrespective of their qualifications or suitability for the job.

Some states/territories have decided that a Certificate IV in career development is a sufficient qualification, and have made it compulsory or are in the process of making it compulsory, for all school career practitioners in that state/territory to obtain a certificate IV. However, some participants have a different view. One participant from a career industry association said a Certificate IV is not sufficient, noting that under the new *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*<sup>13</sup>, career practitioners will, in most cases, need a graduate certificate or a vocational graduate certificate to be eligible for professional membership of the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) from 2012.

Participants said career practitioners and other individuals providing career development in schools, such as teachers and pathway planners, need regular professional development. This is important because they often have their own biases and ideas about careers. Classroom teachers also need training on how best to incorporate career development into everyday learning.

*In an ideal world, careers advisers would have no teaching load or student counselling responsibilities. They would have their own careers space with computers and professional development. They would be professional and would be members of the CDAA. The CDAA would also support career development in schools.*

(VET association)

*If career practitioners in schools are professionally qualified, they have a good chance of providing good advice but most of them have to battle for resources and have to battle for career development to be included in the curriculum.*

(Career association)

One participant from a government department said another barrier to quality career development in schools is a lack of data. The participant said there is no systemic collection of data to identify target groups nor the usefulness and effectiveness of career development initiatives. Anecdotal evidence rather than hard evidence is used. It is clear from another participant interview that collection of limited data is happening in at least one state, but broadly speaking it appears that there is a gap in the evaluation of career development initiatives across the country.

## 10.6 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE IN HIGHER EDUCATION AND VET

As noted above, participants had a limited knowledge of what career development is offered in the higher education and VET sector, and consequently this was not discussed in any detail. Two participants, one from VET association and one from a government department, said universities have recently started doing more in the area of career development to try and combat high drop-out rates in first year, and to give themselves a competitive advantage in the marketplace. Two participants, one from a career industry association and one from a government department, said while TAFE has career development programs, they are not as advanced as those offered by universities.

## 10.7 MEETING THE CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS OF YOUNG PEOPLE NOT IN EDUCATION

Several participants said there are a range of online career development tools for young people not in education, such as the myfuture website. One participant from a VET association said there is scope for online services to provide more advice on pathways, but noted it may be difficult to present this information online because there are so many different options/scenarios.

---

<sup>13</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia; *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*; available at <http://www.cica.org.au/practitioners/standards>

While online services are good, participants said these services need to be accompanied by career practitioners that can help people not in education interpret the information and find some direction. This appears to be a missing link and a big gap. Participants are aware that some federal and state government agencies, church groups and not-for-profit organisations offer career development services, but it is clear that quality of services and provision of advice is patchy. There is a view among participants that there needs to be better coordination between agencies offering career development services to young people not in education. As one participant from a school association said *'someone needs to accept responsibility for inter-agency support'*.

One participant from a career industry association said young people over 17 are increasingly consulting private career practitioners for advice. However, the cost involved means these young people generally come from a high SES background.

## 10.8 GETTING THE RIGHT CAREER DEVELOPMENT HELP AT THE RIGHT TIME

As noted in section 10.3, participants said young people need different career advice at different times. There is a view that years 10-12 are particularly important years for career advice because this is when young people are selecting subjects and considering post school work and study. One participant from a government department said students in schools with high-drop out rates probably need career advice earlier than year 10.

One participant from a not-for-profit organisation said year 8 is when young people start looking for part time work, and this is a good time for them to get advice on practical things like resume writing and interview techniques. Another participant from a not-for-profit organisation said young people will change careers regularly and need to be able to access quality careers advice *'over time'*, including when they are outside educational structures.

Participants have mixed views on how they think young people want careers advice communicated to them. Most participants agree that one on one interviews are important, but said this needs to be complemented by online services and written material. One participant from a government department said young people want to avoid all contact with career practitioners, and prefer to rely on online services. This view, however, was not shared by the majority of participants.

## 11 Key Views from Qualitative Research



This chapter outlines the key findings of our qualitative research into the career needs and wants of young people (5-25 years), their parents, teachers and communities. For the purposes of our research, we define 'career development' as the complex process of managing life, learning and work over the lifespan. We make a distinction between career education and career guidance, which both contribute to a young person's career development. Career education is the development of knowledge, skills and attitudes through a planned program of learning experiences that will assist young people with making informed career decisions. Career guidance is counselling and advice provided to young people to assist them with developing a specific understanding of the realistic learning and work opportunities available to them.

It is clear that young people have very diverse career development needs and wants, depending on their age, level of schooling and whether they come from a potentially disadvantaged group. After discussing young people's career aspirations, including when they started thinking about what they might like to do and what influenced their ideas, with young people, their parents and teachers, we deduce that young people generally fall into one of the following three categories:

- Those that know what they want to do from an early age: these young people generally need information about their chosen career path.
- Those that have general ideas about what they might like to do: these young people need to be given opportunities to refine these ideas and test them out.
- Those that have no idea what they want to do or are not interested: these young people need help to figure out what their interests, values, strengths and weaknesses are. They also need someone to help them link their personal interests and abilities to particular career paths.

### *Primary school*

There is a general view that primary school students can be introduced to a wide range of careers and have their horizons broadened. This is particularly important for primary students from low socio-economic backgrounds and from regional, rural and remote locations who may have limited exposure to different careers. Primary school students can also be taught general competencies and life skills such as resilience, self-esteem, flexibility, reliability, and communication and interpersonal skills.

Teachers said career development in primary school can comprise of career education but not career guidance. They said primary schools have an important role to play in combating traditional gender stereotypes early so that primary students do not develop ideas about what careers 'boys' have and what careers 'girls' have. There is disagreement among teachers on how well career education is currently delivered in primary schools. Some said career education is incorporated into everyday classroom learning, and others say career education is not taught at all. The key barriers to quality career education in primary school appear to be a crowded curriculum and time restrictions.

### *Secondary school*

The participants report that the provision of career development in secondary schools is patchy and inconsistent across states and territories, and also across and within education sectors (Independent, Government and Catholic). There is a general view that Independent secondary schools provide more comprehensive career development than Government schools, and Catholic schools are somewhere in the middle.

Our discussions with young people in secondary school, and with young people who have finished school and were reflecting on their experiences at school, suggest that secondary students want personalised one on one career information and advice that takes into account their interests, values, strengths and weaknesses. They want this advice to be *independent* and not biased. Several young people said they perceive the advice they receive at school from subject teachers to be biased towards the teacher's profession. They also perceive career expos as biased and *'spin'*. Some Independent school students said their schools have a bias towards university and tend to push students down the university pathway. Secondary students said they want a variety of experiential opportunities that give them *'hands on'* practical experience, and allow them to *'test'* different career ideas.

Although many secondary students can articulate their career development needs, some are unfamiliar with the notion of career development, and see it as related only to getting advice on specific jobs.

Young people in higher education or VET and young people not in education said secondary schools should do more to make a link between subject choices and different career paths. Several of these students told stories about them or their friends getting to Year 12 and realising they could not do what they wanted to do because they had not picked the right subjects in Year 10.

There is a general view that years 10-12 are the most important years for career development in secondary school as this is when young people are selecting subjects, undertaking work experience, and considering their post-school work and study options. Many career practitioners and a smaller number of parents, teachers and students say career development should start earlier in secondary school, with some suggesting career development should start as early as year 7.

Several participants said school career practitioners could adopt a *'holistic'* approach, and better engage parents and classroom teachers in the career development of young people. There is a view that parents largely want the best for their children, but have varying abilities to cater to their children's needs. Many parents think schools should seek the opportunity to work in partnership with parents to *'fill the gaps'*.

The VET in Schools Program is generally highly regarded by young people, their parents and teachers. It is seen as particularly valuable for students who know what they want to do.

There is a general view that at risk young people and young people from mobile families, such as defence force and some Indigenous families, are more likely to miss out on quality career development in schools.

### *Higher education or VET*

The majority of young people that are in, or have been in, higher education or VET advised that they have not accessed career development services offered by these institutions. There is a view that universities and VET institutions can market their career development services more effectively. Some students said universities and TAFEs can do more to ensure all students, including those studying by correspondence, have access to these services.

Our discussions suggests that young people in higher education or VET want personalised one on one career advice from someone with industry experience. They also want universities and VET institutions to facilitate greater contact with industry through more integrated learning and internships. Several young people said they want better information and guidance on courses *before* they start so they can determine if the course is best for them. They said they want to avoid being railroaded by parents and schools into courses they know little about.

### *Not in education*

Our discussions suggest young people not in education are a particularly diverse group. Some of these young people said they are happy with the career path they have chosen and do not need any specific career development. Others said they have no idea what they want to do and have significant career development needs.

Many young people not in education report they do not know how to get career advice and information. There is a general view that there is no central place outside educational institutions where young people can go for career information and advice. Many of these young people said they have had negative experiences with employment service providers, and are forced to seek career information and advice from the internet and their own personal networks. Our discussions suggest that young people not in education rely more heavily than other cohorts on employers for their career development needs. Some of these young people said employers adequately respond to their career development needs but the majority said they do not.

A small number of young people not in education said their school career practitioner continues to provide ongoing career development support to them even though they have finished school.

There is a general view that career development services for young people not in education would be more effective if they were free and easy to access, as young people not in education said finance and transport are key barriers for them.

## 11.1 CAREER DEVELOPMENT NEEDS AND WANTS OF POTENTIALLY DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

### *Young people in regional, rural and remote areas*

Young people in regional, rural and remote areas report having limited exposure to the different careers and the day to day existence of universities and VET institutions. Many of these young people cannot get this exposure in their hometown which leads to limited horizons.

Support at key transition points, particularly the transition from school to higher education or VET, and from education to the workforce is reported as important. They often have to move away from home for post-school work or study which complicates the transition. These young people are most at risk of making poor career decisions at these key transition points.

These young people and their parents want labour market advice. They also want detailed advice on university courses across the country so they can match courses to local labour market conditions.

It is reported that universities and VET institutions are less likely to visit regional, rural and remote areas so young people, parents and teachers in these locations rely more heavily on online services. Many say the quality of online services (both for career development and for accessing higher education) needs to improve.

It is suggested that finance and transport are key barriers for these young people accessing career development. More can be done to promote government assistance and scholarships for people from regional, rural and remote areas. More can also be done to provide quality career development services to young people in these locations who choose to study by correspondence.

Schools, teachers, parents and young people suggested that schools in regional, rural and remote locations have more limited opportunities to match young people's interests with subjects or VET courses. For example, schools in regional locations may only offer students VET courses through the VET in Schools Program if there are places available.

### *Indigenous young people*

Our discussions suggest that Indigenous young people are not an homogenous group. They have very different career needs and wants. Indigenous young people in regional, rural and remote areas have many of the same needs and wants as those identified under the heading '*Young people in regional rural and remote areas*'.

There is a general view among Indigenous students and parents that Indigenous young people do not necessarily want advice from an Indigenous career practitioner, but they do want advice from someone who has had Indigenous cultural awareness training. It is reported that Indigenous organisations and Indigenous staff in educational institutions are available to provide career development to young Indigenous people.

Some young Indigenous people said maintaining a connection with their community is important, and leaving their community for post-school work or study can make the post-school transition very challenging. Some Indigenous young people are highly mobile and this makes the provision of career development both within and outside educational institutions difficult.

It was frequently reported that young Indigenous people may complete several Certificate IIIs at TAFE in a range of different fields. This VET study is often facilitated by employment service providers. However, there appears to be a lack of opportunity to link this study with employment opportunities.

Young Indigenous people, like all young people, do not want assumptions made about what they can and cannot achieve.

### *Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) young people*

There is view among teachers and career practitioners that schools can better engage CALD parents to help them have realistic and informed expectations of their children, and to ensure they understand the education system in Australia and the opportunities provided by career development.

### *Humanitarian refugees*

Many young refugees we spoke to said they want to develop proficiency in the English language because they recognise that without adequate English, their career options will be severely limited. There is a view that young refugees can better understand notions of 'career' and 'career pathways', and the various careers available to them in Australia. They often have a poor understanding of the labour market in Australia and cultural norms in Australian workplaces (eg shaking the interviewer's hand when attending an interview). Transitioning from school to higher education or VET, and from education to employment, is a considerable challenge for this group.

### *At risk young people*

At risk young people often have poor connections with schools, universities and VET institutions, and families, which is partly why they may be at risk. Trust was strongly reported as an issue for them, so career information and guidance from someone with whom they can have a long-term trusting relationship would be beneficial. They felt employment service providers could more helpfully take a holistic approach to their career development, and consider their interests, values and abilities, rather than just finding them short term and casual work.

At risk young people have barriers in accessing career development services in terms of cost, transport and child care.

### *Young carers*

Young carers reported the need for flexible work and study options that take their personal circumstances into account (eg pathway plans which allow young carers to complete secondary school certificates over a longer period of time and provide flexible deadlines). Furthermore, someone who can provide practical support in an empathetic and understanding way would be valued. Counsellors that have a dual role of personal counsellor and career counsellor have been seen as suitable for this cohort.

Young carers felt access to career development opportunities are hindered by finances. They report that they cannot get a full-time carer pension if they are full-time students.

### *Young people with a disability*

Young people, career practitioners, teachers and parents report that young people with a disability need specialised advice that takes into account their individual circumstances. Young people with a disability report that it is important their abilities are recognised.

The diagram below illustrates various components of a young person's career development and the stages at which these occur.

FIGURE 1 – YOUNG PEOPLE: WHAT DO THEY WANT

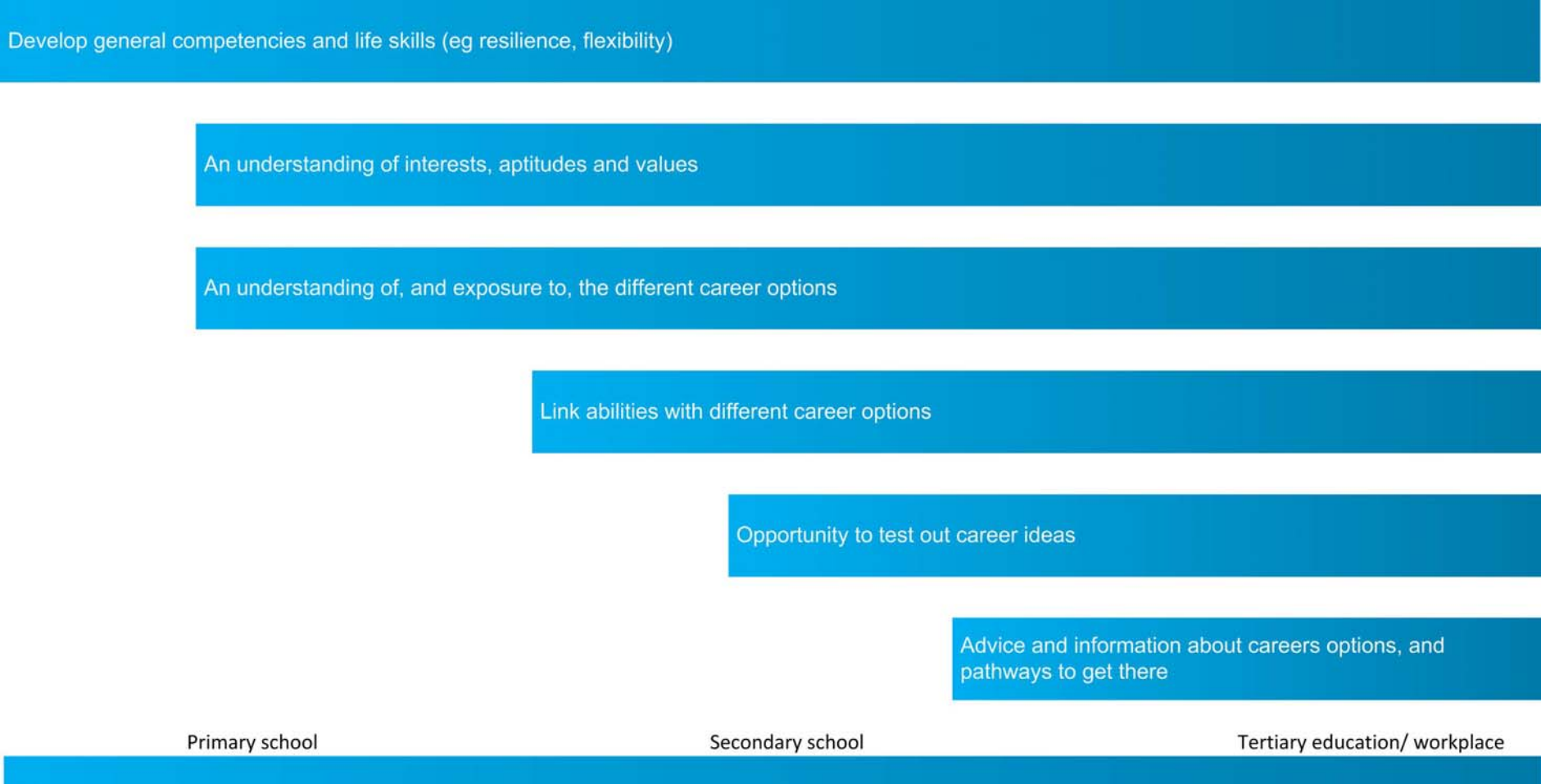




TABLE 4 – YOUNG PEOPLE: WHAT DO THEY WANT - HOW THEY WANT IT – WHEN THEY WANT IT

WHAT	HOW	WHEN
Develop general competencies and life skills (eg resilience, flexibility)	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ influence of parents, family and friends</li> <li>▪ personal development activities at school</li> <li>▪ trying different things (eg sport)</li> <li>▪ part-time and casual work</li> <li>▪ travel.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in the home</li> <li>▪ continues in schools and higher education or VET</li> <li>▪ development of these skills is a life-long evolving process.</li> </ul>
An understanding of interests, aptitudes and values	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ trying different things</li> <li>▪ feedback from parents and family, teachers, peers and the wider community</li> <li>▪ school achievement</li> <li>▪ stated preferences.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in the home and, to a greater extent, in primary school.</li> </ul>
An understanding of, and exposure to, the different career options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ linking classroom learning to careers</li> <li>▪ workplace visits/ work experience etc</li> <li>▪ presentations in schools</li> <li>▪ research projects into different jobs and careers.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in primary school.</li> </ul>
Link abilities with different career options	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one on one interviews with career practitioners</li> <li>▪ discussions with teachers, parents, other family members and friends</li> <li>▪ interactive technologies and use of the internet, etc</li> <li>▪ labour market information.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in secondary school.</li> </ul>
Opportunity to test out career ideas	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ part-time or casual work</li> <li>▪ work experience</li> <li>▪ other forms of integrated learning (eg VET in Schools Program)</li> <li>▪ visits to universities, VET institutions and workplaces.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in secondary school</li> <li>▪ continue in higher education and VET</li> <li>▪ continue after young people have left educational institutions.</li> </ul>
Advice and information about careers options, and pathways to get there	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ one on one interviews with a career practitioner (for subject advice <u>and</u> advice on post-school options)</li> <li>▪ discussions with people with industry experience</li> <li>▪ discussions with parents and other family members, teachers and peers</li> <li>▪ use of online materials</li> <li>▪ use of written materials.</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>▪ commence in secondary school</li> <li>▪ continue in higher education and VET</li> <li>▪ continue after young people have left educational institutions</li> <li>▪ continue after young people have left educational institutions</li> </ul>

### *Young people and transitions*

It is reported that young people make important decisions that affect their career development at key transition points, including the transition from school to higher education or VET, and the transition from education to the workforce. There is a general view that the transition from school to university and then to work is difficult, and overwhelming for some young people. Our discussions suggest that young people may not be getting the support they need at transition points and, consequently, may be making poor career decisions at these points.

### *Career development needs and wants of parents*

It is reported by parents and teachers that many parents find transition points and the later years of secondary school very difficult, because they do not know how to support the career development needs and wants of their children. Parents said they want schools to provide them with more information and to better engage with them on the career development of their children. Some said they want advice on what their role should be. As noted above, parents have different abilities to cater to the career needs and wants of their children and expect schools to *'fill the gap'*.

Our discussions suggest that there may sometimes be tension between schools and parents on the career development of young people. Some parents report that schools are not adequately catering to their children's needs, and some teachers report that they are trying to manage parents' expectations of their children. There is a general view that schools and parents should seek to work in partnership with each other.

Some parents suggested an online *'one stop shop'* for career information on the labour market, university courses and the cost of these courses, and awards and pay rates, would be very valuable.

### *Career development needs and wants of teachers*

There is a general view that teachers can better understand career development and its importance. Professional development to train teachers on how to incorporate career development into classroom or subject teaching would be very valuable. There is also a view if parents and school practitioners develop a good working relationship, the holistic approach to career development in secondary schools referred to above will be easier to implement. Some primary teachers are of the view that professional development in the area of career development for primary school teachers should be delivered by professionals external to the school.

### *Career development needs and wants of employers*

Our discussions suggest that many employers, particularly small to medium employers, can better understand career development and the benefits it can deliver to their workplace. Young people are often critical of employers expectations of them, suggesting that employers expect them to be able to do more than they can. Some employers report that if employers want work ready graduates, they could work with educational institutions to assist young people to become more work ready (eg through work placements and work experience).

## 12 Bibliography

Career Industry Council of Australia; *Professional Standards for Australian Career Development Practitioners*; available at <http://www.cica.org.au/practitioners/standards>

MCEECDYA, 2010 *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, prepared by Miles Morgan Australia, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra. Available at: <http://www.blueprint.edu.au/>

Sikora Joanna, Saha Lawrence J; *Lost talent? The occupational ambitions and attainments of young Australians*; 12 January 2011; ISBN:978 1 921809 55 2

# Appendix A Stakeholder consultation list

## Appendix B Focus group specifications

# Appendix C Communication tools

## Appendix D Career practitioner consultation list



# Appendix E Large employer telephone interviews

## Appendix F Discussion guides

