



# CAREER GUIDANCE

THE MISSING LINK IN SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITIONS

Youth Action Policy Paper

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## About Youth Action

Youth Action is the peak organisation representing young people and youth services in NSW. Our work helps build the capacity of young people, youth workers and youth services, and we advocate for positive change on issues affecting these groups.

It is the role of Youth Action to:

1. Respond to social and political agendas relating to young people and the youth service sector.
2. Provide proactive leadership and advocacy to shape the agenda on issues affecting young people and youth services.
3. Collaborate on issues that affect young people and youth workers.
4. Promote a positive profile in the media and the community of young people and youth services.
5. Build capacity for young people to speak out and take action on issues that affect them.
6. Enhance the capacity of the youth services sector to provide high quality services.
7. Ensure Youth Action's organisational development, efficiency, effectiveness and good governance.



## Contents

<b>Foreword by the NSW Business Chamber</b>	<b>4</b>
<b>Recommendations</b>	<b>6</b>
<b>Introduction</b>	<b>8</b>
<b>Youth unemployment is problematic in NSW</b>	<b>10</b>
<b>The impacts of youth unemployment are multifaceted</b>	<b>13</b>
<b>Career guidance – Improving the school to work transition</b>	<b>15</b>
<b>Where are we now?</b>	<b>18</b>
<b>The experience of young people</b>	<b>22</b>
<b>Opportunities for change</b>	<b>23</b>
<b>Implementation principles – What works?</b>	<b>27</b>
<b>Case Studies</b>	<b>40</b>



## Foreword by the NSW Business Chamber

Business is highly concerned about rising levels of youth unemployment. The proportion of young people looking for work in NSW is nearly 17% in some regional locations, and is more than 12% statewide.<sup>1</sup> More needs to be done to connect young people with meaningful work and to train the workforce of the future.

Right now, we hear from employers, parents and from young people that careers advice provided by schools does not equip students with comprehensive information about their options for work or further study.

Students are overwhelmingly pushed toward university, meaning there is an emphasis in school on choosing subjects that will result in a high Australian Tertiary Admissions Rank (ATAR). This is a major problem, as we know more than 60 percent of young people will not go to university straight after school, instead heading to further study through a vocational education and training provider or directly into the workforce.

But this does not have to be a negative. In fact, the job outcomes an apprenticeship or traineeship can deliver are often far better than those following a higher education pathway. The issue is that young people are not being effectively informed, engaged and advised about all of their career options so that they are ready to smoothly transition from school to their next stage in life.

Careers advice in school also lacks a direct link with industry, meaning students are not receiving solid intelligence about where the jobs are now and where they are likely to be in future. We need to ensure that young people are not left behind and that they are fully informed about the pathways that best match their capabilities and interests, and those which are likely to lead to a job.

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<sup>1</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Australia's youth unemployment hotspots snapshot*, My Choice Our Future Youth Unemployment Campaign, BSL, Melbourne, 2016.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

This means there is an urgent need for high quality, accessible and visible career advice services directly involving industry to be available to school students.

Youth Action's *Career Guidance: Missing Link in School to Work Transitions* takes up this call and the NSW Business Chamber is pleased to endorse its recommendations.

Many of the themes in this paper reinforce key arguments raised in the NSW Business Chamber's own advocacy agenda. We have called on Government to actively involve employers, community organisations and schools in careers advice for some years, and the reiteration of this call from Youth Action, the peak body and voice for youth, is very welcome.

Business also strongly supports the need to revise and reshape course curricula to better match the skills in demand by industry. Students need to attain knowledge that is directly relevant to the modern workplace so that they are ready to contribute from day one on the job.

Setting young people on the right pathway to work is an issue that concerns the entire community. Business needs the next generation of employees to be fully engaged in their chosen occupation. Families want to see their children rewarded and happy when they begin working.

We join with Youth Action in calling for urgent Government action to reshape the career guidance available to young people. Taking up the recommendations made in this report and the NSW Business Chamber's own research will ensure that the next generation of workers is on the right track for a fulfilling and satisfying work-life.

Stephen Cartwright  
Chief Executive Officer, NSW Business Chamber



## Recommendations

### Youth Action recommends the NSW Government:

**Recommendation 1:** Develops an overarching youth employment strategy, with an emphasis on improved career guidance.

**Recommendation 2:** That the youth employment strategy should invest in the development of career guidance to:

- **2.1:** respond to the context of the labour market
- **2.2:** foster engagement with education.

**Recommendation 3:** Implement policy that supports schools to develop a minimum level of career guidance programs in order to achieve outcomes of the *Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, and that it:

- **3.1:** Implement targeted measures for young people experiencing disadvantage in the NSW career guidance policy
- **3.2:** Allocate adequate funding and resourcing for schools to develop career guidance programs that meet outcomes.

**Recommendation 4:** Strengthen supports for career advisers to ensure continuing professional development and information flow.

**Recommendation 5:** Undertake a body of work to inform curriculum linkages to skills of the future, including providing specific advice for guidance roles.

**Recommendation 6:** Develop a mechanism to foster a network involving external employers, community organisations and schools.

**Recommendation 7:** Ensure career guidance programs developed are tailored support to address specific circumstances of young people experiencing disadvantage. This includes the following:

- **7.1:** Improving cultural competency

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

- **7.2:** The use of role models and mentors for young people to experience relatable aspirations and develop confidence
- **7.3:** Career guidance programs that link young people to services and programs for support
- **7.4:** Focus on 'work' literacy and navigating new environments
- **7.5:** Guidance in terms of eligibility for university and VET courses or work opportunities.



## Introduction

The transition from education to further study or employment is a crucial point in time for young people. While this transition period gives young people the opportunity to consolidate skills, develop a sense of job-readiness and make decisions about their lives and career paths, it has become increasingly difficult for young people to gain employment after leaving education and training.<sup>2</sup> Factors such as the reduction of entry-level job opportunities, job automation, the casualisation of the workforce as well as disengagement from education have caused the length of the transition period for young people to increase.<sup>3</sup>

Effective career guidance in high schools can improve the transition from education to employment for young people, especially for those experiencing disadvantage. Benefits include increased engagement with education, improved employment prospects and an increase in social capital and wellbeing. Studies show that if young people can recall four structured career activities across their school life, they are five times less likely to be unemployed or disengaged from education or training.<sup>4</sup> Despite this, approximately 50% of schools in Australia (with populations of over a 1000 students) dedicate less than \$3 per student for career guidance.<sup>5</sup>

As it stands, the quality of career guidance in high schools varies drastically across NSW. As of 2012, the Department of Education has provided a framework that outlines core areas of responsibility expected of teachers in a career adviser position. The extent to which each of the core areas is implemented varies between schools according to the individual school's needs, which are determined by the principal. There is also a strong focus on career advisers as the sole provider of

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<sup>2</sup> N Galliot, 30 April 2015, 'Career studies and advice: start early or don't start at all', The Conversation, accessed via <http://theconversation.com/career-studies-and-advice-start-early-or-don't-start-at-all-40563>

<sup>3</sup> The Smith Family, *Young people's successful transition to work: What are the preconditions?*, The Smith Family, Sydney, 2014.

<sup>4</sup> L O'Brien, *Knowledge and networks: Changing the unemployment trajectory for disadvantaged young people*, Australian Long-Term Unemployment Conference, The Smith Family, 2015, p. 9.

<sup>5</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *A snapshot of career practitioners in Australia*, CICA, 2015.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

career information, putting the role under pressure to cater to an entire school.<sup>6</sup> As a result, students do not always perceive current career guidance provision as useful.

Best practice in career guidance involves an integrated and holistic approach where career development is woven into all aspects of school learning. As well as a skills-based curriculum, this should include individual support, parental/guardian involvement and partnerships with community organisations to support the diverse needs and aspirations of young people. Links with employers are also important as providing opportunities for young people to develop networks with industry and business sectors deepens their understanding of career pathways and planning.

For the purpose of this paper, career guidance is defined as a range of activities both inside and outside of the school environment that support the development of students' knowledge, skills and capacities in relation to planning their future careers. These activities include not only individual career advice, but also a wide range of skill-development activities.

While it is acknowledged that youth unemployment is a complex issue with no single solution, this paper highlights career guidance as an essential component to improving employment outcomes for NSW high school students.

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<sup>6</sup> Department of Education, *Essential Information – Careers Adviser*, Department of Education and Communities NSW, Sydney, 2012.



# Youth unemployment is problematic in NSW

Youth unemployment is significant for young people in NSW, with unemployment rates at 12.7% as of February 2017.<sup>7</sup> Young people are particularly vulnerable in the labour market as, in general, by virtue of their age they often have less experience and skills to draw on. This is evident in the youth unemployment rate, which is more than double the general, statewide unemployment rate (5.6%).<sup>8</sup> In NSW there are areas of heightened concern such as in the Hunter region, where youth unemployment is as high as 21.8% as of January 2016, second only in Australia to outback Queensland.<sup>9</sup>

## What is driving youth unemployment?

### A changing labour market

Structural changes in the economy and labour market since the 2008 global financial crisis continue to contribute to youth unemployment. At the time of the global financial crisis in 2008, the average transition time was 3.8 years.<sup>10</sup> As of 2015, it takes young people, on average, 4.7 years after leaving full-time education to enter full-time work.<sup>11</sup> This leads to particularly high rates (27%) of young people aged 17-24 – the typical age of transition – not being engaged in full-time study or work.<sup>12</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017, *Labour force, Australia*, Table 16. Labour force status for 15-24 year olds by State, Territory and Educational attendance (full-time), time series spreadsheet, cat. no. 6202.0, accessed via <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Feb%202017?OpenDocument>>

<sup>8</sup> Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2017, *Labour force, Australia*, Table 4. Labour force status by Sex, New South Wales – Trend, Seasonally adjusted and Original, time series spreadsheet, cat. no. 6202.0, accessed via <<http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/DetailsPage/6202.0Feb%202017?OpenDocument>>

<sup>9</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Australia's youth unemployment hotspots snapshot*, My Choice Our Future Youth Unemployment Campaign, BSL, Melbourne, 2016.

<sup>10</sup> Foundation for Young Australians, *How young people are faring in the transition from school to work*, FYA, Melbourne, 2014.

<sup>11</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>12</sup> L O'Brien, *loc. cit.*

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

A decline in the number of entry level jobs and developed career pathways for young people, as well as globalisation, automation and the rise of precarious work, are transforming the opportunities for youth employment. This makes it difficult for young people to 'get a foot in the door' and subsequently compete in the labour market.<sup>13</sup> The decline in occupations that help young people enter the labour market is evident in the shift towards a more service-based economy, which so far has favoured employment for adults over 25.<sup>14</sup>

The need for a more flexible and highly skilled workforce has also impacted employment prospects for young people. There is a growing emphasis on qualifications and experience as prerequisites for work, with employers seeking skilled and experienced workers even for typically lower skilled jobs.<sup>15</sup> This often does not match the capacity of young people, many of whom do not have qualifications and typically have less experience in the labour market. Additionally, rising unemployment rates create more competition for jobs, meaning that higher skilled and experienced people are filling vacancies in typically youth-dominated industries such as hospitality and retail, preventing young people from being able to develop their skills.<sup>16</sup> As a result, the Australian Workforce Development Agency has identified low skilled young people as at a particularly high risk of being left out of employment.<sup>17</sup>

### Disengagement from education and training

Disengagement from education or training can also create barriers to accessing employment. A lack of formal education can contribute to difficulties gaining employment, as studies show that individuals without formal education or trade qualifications face at least double the risk of unemployment.<sup>18</sup> Educational engagement at school is a strong predictor of further study and

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<sup>13</sup> J Skattebol, T Hill, A Griffiths & M Wong, op. cit. p. 8.

<sup>14</sup> D Bowman, J Borlagdan & S Bond, *Making sense of youth transitions from education to work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Victoria, 2015.

<sup>15</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Investing in our future: opportunities for the Australian government to boost youth employment*, BSL, Melbourne, 2014, pp. 6-10.

<sup>16</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>17</sup> T Vinson & M Rawsthorne, *Dropping off the edge 2015: Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services, Richmond, 2015, p. 32.

<sup>18</sup> *ibid.*

vocational education, with evidence showing that students who are supported to engage with school and link it to future workforce participation are more likely to progress to post-school education or training.<sup>19</sup> This longer-term educational engagement in turn has strong links to positive labour market outcomes.<sup>20</sup> For example, the Productivity Commission estimated that for every additional year of education, the future earnings of an Australian increase between 5.5% and 11%.<sup>21</sup>

Disengagement with education or training is often the result of cumulative challenges that students face in relation to their social background, school and community.<sup>22</sup> Young people are often not supported to enable them to navigate their educational path in a way that works best for them.<sup>23</sup>

### Disadvantage and unemployment

Unemployment does not affect all young people to the same extent, as people who experience forms of disadvantage face more difficulty in accessing employment opportunities.<sup>24</sup> Access to career development opportunities is often restricted for socially excluded young people as they face multiple barriers to employment.<sup>25</sup> This is evident in research showing that young people living in socio-economically disadvantaged communities are more likely to obtain poor quality, short-term and unstable employment.<sup>26</sup>

In this context, disadvantage refers to barriers that prevent equity of participation and success in education and employment, and more widely limit access to resources required for full participation in society.<sup>27</sup> Structural issues such as social exclusion and lack of social capital are typical barriers to

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<sup>19</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, *Career development supporting young Australians: A literature review*, Youth Connect, Victoria, 2015, p. 10.

<sup>20</sup> S Gemici, A Bednarz, T Karmel & P Lim, *The factors affecting the educational and occupational aspirations of young Australians*, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>21</sup> P Tatham, *Using career development services to strengthen student retention and attainment*, Career Industry Council of Australia, 2009, p. 3.

<sup>22</sup> I Williams, *Preparing students for the transition to work or further study: engaging students, building aspirations*, The Smith Family, Sydney, 2011, p. 3.

<sup>23</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, op. cit., p.18.

<sup>24</sup> T Vinson & M Rawsthorne, *Dropping off the edge 2015: Persistent communal disadvantage in Australia*, Jesuit Social Services, Richmond, 2015.

<sup>25</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, op. cit., p. 5.

<sup>26</sup> The Smith Family, op. cit., p. 6.

<sup>27</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, op. cit., p. 33.

gaining employment for those experiencing disadvantage, which often include young people from Indigenous communities, people living with a disability, people from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, people living in rural and remote areas, and people living in areas of low socio-economic status. Social exclusion refers to processes of marginalisation and exclusion based on race, gender, ability and status that can affect people's capacity to participate equally in society.<sup>28</sup> Additionally, a lack of social capital, meaning the social networks that enable access to resources and support, can limit educational participation and the knowledge and networks that assist participation in the workforce.<sup>29</sup>

## The impacts of youth unemployment are multifaceted

### The impact on young people

Unemployment has long-term detrimental impacts on young people. Delayed or unsuccessful transitions to employment can lead to economic, social and personal disadvantage for young people, while also significantly increasing the risk of long-term unemployment and employment insecurity.<sup>30</sup> Employment has been identified among seven key dimensions of individual social exclusion in Australia. Job uncertainty and the threat of job loss are related to increased psychological disorders, anxiety, depression, and harmful bodily effects, to the same extent as actual unemployment.<sup>31</sup> Such instability inhibits a person's capacity to plan and control their own life, a contributor that is especially important to the wellbeing of young people.<sup>32</sup>

Unemployment can also have a scarring effect on young people that impacts their future choices. Research shows that the longer a young person is unemployed, the harder it is for them to move

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<sup>28</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>30</sup> J Skattebol, T Hill, A Griffiths & M Wong, *loc. cit.*

<sup>31</sup> T Vinson & M Rawsthorne, *op. cit.* p. 33.

<sup>32</sup> *ibid.* p. 34.

into work.<sup>33</sup> Resulting from this, young people can become caught in cycles of poverty and extended reliance on income-support payments and other social services.

The rise of insecure work and underemployment also has significant impact on a young person's ability to progress in their skills and employment opportunities. Workers in these roles are less likely to have access to training and development opportunities, may receive no paid leave entitlements, and can be more vulnerable to job losses, which makes it challenging for young people to remain or progress in steady employment.<sup>34</sup>

## The impact on government spending

Young people represent a vital opportunity to strengthen the productive capacity of Australia at a time when the population is ageing and the workforce is consequently in decline. With approximately one in three young people unemployed and at the margins of the labour market, youth unemployment represents an avoidable dollar cost to public services.<sup>35</sup> Analysis shows that in 2015, high rates of youth unemployment cost the economy approximately half a billion dollars for that year, translating to \$13.6 billion in lost gross domestic product.<sup>36</sup> This means higher social security payments and lower tax receipts. The taxation loss alone adds up to approximately \$3.15 billion of lost revenue for the government each year, which is about 0.8% of total Commonwealth expenditure and more than half the annual cost of the Commonwealth Grant Scheme of higher education subsidies.<sup>37</sup>

These annual monetary impacts are only part of the total long-term cost of youth unemployment to Australia. Unemployment, job insecurity or underemployment in early life increase the chances of being unemployed later in life and reduces lifetime employment achievement, known as the

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<sup>33</sup> Brotherhood of St Laurence, *Investing in our future: opportunities for the Australian government to boost youth employment*, op. cit., p. 7.

<sup>34</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>35</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>36</sup> J Owen, 'Young People are the Future', *The Australian*, 10 March 2015.

<sup>37</sup> *ibid.*

'scarring effect'. As well as the direct cost of youth unemployment to governments today, the scars of youth unemployment will affect Australia far into the future.

## **Career guidance – Improving the school to work transition**

Career guidance aims to support the employment prospects, engagement with education, and overall wellbeing of young people. Career guidance is defined here as a range of activities that foster students' knowledge, skills and capacities in relation to self-development, making informed choices, and planning their future careers. These activities include individual career advice and counselling, information provision, skill-development, and employer engagement.

Career guidance is an important tool for countering youth unemployment, having the potential to improve young people's career opportunities. Key to supporting young people's transitions into employment are elements such as:

- Well organised pathways that connect initial education with further work and study
- Opportunities for workplace experience
- Information and guidance around career options.<sup>38</sup>

Research suggests that increasing the career management capacity of young people can lead to better outcomes for the wider community, especially as it assists individuals experiencing disadvantage in making successful transitions to the labour market.<sup>39</sup> These successful transitions encourage efficiency in labour markets and increase productivity as people have the skills to manage their own careers.

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<sup>38</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, op. cit., p.10.

<sup>39</sup> R Polvere, P Lim, loc. cit.

Career guidance also has the potential to improve educational engagement and attainment, through increasing awareness of the labour market and the relevance of learning, as well as building confidence and self-awareness.<sup>40</sup> Career guidance also promotes positive outcomes and wellbeing, as career related choices can have long-term impacts on individuals' lifestyles, emotional welfare, economic status, and sense of worth and productivity.<sup>41</sup>

### Increasing engagement with education

Quality career guidance programs are associated with higher levels of academic achievement and increased student attendance.<sup>42</sup> Young people who engage with education and undertake post-school study or training have more successful labour market outcomes.<sup>43</sup> Career guidance supports students to understand the relevance and importance of the work they are doing at school, as well as increasing confidence in identity and abilities. Effectively delivered career guidance services have the potential to improve engagement and increase completion rates by 10 to 20%.<sup>44</sup>

### Relevant skills and knowledge

Ensuring students are taught relevant skills early in their secondary schooling creates better alignment between labour market needs and educational choices.<sup>45</sup> This also allows students to make the most of resources and opportunities in the transition from education to work. By providing access to relevant information and skills, effective careers guidance can support young people in increasing their social capital throughout their working lives.<sup>46</sup> Further benefits outside of employment include increased personal self-worth and wellbeing, particularly when individuals are employed in roles that match their skills and interests.<sup>47</sup>

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<sup>40</sup> *ibid.*, p.16.

<sup>41</sup> S Rothman & K Hillman, *Career advice in Australian secondary schools: use and usefulness*, Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Research Report No 53, 2008.

<sup>42</sup> S Rice, S Gillis, M Leahy & J Polesel, *Career Development: Defining and measuring quality*, Centre for Vocational and Educational Policy, University of Melbourne, 2015.

<sup>43</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, *op. cit.*, p.10.

<sup>44</sup> P Tatham, *op cit.*, p. 1.

<sup>45</sup> S Rice, S Gillis, M Leahy & J Polesel, *loc. cit.*

<sup>46</sup> T Hooley, J Matheson & A G Watts, *Advancing ambitions: The role of career guidance in supporting social mobility*, The Sutton Trust, 2014.

<sup>47</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, *loc. cit.*

## Employment prospects and outcomes

Career guidance can develop the capacity of individuals to successfully navigate and manage transitions to work, leading to better employment outcomes. Career planning and the provision of good planning advice form an essential part of helping young people to properly 'attach' to the labour market.<sup>48</sup> When young people develop an understanding of the labour market and how it works, and cultivate an ability to develop and set realistic career goals, their employment prospects increase dramatically. This is evident in research that has shown that developing clear occupational plans early assists young people to achieve positive employment outcomes by the age of 25, even if outcomes are not aligned with their original plan.<sup>49</sup>

## Increasing social capital

There is potential to minimise inequalities for young people through career guidance, which can address issues that prevent participation and success. This ensures that those who experience disadvantage, or who lack social capital in the form of networks and contacts, can receive advice, information and guidance that will open up opportunities for further study or work.<sup>50</sup> Numerous factors affect a young person's capacity to build the social capital needed for the transition process.

Key elements include:

- good information and guidance in terms of career options
- a tightly knit safety net for those at risk of disadvantage
- well-organised pathways that connect education with work and further study.<sup>51</sup>

Identity is also acknowledged as an important asset of social capital, especially for young people to draw on when searching, preparing and applying for jobs.<sup>52</sup> Young people who have grown up in lower socio-economic areas, or have parents with English as a second language, can have a different

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<sup>48</sup> The Smith Family, loc. cit.

<sup>49</sup> N Nguyen & D Blomberg, *The role of aspirations in the educational and occupational choices of young people*, NCVER, Adelaide, 2014, p. 6.

<sup>50</sup> R Sweet, 'Apprenticeship, pathways and career guidance: a cautionary tale', in L Deitmer, U Hauschildt, F Rauner & H Zelloth (eds), *The Architecture of innovative apprenticeship: Technical and vocational education and training: Issues concerns and prospects*, Volume 18, Springer, Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2012.

<sup>51</sup> Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development, *From initial education to working life: Making transitions work*, OECD, Paris, 2000.

<sup>52</sup> Social Ventures Australia, *Fundamental principles for youth employment*, SVA, February 2016, p. 4.

or lesser understanding of the employment landscape and language, as well as the community supports available. This impacts their capacity for building identity and confidence in career choices. Evidence points to career guidance having a positive impact on self-confidence and decision-making skills that in turn can improve socio-economic situations and increase social capital in the long-term.<sup>53</sup>

## Where are we now?

### The role of governments

Over the last few decades, governments have recognised the need to improve career prospects for young people and have identified career guidance as one of the key features of this process.<sup>54</sup> Several career information resources have been developed by the government, however as unemployment is yet to significantly decline, there is the question as to whether current policies in education are appropriately directed.

The Department of Education's Strategic Directions, 'Creating Futures Together 2015-2017', aims for every student to be actively engaged in meaningful, challenging and future-focused learning experiences to achieve and thrive as learners, leaders and responsible, productive citizens.<sup>55</sup> However, without career education being a major focus within NSW schools, students lose the opportunity to engage in the career exploration and decision-making that prepares them for the workforce.

**Recommendation 1:** That the NSW Government develops an overarching youth employment strategy, with an emphasis on improved career guidance.

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<sup>53</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, loc. cit.

<sup>54</sup>R Sweet, 'Apprenticeship, pathways and career guidance: a cautionary tale', in L Deitmer, U Hauschildt, F Rauner & H Zelloth (eds), *The Architecture of innovative apprenticeship: Technical and vocational education and training: Issues concerns and prospects*, Volume 18, Springer, Dordrecht, Netherlands, 2012.

<sup>55</sup> Department of Education, *Strategic Directions - Creating futures together 2015 - 2017*, Public Schools NSW, Department of Education and Communities, 2015.

**Recommendation 2:** That the youth employment strategy should invest in the development of career guidance to:

- **2.1:** respond to the context of the labour market
- **2.2:** foster engagement with education.

## Career guidance policies

### Federal

There are a number of national frameworks and guidelines that make up the policy context for career guidance. The Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) has developed the *Australian Professional Standards for Career Development Practitioners* for advisers, and the *School Career Development Service Benchmarking Resource* for schools developing programs. Additionally, *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development* provides a national framework of career competencies to assist program design and evaluation. These frameworks are all relevant, although not compulsory to use, for the planning and delivery of career advice in NSW high schools.

### New South Wales

In NSW, the 2013 education reform 'Local Schools Local Decisions' has given public schools more authority to make local decisions about how best to meet the needs of their students.<sup>56</sup> Individual schools now manage up to 70% of the overall public school budget, an increase from less than 10% before the reforms.<sup>57</sup> This means that individual schools and principals can use funding and resources to cater to the specific needs of their school and community. While this can benefit schools where their needs are met, it can also create inconsistencies across the board, as there is limited accountability. In terms of career guidance, due to the reforms, the principals of individual schools decide the teaching allocation of a career adviser's position. The Department of Education's Staffing Services does not have a definitive written position criterion for career advisers, however

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<sup>56</sup> NSW Department of Education, 17 March 2017, *Local Schools Local Decisions*, NSW Government, accessed via <<http://www.schools.nsw.edu.au/news/lslid/index.php>>

<sup>57</sup> NSW Department of Education, 2016, *Managing Resources*, DEC, accessed via <<http://www.dec.nsw.gov.au/about-the-department/our-reforms/local-schools-local-decisions/reform-agenda/managing-resources>>

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

they do provide a framework that can assist career advisers in management, accountability, career development and information recording.<sup>58</sup> This framework provides a comprehensive guide to what the role of an effective career adviser looks like, however it is up to the discretion of individual schools as to what standards are enforced.

There is also a strong focus on career advisers as the sole provider of career information, putting the role under pressure to cater to an entire school. As a result, the standards of career advisers across the NSW public system can vary greatly from school to school. The Careers Advisers Association of NSW and ACT Inc. has produced a *Framework for Career Education and the Role of Careers Advisers in NSW and ACT Schools*, which is an optional guideline for career advisers to use.

For catholic and independent schools there are no guidelines or policies for career guidance. Individual schools are responsible for making decisions about whether to employ a career adviser and what standards they must uphold.

## Career guidance in the community

Community and youth services often fill the gaps left by a lack of policy by providing programs and vocational skill training for young people. Many community organisations provide young people with guidance in choosing a career path and opportunities to develop specific skills required for certain jobs.

For example, The Smith Family provides a tertiary mentoring program, where students are matched with a mentor who provides support, advice and guidance to help the students understand their career pathways.<sup>59</sup> Mentors are usually working in the student's aspired career field so they can provide knowledge and skills specific to the workforce, as well as possible work experience and connections.

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<sup>58</sup> NSW Department of Education, *Essential Information – Career Advisers*, loc. cit.

<sup>59</sup> The Smith Family, 2014, *Tertiary Mentoring*, The Smith Family, viewed 28 July 2016, <<https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/what-we-do/our-work/post-school-options/tertiary-mentoring>>

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

The Salvation Army's youth support network 'Oasis' has an employment program that aims to provide a foundation for young people to confidently enter into the workforce. Employment Pathways is designed as a five week coaching tool that provides both life skills and work-readiness training for young people experiencing disadvantage. It aims to provide a safe environment for young people to learn important life skills, gain a realistic appreciation of what it means to be a responsible employee, develop their own abilities and gain the confidence to take on full- or part-time employment.<sup>60</sup>

Community and youth services like The Smith Family and Salvation Army give young people, especially those experiencing disadvantage, opportunities to develop the skills and knowledge of career pathways that may be lacking in their home or school environment. However, these services tend to be localised and are only able to address the needs of those who are connected with the service.

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<sup>60</sup> Oasis, 2016, *Pathways to Employment*, The Salvation Army, viewed 28 July 2016, <<https://salvos.org.au/oasis/services/education/pathways>>

## The experience of young people

This policy context results in varying outcomes in terms of what career guidance looks like in practice. Young adults surveyed who recalled more than four career activities while at school were five times more likely to be engaged in education or employment.<sup>61</sup> However, according to the Social Research Council (SRC), most students across the NSW school system (government and non-government) make reports of having participated in one career advice activity through school, though the specific experience varies.<sup>62</sup>

A study of NSW high school students in Years 9-12 showed a range of levels of engagement with career guidance activities, with 70-77% of students having had one-on-one talks with a school career adviser.<sup>63</sup> Of this group, 52-71% of students reported that their careers advisers had identified careers that matched their interests and abilities, but only 27-29% reported having developed a career transition plan.<sup>64</sup> This lack of consistency also means that some students miss out entirely. For example, in another study, 20% of Year 10-12 students reported not having experienced any career sessions while making subject selections.<sup>65</sup> Subsequent reports for 2015 and 2016 did not report on career advice activity, despite the continued inclusion of career advice questions in the study.

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<sup>61</sup> A Mann, *It's who you meet: Why employer contacts at school make a difference to the employment prospects of young adults*, Education and Employers Taskforce, London, 2012.

<sup>62</sup> Social Research Centre, *NSW secondary students' post-school destinations and expectations*, 2014 Annual Report, SRC, 2015, p. xii.

<sup>63</sup> *ibid.* p. 50.

<sup>64</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>65</sup> N Galliot & L Graham, 'School based experiences as contributors to career decision-making: findings from a cross-sectional survey of high school students', *The Australian Educational Researcher*, vol. 42, no. 2, 2015, pp. 179-199.

## Opportunities for change

### Consistency of delivery

The localised nature of NSW schools likely leads to a lack of consistent quality of career guidance. The review of the national career guidance framework, the *National Blueprint for Career Development*, found that without an explicit policy, any use of or reference to guidelines is likely to be 'limited and incidental.'<sup>66</sup> In effect, career guidance programs in schools are determined by the individual career advisers or the school executive's interpretation of the role.<sup>67</sup> While this can foster positive programs that cater to the specific needs of communities, it relies on the dedication, skills and resources of the individual executive, who may or may not see career guidance as a priority. In addition, without regulation of career guidance standards there is limited opportunity to evaluate the quality of provision.

While there is a wealth of quality benchmarks addressing career guidance standards, such as the *National Blueprint for Career Development*, schools need to be supported to implement these standards to achieve positive outcomes for NSW high school students. It is important that each school meets some level of outcomes to ensure consistency of opportunity across young people in NSW. Schools can cater to their diverse community needs by developing career guidance programs that have a range of activities and individual support. However, there is a need to ensure the development of career guidance programs that produce consistent and evaluated outcomes.

**Recommendation 3:** That the NSW Government implement policy that supports schools to develop a minimum level of career guidance programs in order to achieve outcomes of *The Australian Blueprint for Career Development*.

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<sup>66</sup> Atelier Learning Solutions, *Report of the review of the Australian Blueprint for Career Development*, ALS, 2012, p. 46.

<sup>67</sup> Careers Advisers Association of NSW and ACT Inc., *Framework for career education and the role of a careers adviser in NSW and ACT schools*, CAA, 2015, p. 9.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

Consequently, there is inconsistent interest in implementing quality career guidance programs. Students who would get the most out of career guidance support tend to be those experiencing disadvantage, and are usually the minority of the school population. Young people who are the most vulnerable are at risk of missing out on crucial support, and go on to face difficulties such as staying engaged in education and in the transition to further study and employment. There is a need to prioritise young people who experience disadvantage through implementing targeted approaches throughout career guidance policy.

**Recommendation 3.1:** Implement targeted measures for young people experiencing disadvantage in the NSW careers guidance policy.

### Appropriate resourcing

High quality career guidance programs cannot exist without appropriate staff and resources. Without a distinct policy for career guidance, career advisers often do not have enough resources to engage with guidelines or frameworks that do exist.<sup>68</sup> Research from the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) shows that over half of all school career practitioners in Australia are working part-time, and of those, only one in three are able to devote all of their time to career guidance and education activities.<sup>69</sup> CICA research also shows that one in two schools with a population of over 1000 students have less than \$3 per student for career education.<sup>70</sup> School career practitioners are often unable to allocate enough time and resources for consistent, personalised career education and guidance.

An increase in priority afforded to career guidance and quality programming requires greater support from governments in the form of funding and resources. Consistent support in terms of guidelines and benchmarks for developing career guidance programs should be underpinned by appropriate funding to see these guidelines through. Career advisers also require specific training and

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<sup>68</sup> Atelier Learning Solutions, op. cit., p. 3.

<sup>69</sup> Career Industry Council of Australia, *A snapshot of career practitioners in Australia*, CICA, 2015.

<sup>70</sup> *ibid.*

professional development opportunities to be able to cater to the diverse needs of young people in NSW.

**Recommendation 3.2:** Allocation of adequate funding and resourcing for schools to develop career guidance programs that meet outcomes.

### Increase in structured programs

According to research with Australian high school students, career advisers that do not have the knowledge to determine student needs and who do not have structured programs within their school are not effective.<sup>71</sup> Issues such as inaccessibility, unavailability and a general lack of the presence of a career counsellor in school life lead students to feel like they need to be the prime initiators of individual contact, a major barrier to gaining the assistance they require.

Structured programs can also assist in early intervention. Early intervention in career guidance is in turn crucial to successful transitions from education to employment. Studies show that younger students tend to have higher aspirations, so the earlier students can determine their career path, the more likely they are to pursue associated coursework during high school.<sup>72</sup> A lack of guidance in the earlier stages of secondary school can lead to the uptake of subjects that are either not well suited to their interests and abilities or to the student's desired career pathways.<sup>73</sup>

### A focus on skills, not just content

Knowledge of changing labour market needs, longer-term decision-making skills and career management skills are vital in securing employment today. This reflects the need to move towards a skills-driven learning environment rather than content based.<sup>74</sup> In today's employment climate, young people are likely to have many different jobs over their lifetime. Critical skills for future

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<sup>71</sup> K Walker, N Alloway, L Dalley-Trim & A Patterson, 'Counsellor practices and student perspectives: Perceptions of career counselling in Australian secondary schools', *Australian Journal of Career Development*, vol. 15, no. 1, 2006, pp. 37-45.

<sup>72</sup> N Galliot, loc. cit.

<sup>73</sup> N Galliot & L Graham, loc. cit.

<sup>74</sup> J Skattebol, T Hill, A Griffiths & M Wong, loc. cit.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

workforce employability likely include a dedication to lifelong learning, and capacity to navigate towards and adapt to new ways of employment.<sup>75</sup> Studies have shown the desire from students for career counsellors to move beyond simply providing a book with course or employment information, instead requiring that they provide greater assistance in making sense of the vast array of information and pathways available to students and developing action plans as options are explored.<sup>76</sup>

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<sup>75</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>76</sup> K Walker, N Alloway, L Dalley-Trim & A Patterson, *loc. cit.*

# Implementation principles – What works?

## Integrated and holistic approaches

A holistic approach to career guidance is understood to encompass a variety of mechanisms and activities that work together to create a supportive network. Such mechanisms include compulsory career education beginning in early school years, individual and tailored guidance, building links with industries and training organisations, building staff skills and the involvement of parents and carers.<sup>77</sup> This also entails resourcing for staff to provide adequate services to students, funding to support the ongoing building of staff skills, and the monitoring and evaluation of quality provision.<sup>78</sup>

Successful career programs have careers embedded in the school ethos, adequate staff and resources, start early, and provide individual career guidance.<sup>79</sup> The most effective career guidance programs are ones where a number of interventions within a school are connected together for a meaningful whole.<sup>80</sup> As mentioned, young adults who can recall more than four career activities while at school are five times more likely to be engaged in education or employment.<sup>81</sup> Coordinated strategy among the various elements of career education and guidance programs maximises resources, resulting in effective career practice.

The career guidance role needs supports to successfully address the needs of the student population. This includes funding, resources, and professional development opportunities to increase ability to coordinate an integrated career guidance program. With the changing nature of the labour market, career advisers need the resources to be up-to-date with information about the workforce and job or training opportunities.

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<sup>77</sup> S Rice, S Gillis, M Leahy & J Polesel, loc. cit.

<sup>78</sup> NSW Business Chamber, *Paving the pathway: addressing post year 10 education*, NSW Business Chamber, North Sydney, 2015.

<sup>79</sup> T Hooley, 17 October 2014, 'Inspire children with good career advice and they do better at school', The Conversation, accessed via <<https://theconversation.com/inspire-children-with-good-careers-advice-and-they-do-better-at-school-33104>>

<sup>80</sup> J Skattebol, T Hill, A Griffiths & M Wong, loc. cit.

<sup>81</sup> A Mann, loc. cit.

**Recommendation 4:** Strengthen supports for career advisers to ensure continuing professional development and information flow.

## Curriculum, not just counsellors

Recent literature suggests that by learning about the nature of current and future job markets, the educational requirements of a variety of courses, and the experience needed for different roles, students are more likely to identify suitable jobs and recognise their own skills and interests.<sup>82</sup> These teachings need to begin early and be integrated into everyday learning areas to be most effective.<sup>83</sup> Inclusion of career education in the broader school curriculum encourages students to link their learning with the future labour market. By improving the content of individual subjects to include a skills base, career education can build knowledge and skills while providing a broad range of relevant career options and workplace learning. The focus on both external knowledge (e.g. of the job market) and internal knowledge (e.g. awareness of personal attributes) can equip students not just for immediate career decision regarding subject choices, but also for lifelong management of their careers.<sup>84</sup>

The school curriculum needs to prepare all young people for the future of work by focusing on developing transferrable skills. Schools and career advisers need the appropriate information to support skill development.

**Recommendation 5:** Undertake body of work to inform curriculum linkages to skills of the future, including providing specific advice for guidance roles.

## Individual, student-centred support

Across the board career education and skills development needs to be complemented by individual support and guidance. As young people are not a homogenous group, it is important that career

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<sup>82</sup> S Rice, S Gillis, M Leahy & J Polesel, loc. cit.

<sup>83</sup> J Skattebol, T Hill, A Griffiths & M Wong, loc. cit.

<sup>84</sup> S Rice, S Gillis, M Leahy & J Polesel, loc. cit.

guidance goes beyond information provision and focuses on individual students, taking into account their particular life circumstances and needs.<sup>85</sup> Multiple studies agree that career advisers within schools are most effective when they provide tailored support that explores individual students' interests, skills, strengths and potential barriers to gaining employment.<sup>86</sup> This individual relationship allows for students to identify their own career aspirations, aligning their interests with potential occupations, as well as providing an opportunity for students to develop self-esteem and a sense of self.<sup>87</sup> This idea is supported by student feedback, with studies showing that students identify individual discussions with career staff as being the most useful career activity, and respond most positively to career advisers who are proactive and perceive students as individuals.<sup>88</sup>

## Partnerships with community organisations and employers

International reviews show that best practice in career guidance for students involves a partnership model, where external parties such as employers, training providers and community organisations work in partnership with schools. This should involve exposure to different career pathways and opportunities for experiential learning.<sup>89</sup> As discussed above, young people have a diverse range of interests and needs, which schools alone cannot always provide adequate support for. Partnerships can improve the quality and depth of school career guidance, while developing student career pathways through providing connections to employers, exposure to industry specific knowledge, and specialised support.<sup>90</sup>

In particular, opportunities for young people to develop networks with industry and business sectors can deepen their understanding of career pathways and planning.<sup>91</sup> Evidence from American

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<sup>85</sup> D Bowman, J Borlagdan & S Bond, *Making sense of youth transitions from education to work*, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Victoria, 2015, p. 38.

<sup>86</sup> See for example, Social Ventures Australia 2016; Walker et al. 2006; Rotham & Hillman, 2008.

<sup>87</sup> L O'Brien, loc. cit.

<sup>88</sup> K Walker, N Alloway, L Dalley-Trim & A Patterson, op. cit., p. 40.

<sup>89</sup> R Sweet, op. cit., p. 63.

<sup>90</sup> S Rice, S Gillis, M Leahy & J Polesel, op. cit., p. 21.

<sup>91</sup> L O'Brien, op. cit., p. 10.

and British studies suggests that employer engagement facilitates more successful transitions from education to employment.<sup>92</sup> Reviews of employer engagement programs, such as US Career Academies Program, show that former participants work and earn more than their control group peers.<sup>93</sup> The positive impacts may be heightened for young people experiencing disadvantage, who are more at risk of disengaging from study or training and may have less social capital to draw on.<sup>94</sup>

Networks become even more important to counter the lack of social capital and barriers to employment that are emphasised by disadvantage. Strong networks support skill development, work experience, job readiness, and connections with mentors. Schools need a dedicated role (whether internal or external to the school system) that acts as an opportunity to broker and develop these connections and networks.

The NSW Department of Education policy outlines a focus on outcomes with the aim for every student to be actively engaged in meaningful, challenging and future-focused learning experiences.<sup>95</sup> However, without a strong network where students can actively engage in firsthand experience within NSW schools, they lose the opportunity to participate in the career exploration and decision-making that prepares them for the workforce. This partnership model has previously been successful, as seen in the School Business Community Partnership Brokers Program, which established partnerships across Australia between schools and industry to improve young people's education and transition outcomes.<sup>96</sup>

**Recommendation 6:** Develop a mechanism to foster a network involving external employers, community organisations and schools.

## Working inclusively

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<sup>92</sup> A Mann, loc. cit.

<sup>93</sup> *ibid.*, p. 13.

<sup>94</sup> *ibid.*, p. 1.

<sup>95</sup> Department of Education, *Strategic Directions*, loc. cit.

<sup>96</sup> Social Ventures Australia, *Understanding the impact of the Partnership Brokers National Network*, SVA Consulting, 2013.

### Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds

Good practice in career guidance must incorporate an understanding of the unique experiences, needs, and strengths of young people from diverse cultural backgrounds, especially young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds. Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds often face barriers such as less social capital and face more difficulty in developing their self-identity and future goals.<sup>97</sup> Understanding that the migrant and refugee experience is often characterised by trauma, separation and loss, and that this increases the challenges of settling in a new country, is essential for effective career guidance.<sup>98</sup>

Career guidance for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds should involve families, community organisations, mentors and role models to support their self and professional development. Understanding the role of and responsibility to families, and engaging families in decision-making processes, is important for career guidance. Families often play a key role in decision-making processes for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, as many cultures may not view adolescence as a stage of individuation.<sup>99</sup> Developing positive relationships between schools and community services is also very important when working with young people from diverse backgrounds, especially given that this group is made of numerous diverse subgroups who may have differing support needs.<sup>100</sup> Educational systems can play an important role in building community and connecting young people and their families with specific support for building identity as well as navigating education and employment pathways.<sup>101</sup> Involving mentors or role models can also support self and career development, as well as highlighting the resilience of young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds.

Young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds also face further barriers to employment due to a disrupted education and lack of knowledge and skills around education and employment

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<sup>97</sup> Multicultural Youth Advocacy Network, *National youth settlement framework*, MYAN Australia, 2016, p. 11.

<sup>98</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

<sup>99</sup> *ibid.*, p. 11.

<sup>100</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>101</sup> *ibid.*, p. 9.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

pathways in Australia. Effective career guidance for this group of young people must involve support for understanding career options as well as up-to-date information on course availability and eligibility. Career guidance needs to support young people to extend their knowledge of career options and processes, in terms of what career pathways are available and how to get there.<sup>102</sup>

While all young people need the opportunity to develop practical skills necessary to participate in the workforce, for young people from migrant and refugee backgrounds, it is essential that language skills for the world of work are addressed through career education and guidance within schools. Additionally, particularly for young asylum seekers, eligibility for education and training courses can be limited, and career advisers need to be up-to-date with what courses and alternative pathways are available.

### Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people face unique barriers to engagement with education and successful transitions into employment. These barriers include a range of structural disadvantages, such as negative health and social outcomes due to trauma, removal from family, family breakdown, cultural dislocation, racism and discrimination.<sup>103</sup> As a result, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities face higher levels of disadvantage in relation to socio-economic status, education, housing, and employment, which affect the way Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people conceptualise their educational and occupational future and how they develop aspirations.<sup>104</sup> The development of aspirations is a significant process for young people, and has been shown to impact positively on educational outcomes and engagement when transitioning from school to further study and work.<sup>105</sup> Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people have identified the need for positive occupational role models, career advice and support, and a deeper

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<sup>102</sup> *ibid.*, p. 7.

<sup>103</sup> Mission Australia, *Indigenous aspirations: Employment and educational opportunities for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander youth*, Mission Australia, Sydney, 2014, p. 12.

<sup>104</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>105</sup> *ibid.*, p 4.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

understanding of how to navigate occupational pathways as factors that will assist in developing and achieving educational and occupational aspirations.<sup>106</sup>

While there is limited research on specific career practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, Indigenous career support organisations such as Career Trackers point to the need to work with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people from an early age to develop self-esteem and set goals.

Individual career counselling is particularly important, aiming to foster knowledge and awareness of education and employment, while supporting and understanding the issues faced by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, and aiming to build confidence.<sup>107</sup> The Jobs Australia Indigenous Network also notes that effective programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people are those that develop motivation and confidence, while building skills.<sup>108</sup> The use of mentors and role models is also important for young Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, as it can be a powerful experience for disengaged Indigenous young people to see their peers taking steps to improve their lives.<sup>109</sup> This is evident in mentoring programs such as the Australian Indigenous Mentoring Experience (AIME), which is a program that links up Indigenous school students with university student mentors. Reviews show that AIME students exceed national progression rates of both Indigenous and non-Indigenous students in Years 10 and 11, and that 69% of core AIME mentees reviewed had clear post-school aspirations.<sup>110</sup>

Research on best practice with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people also highlights the importance of involving families and communities. Family and community networks play a significant role in many Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations, and provide a wealth of

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<sup>106</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>107</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, *op. cit.*, p. 37.

<sup>108</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>109</sup> R Price-Robertson & M McDonald, *Working with Indigenous children, families, and communities: Lessons from practice*, Communities and Families Clearinghouse Australia, Melbourne, 2011, p. 6.

<sup>110</sup> V Harwood, S O'Shea, K Clapham, J Wright, L Kervin, N Humphry, S McMahon, M Hogan & G Bodkin Andrews, *Evaluation of the AIME outreach program*, School of Education and Interdisciplinary Education Research Institute, University of Wollongong, 2013, pp. 21-23.

resilience to draw on. Most young people rely on parents and families as information sources and supports when making decisions about post-school pathways, and this is particularly true for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, whose extended family networks often play a major role in upbringing and who are less reliant on services catering to the general population.<sup>111</sup> Research has found that engaging with families to support Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people positively influences both the formation and achievement of career and education aspirations.<sup>112</sup> Community involvement can also extend to the planning and implementation of programs. When working with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander young people, families, and communities it is important to be aware of the diverse nature of Indigenous cultures, and tailor approaches to suit different Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities in relation to education and employment outcomes.<sup>113</sup>

### Young people from rural and remote areas

Young people living in rural and remote locations have different transition experiences from young people from metropolitan areas, meaning that career guidance needs to be formulated to address the specific issues for young people who live in these areas. The terms rural and remote describe areas of NSW outside of the capital city and population centres, with rural referring to areas outside of inner and regional centres but with access to services locally, and remote referring to sparsely populated areas that are a significant distance from population centres.<sup>114</sup>

Transitions to further study and employment are a significant issue for young people living in rural and remote areas, with these areas often recording higher youth unemployment rates and lower school attendance and completion rates than metropolitan areas.<sup>115</sup> Young people from rural and remote communities face some of the same issues as all young people across Australia, however distance and reduced access to services and resources mean that issues are often more difficult to

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<sup>111</sup> Mission Australia, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>112</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

<sup>113</sup> R Price-Robertson & M McDonald, op. cit., p. 1.

<sup>114</sup> Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, *Engaging young people in regional, rural and remote Australia*, Report for the National Youth Affairs Research Scheme, 2015, p. 19.

<sup>115</sup> *ibid.*, p. 36.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

address in rural areas.<sup>116</sup> Distance imposes greater costs to access services, education and employment, often requiring lengthy travel and relocation.<sup>117</sup>

Young people from rural and remote areas also face barriers such as limited exposure to different careers and a limited number of universities and Vocational and Educational Training (VET) institutions in or close to their hometowns.<sup>118</sup> Studies show that as well as the factors relating to location, young people from rural and remote areas also tend to develop lower aspirations as a result of community attitudes.<sup>119</sup> These factors, coupled with the high co-prevalence of low socio-economic status, mean that young people from rural and remote communities need tailored career guidance programs appropriate to their contexts.

Decision-making around education and employment comes with a great deal of complexity for young people in rural and remote communities. These decisions may involve consideration of geographical relocation and the associated issues of leaving family and social disconnection.<sup>120</sup>

Whether relocating or pursuing local opportunities, it is important that young people are supported in making a decision that best meets their needs and aspirations, and that career guidance incorporates an understanding of rural conditions.<sup>121</sup> A NSW review of rural education found that, similar to other young people experiencing disadvantage, career goal-setting and mentoring were highly motivating to young people in rural and remote areas.<sup>122</sup> Young people from rural and remote communities have expressed interest in having local mentors and role models, with studies showing that rural mentoring programs help young people develop higher aspirations for their future.<sup>123</sup> Programs that have been successful in working directly with young people address not

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<sup>116</sup> *ibid.*, p. 43.

<sup>117</sup> *ibid.*, p. 6.

<sup>118</sup> R Polvere & P Lim, *op. cit.*, p. 36.

<sup>119</sup> D Curtis, A Drummond, J Halsey & M J Lawson, *Peer-mentoring of students in rural and low-socioeconomic status schools: Increasing aspirations for higher education*, NCVER, Adelaide, 2012, p. 7.

<sup>120</sup> M J Fleming & D M Grace, 'Increasing participation of rural and regional students in higher education', *Journal of Higher Education Policy and Management*, vol. 36, no. 5, 2014, pp. 483-495.

<sup>121</sup> Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, *op. cit.*, p. 44.

<sup>122</sup> *ibid.*, p. 56.

<sup>123</sup> D Curtis, A Drummond, J Halsey & M J Lawson, *op. cit.*, p. 25.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

only career education, but issues pertaining to rural background such as a lack of finances, loneliness, and students' attitudes towards higher education.<sup>124</sup>

As many of the barriers young people in rural and remote areas face are structural and community-level issues, they cannot only be addressed at the individual level. A major element of this includes addressing the lack of resources and services in rural and remote communities. Improved career guidance programs can also play a role in addressing the local context of rural young people by involving the community as a whole.<sup>125</sup> Networks between schools and external organisations and businesses to promote career planning and opportunities are beneficial for young people as well as the community itself. The involvement of the wider community is a key factor in successful engagement practices, as community involvement increases the social capital of young people by building collaborative networks.<sup>126</sup> Education and service providers, local businesses, local government, and other local organisations all develop the social capital of a community, and subsequently the futures of young people.<sup>127</sup> Intercommunity connections can also help fill resource and service gaps. The development of networks between schools and community organisations builds the expectations and values of communities, which play a large role in influencing young people's decisions.<sup>128</sup>

### Young people with disability

The experiences of young people with a disability in education and employment are often characterised by social exclusion, social isolation, inaccessibility and a lack of resources, highlighted in the 2009 National Disability Strategy (NDS) Consultation Report.<sup>129</sup> In 2009, Australia was ranked 21<sup>st</sup> out of 29 OECD countries in employment participation rates for people living with a disability,

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<sup>124</sup> P McIlveen & T Morgan, 'A longitudinal study of the experience of a career development program for rural school students', *Australian Journal of Career Development*, vol. 21, no. 1, 2012, pp. 22-30.

<sup>125</sup> Australian Clearinghouse for Youth Studies, op. cit., p. 15.

<sup>126</sup> *ibid.*, p. 8.

<sup>127</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>128</sup> M J Fleming & D M Grace, op. cit., p. 484.

<sup>129</sup> National People with Disabilities and Carer Council, *Shut out: The experience of people with disabilities and their families in Australia*, Commonwealth of Australia, Canberra, 2009.

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

with 45% of those living near or below the poverty line.<sup>130</sup> These statistics are especially concerning for young people, as consistent participation in employment is heavily influenced by the level of engagement with education and the success of the transition period. Increasing employment prospects for young people living with a disability is key to improving financial security, personal wellbeing, social inclusion and mental and physical health issues.<sup>131</sup> Career guidance programs need to address the specific needs of young people living with disabilities to ensure that they have support and access to meaningful employment.

Community and family supports play a significant role in helping young people identify their future aspirations and build work readiness skills that increase confidence and self-esteem. For young people with a disability, who often experience social exclusion, building a network of supports made up of family and community services significantly improves their sense of self and personal wellbeing.<sup>132</sup> It is crucial that career guidance programs acknowledge the importance of networks for young people with disabilities, and aim to foster independence and increase their participation in further education and employment. It is also important to note that while every young person with a disability who is able to work should have an opportunity to participate in employment and be actively supported to do so, not all young people with a disability will be suited to traditional employment settings.<sup>133</sup> For young people with high support needs, career guidance programs should include options that foster independence, connections to services, ongoing life skills development, social inclusion, and the pursuit of active and fulfilling experiences.

Young people living with a disability also face challenges when it comes to accessing appropriate resources that assist them in attending school, educational attainment and progression to employment. In the NDS consultation report, the lack of access to buildings, facilities and transport, as well as unavailable or infrequent services, were listed as the major barriers to participation in

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<sup>130</sup> Department of Education and Early Childhood Development, *Strengthened Pathways Planning: Preparing young people with disabilities for a successful future beyond school*, VIC Government, Melbourne, 2014.

<sup>131</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>132</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>133</sup> *ibid.*



## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

education and employment.<sup>134</sup> In order to address these issues, the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) has been created to fund supports that enable participants to attend school education and engage in a range of community activities.<sup>135</sup> The NDIS includes funding for specialised support to transition between schools, or from school to post-school options, however it does not cover a range of aspects specific to the school environment. According to the NDIS, the education system is responsible for modifications to buildings, learning-specific aids, specialised teachers and supervision. Regardless of whether a school provides these things or not, the NDIS will not provide funding.<sup>136</sup> This creates inconsistencies in the education system that means young people with a disability have varying levels of access to services that depend on their individual school. Career advisers need to be aware of the specific challenges faced by young people with a disability in order to increase their educational engagement and participation in the community. Linking young people living with a disability with relevant services in the community and providing additional learning aids and supports is crucial to improving accessibility.

Career guidance can help overcome barriers faced by young people experiencing disadvantage. Young people are a diverse group who face a diverse range of challenges. Career guidance needs to be tailored to understand and address the differing circumstances of young people in NSW. Key elements of career guidance that support young people experiencing disadvantage in particular include community and family involvement and support, mentors and role models to build aspirations, and networks with support services and resources.

**Recommendation 7:** Ensure career guidance programs developed are tailored support to address specific circumstances of young people experiencing disadvantage. This includes the following:

- **7.1:** Improving cultural competency, for example by involving families in discussions
- **7.2:** The use of role models and mentors for young people to experience relatable aspirations and develop confidence

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<sup>134</sup> National People with Disabilities and Carer Council, loc. cit.

<sup>135</sup> National Disability Insurance Scheme, *Mainstream Interface: School education*, NDIS, 2014.

<sup>136</sup> *ibid.*

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

- **7.3:** Career guidance programs that link young people to services and programs for support
- **7.4:** Focus on 'work' literacy and navigating new environments
- **7.5:** Guidance in terms of eligibility for university and VET courses or work opportunities.



## Case Studies

### Careers New Zealand

Careers New Zealand was established as a national external careers provider in 1989. They aim to provide a careers system that effectively connects education with employment by working in partnership with central and local government agencies, schools, tertiary providers, community-based organisations, industry and businesses, Māori organisations and iwi.<sup>137</sup> Through their website, Careers New Zealand offers career information, including about tertiary courses and career outlooks, a job database, interactive career planning tools, resources for educational institutions and one-on-one career counselling via online chat or telephone.<sup>138</sup> Careers New Zealand also supports schools to provide quality career education on a number of levels. Resources, including teaching and learning materials, links to tertiary training providers and employers, and tools for benchmarking the quality of careers guidance, are provided to schools to support their internal careers advisors. Careers New Zealand also provides external career consultants across 17 local offices who can deliver workshops and tailored activities to local schools.<sup>139</sup> Additionally, in-depth support is provided for schools experiencing disadvantage, as well as opportunities for professional training for school staff through Careers Education.<sup>140</sup>

As an external body, Careers New Zealand provides an effective holistic model of careers guidance through connecting educators and employers to improve career pathways and transitions, delivering professional development services for educators, developing tools and resources to help people make informed choices and working in partnership with other organisations to improve the quality and efficiency of student career pathways. In a recent annual report, 86% of 313 schools and tertiary organisations agreed that the support received from Careers New Zealand in 2014/15

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<sup>137</sup> Careers New Zealand, *Annual Report 2014-15*, New Zealand Government, 2015.

<sup>138</sup> NSW Business Chamber, loc. cit.

<sup>139</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> *ibid.*

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

helped to improve their career education or development services.<sup>141</sup> Community organisations and government bodies were also engaged, with 78% of groups and organisations involved reporting that Careers New Zealand's career development support was useful. Youth engagement also improved, with 70% of young people aged 15-24 knowing about Careers New Zealand, and 84% of those trusting the information and services provided.<sup>142</sup>

## Beacon Foundation

The Beacon Foundation is a national non-profit organisation that works within schools to foster community involvement and support young people to make decisions about career pathways.<sup>143</sup> Beacon aims to raise young people's awareness of available careers and link these careers to the school curriculum.<sup>144</sup> This model utilises a holistic approach integrated with external organisation involvement, creating a shared responsibility between businesses and schools and heightening schools' capacity to support a diverse range of young people. The key objectives, including exposure to employers, work readiness development, an industry focused curriculum, and job placements, work to achieve the outcomes of enhanced employability, increased student engagement, increased confidence and aspirations, strong community-school connections, and pathways to employment.<sup>145</sup>

Beacon has fostered partnerships between 2,650 businesses and 147 schools, engaging 15,750 young people in career development activities across Australia.<sup>146</sup> According to the 2014 National Outcomes Report, 94% of participants from Beacon schools reported having a greater understanding of jobs available and what employees want, 97% reported a greater understanding of how to enter the workforce, and 93% reported having developed more confidence and more skills to increase the chance of employment.<sup>147</sup> Demonstrating the value of this approach, 95% of students

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<sup>141</sup> Careers New Zealand, loc. cit.

<sup>142</sup> *ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> V Plows, K Te Riele & D Bottrell, *Beacon program at Cressy District High School. Case study*, The Victoria Institute for Education, Diversity and Lifelong Learning, Melbourne, 2014, p. 3.

<sup>144</sup> Beacon Foundation, *National outcomes report 2014*, Beacon Foundation, Hobart, 2015, p. 4.

<sup>145</sup> V Plows, K Te Riele & D Bottrell, loc. cit.

<sup>146</sup> Beacon Foundation, loc. cit.

<sup>147</sup> *ibid.*, p. 4.

from Beacon schools reported being fully engaged in education, training or work eight months after completing Year 10 in 2013.<sup>148</sup>

## School Business Community Partnership Program

In 2010, the Australian Government established the School Business Community Partnership Brokers Program to address barriers faced by young people in education and employment. This program was delivered across 107 regions in Australia by the Partnership Brokers National Network (PBNN), a network of independent professionals who facilitated partnerships based on a whole of community approach.<sup>149</sup> The program supported partnerships between schools, businesses, community organisations and other stakeholders to improve education and transition outcomes for young people.<sup>150</sup> The PBNN brokers bridged the gap where schools did not have the resources to connect with industry and helped create relationships between schools, businesses and organisations.<sup>151</sup> This led to the development of programs for young people to develop skills and engage in work experience.

Social Ventures Australia's (SVA) review of the PBNN found that the program produced a range of benefits for schools, businesses and young people. The program had significant reach, involving a network of over 100 partnership brokers who supported approximately 16,000 partnerships and more than 5,000 partner organisations across Australia.<sup>152</sup> Using a social return on investment (SROI) methodology, SVA found that between 2010 and 2013 the value of social returns from the program exceeded the government's cash investment between 1.1 and 3.7 times in different regions.<sup>153</sup> The impact of the PBNN also increased over time, demonstrating the momentum-building capacity of the program.<sup>154</sup> For young people, the program helped to increase confidence,

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<sup>148</sup> *ibid.*, p. 10.

<sup>149</sup> The Smith Family, 2016, *School business community partnership brokers*, The Smith Family, accessed via <<https://www.thesmithfamily.com.au/what-we-do/our-work/supporting-communities-in-need/community-partnership-brokers>>

<sup>150</sup> Social Ventures Australia, *op cit.*, 2013, p. 1.

<sup>151</sup> The Smith Family, *School business community partnership brokers*, *loc. cit.*

<sup>152</sup> Social Ventures Australia, 2013, *loc. cit.*

<sup>153</sup> *ibid.*, p. 2.

<sup>154</sup> *ibid.*

## Policy Paper: Career Guidance

aspirations, and the building of relevant workforce skills and networks.<sup>155</sup> For partner stakeholders, the sharing of resources and expertise helped to build capacity and capabilities.<sup>156</sup> The funding of this program ended in December 2014, leaving a significant program deficit for young people.

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<sup>155</sup> The Smith Family, *School business community partnership brokers*, loc. cit.

<sup>156</sup> Social Ventures Australia, 2013, loc. cit.

