



***Preparing for
the future
and living today***

*Young People's Perceptions of Career Education,
VET, Enterprise Education and Part-Time Work*
Prepared for Enterprise and Career Education Foundation

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1. Executive Summary

The Young Visions Project was initiated by ECEF in 2001 to provide an up-to-date analysis of young Australians' perceptions of vocational education, workplacement, career education and enterprise education. The goals of the project are linked closely to ECEF's Vision, to support 'young Australians achieving their full potential through enterprise learning and informed career choice.'

In 2002 The Youth Research Centre at the University of Melbourne undertook a series of national focus groups with approximately 400 young people in 26 schools to gain their perceptions of the changing labour market, their own lives and how school fits within the multi-dimensional nature of their lives.

Focus groups were chosen as a research tool to complement the extensive national survey being conducted by EORU at the University of Melbourne. The focus groups allowed for open ended discussion and for young people to initiate and name the issues relevant to them and their understanding of their lives and futures.

The significance of tapping into young people's own understandings and views is now recognised. Young people are, in a sense, the pioneers of 'new careers for new economies'. Policy makers and educators have a lot to learn from young people in order to construct the new frameworks for young people's education. Through the focus groups, the young people began to build their understandings and created links between their own personal narratives and the topics under discussion. These topics included:

- ◀ The role of career education;
- ◀ VET and Learning and the development of industry understanding;
- ◀ Enterprise education and the role of schools;
- ◀ Young people as workers; and
- ◀ Feeling prepared to leave school.

Throughout all the topics was an overriding theme of generic and reflexive skills that the young people need to develop to enable them to negotiate their world and balance the many, varied aspects of their lives. The generic skills were being developed in all spheres of life and then applied to other parts of their lives. Comprehensive career education gives a framework to schools to enable young people to draw on these skills through all aspects of their lives and school experience.

Career education is about:

- ◀ firstly, subjective realities (exploring what is meaningful, what matters to the student, their own stories about where I am going and why);
- ◀ secondly, objective realities (understanding opportunities, expanding their own stories about the world that they live in);
- ◀ and thirdly, developing the reflective skills required to constantly and creatively link these first two together under changing (work) conditions.

Overwhelmingly the young people reported having access to good career information. Some reported having access to career counselling but there was little understanding about career education. The differences between these and how they are happening are explored in this report.

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The students had an enthusiasm not simply for career information, but for tools to make sense of the bigger picture that faced them. While many were seeking grounded information on specific jobs, their biggest challenge and the real gap related to finding ways of actually negotiating the world they were entering. The young people therefore wanted an integrated picture from their schools and courses rather than the atomised glimpses they were getting from individual subjects. They wanted to be able to engage at school in ways that would help them to make sense of their own life experiences and the world they are part of.

Although not formally named as such, schools were providing, and young people were accessing, career education in a number of different ways including:

- ◀ VET and structured work place learning (SWL);
- ◀ Enterprise education activities;
- ◀ Extra curricula activities;
- ◀ Discussions in class making links to the bigger picture (particularly English and drama);
- ◀ Part-time work; and
- ◀ Family and friends.

It was girls not studying VET, followed by boys not studying VET and girls studying VET, who were most able to make the links across the different areas of their lives, both in and out of school, to draw together the portfolio of generic skills and understandings to develop their career narratives. Boys studying VET while connected in with a specific vocational area were not, in general, making the links across the different areas of schooling to broaden their career narratives.

Young people studying VET found that SWL or workplacement was the part of the VET course that provided them with the best understanding of the industry area that they were studying. It provided the place for the practical application of the theory that they had been learning as well as providing them with real experiences that could help them make decisions about their future directions in a very practical way.

Part-time work provided the young people with a range of skills that could be transferred to other aspects of their lives, including school, as well as providing them with an income and experience in the workforce that would help with work later. Most of the young people were not working in areas in which they wished to continue. They were based in the fast food and retail sectors, but found the people and communication skills useful for school and working with other students and teachers.

In general, the young people perceived that schools had a neutral position on part-time work as long as it did not interfere with school work. While some schools actively supported and understood the value of part-time work and helped the students balance their part-time work and school commitments, most schools still stated that school needed to be first in the young people's priorities. The young people found that they now need to 'project manage' the different aspects of their lives and would like school support to assist with this.

The young people spoke about gaining generic skills such as communicating, time management, working in groups, self awareness, synthesis of information and problem solving through a wide range of their personal experiences both in and out of school. These skills or attributes are also defined as enterprising attributes. While the students did not

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understand the concept ‘enterprise’, they could relate to the individual attributes and discuss where they developed these attributes in their lives. Enterprising attributes were most often mentioned as being developed in English, drama and sport with leadership and other extra curricula activities playing an important role. It was the subjects that most helped them reflect and consider different responses to life issues that rated most highly. Out of school, young people found that part-time work, family and social relations were areas that helped develop these skills.

Students felt that their enterprising skills could be enhanced at school through engaging in more practical, ‘hands on’ work, group work, discussion, community-based work and having teaching material relating to the real world. To really allow for the enhancement of enterprising skills, the school organization would also have to change, with a move away from the individualised subject areas to a curriculum that integrated the teachers, subject areas and the students.

The research findings have highlighted a number of key areas including:

- ◀ The need to focus on the broader work and life experiences of young people, using enabling strategies across the whole curriculum;
- ◀ The potential role of positive, purposeful narratives by young people in supporting their engagement with education;
- ◀ The role of all teachers and parents in career education; and
- ◀ The need for professional development for all teachers as to how career, enterprise and transition education can be integrated into other learning areas of the school curriculum.

2. Introduction

The Young Visions Project, initiated by ECEF, was developed to provide an up to date analysis of young Australians' perceptions of vocational education, workplacement, career education and enterprise education. The goals of the project are linked closely to ECEF's Vision, which is to support 'young Australians achieving their full potential through enterprise learning and informed career choice.' The aims of the project represent a means of fulfilling ECEF's Mission to 'build alliances which equip all young Australians with the information and employability skills to make successful transitions from school to work.'

The necessity of building a systematic and up-to-date evidence base in order to fulfil ECEF's goals is underlined by the rate of change to the world with which young people must engage, both during their school years and when they leave school. The youth research literature from all industrialised countries reveals a significant shift in the experiences of 'growing up' for the generations born after 1970, compared with their parents' generation. Yet, in Australia, as in many other countries, the foundations of our thinking about the relationship between education and work, and the preparations for life beyond school, were developed during the time of expansion to mass secondary education which occurred in the 1950s.

During the late 1990s, new foundations have been laid for a mass post-secondary education system in Australia that will be extensively developed during the 2000s. This shift alone has significant implications for the ways in which young people are prepared for work. The rate of change to all areas of life has inevitably meant that education is lifelong and that people will change their occupation several times during their career.

Because they know no other reality, young people have engaged with the new economic and social conditions unselfconsciously. Indeed, many youth researchers are documenting the development of 'new identities' that match the new conditions (Dwyer, Harwood and Tyler 1999). It is suggested that, faced with circumstances such as chronic uncertainty in the job market and the tendency for employers to favour short-term contracts, young people have embraced the notion of 'flexibility' to their own advantage. Increasingly, young people are placing a high value on their own capacities to change track and to maintain different options for themselves. The meanings of education and work are changing, and their relative significance in young people's lives, alongside other element, such as leisure and lifestyle, are also changing.

A notable feature of the research base (Wyn and Dwyer 2001) on young people, education, work and career is a shift away from prescriptive studies based on traditional approaches that pre-empt the research agenda. The significance of tapping into young people's own understandings and views is now recognised. This shift is critically important to the development of a sound research base on young people's education and career needs. Because young people are, in a sense, the pioneers of 'new careers for new economies', policy makers and educators have a lot to learn from young people in order to construct the new frameworks for young people's education. Their understandings, and the patterns of life that they are forging, reveal complexities that are important to incorporate in new policy and program directions.

2. Introduction

(continued)

The Young Visions Project process was initiated in 2001 with the goal of establishing a systematic evidence base for ECEF on young people's perceptions of vocational education, part-time work, enterprise education and careers education. ECEF commissioned two research groups at the University of Melbourne, the Educational Outcomes Research Unit (EORU) and Youth Research Centre (YRC), to undertake four tasks to achieve this goal:

- ◀ The development of a literature review (YRC)
- ◀ The development and testing of a school-based questionnaire for students to complete in classroom time (EORU)
- ◀ The development of a proposal for a national longitudinal survey of senior secondary students (EORU)
- ◀ The development of a proposal for national focus groups with senior secondary students (YRC)

Findings from the literature

The literature review (Wyn 2001) provided a basis for the development of the research tools. The review drew on extensive literature on the transition from school to work for young people. It was found that much of this literature is shaped by an implicit assumption that the educational and employment trajectories of the previous generation (the 'baby-boomers') represent an ideal that subsequent generations would and should follow. This assumption has been brought into the 1990s and 2000s through the use of the educational policy staple of the 1990s – the concept of 'pathways'. The metaphor of 'pathways' has been used relatively uncritically to present an expectation that transition processes should follow a linear trajectory and that education is the prior experience to work. Yet, even baby-boomers will agree that their own experience of becoming credentialed and of finding a job, occupation or career has been far from linear.

Researchers have begun to point out that the pathways metaphor offers a seriously flawed model of transition for the 2000s (see Wyn and Dwyer, 2001). This is because the relationship between education and employment, in particular, has changed. Young people who were born after 1970 know no world other than that in which employment is precarious; qualifications do not ensure employment and education is a lifelong process. Learning to live with contingency and uncertainty of necessity, young people are also learning to construct identities around life concerns other than work. For this reason, it is argued that knowledge about young people needs to be balanced by knowledge from young people.

Despite this, there are few studies of student workers, even though young Australians have one of the highest participation rates in the labour market in the world. Researchers have also paid relatively little attention to young people's life trajectories and reflections beyond the compulsory years and immediate post-compulsory years.

2. Introduction

(continued)

The literature review concluded that:

- ◀ Longitudinal studies provide the most effective information about the ways in which young people approach education, work and other life arenas;
- ◀ The current research suggests that there are changes in the uses that young people make of formal education, placing it alongside other, informal education processes, including work;
- ◀ The school-work duo needs to be replaced by a model that acknowledges other life spheres such as leisure, relationships and personal development;
- ◀ Young people require information about the changing nature of work and the new relationship of education to work; and
- ◀ Young people require information about what other young people are doing.

These findings, together with the preliminary findings from a pilot survey conducted by EORU, informed the design of the research that involved qualitative research conducted by the Youth Research Centre in 2002 and the development of several surveys by EORU. The design and implementation of the research is described in the methodology section of this report.

This report discusses the findings of the Young Visions focus groups conducted by the YRC in 2002, drawing on the findings of the surveys conducted by EORU where relevant.

3. Methodology

The Young Visions Project has been conducted in three phases:

- In 2002** –National classroom based survey of 20,000 students (conducted by EORU)
–National focus groups with 400 young people (conducted by YRC)
- In 2003** –National telephone survey of approximately 15,000 students (conducted by EORU)

The Young Visions Focus Groups were designed to achieve the following:

- ◀ Complement and expand upon the Young Visions Survey;
- ◀ Commence ECEF’s discussions with young Australians;
- ◀ Influence and assist the development of ECEF’s broader youth strategy; and
- ◀ Inform policy and practice regarding the Transitions Agenda.

The findings from the focus groups broadly meet the following topics:

- ◀ How do VET, Enterprise Learning and Career Education prepare a young person for successful post-school transitions and a life in the post-industrial age?
- ◀ How do young people perceive learning outside of the classroom?
- ◀ As clients of a service, what levels of satisfaction do young people have with the outcomes they obtain from ECEF-supported initiatives? This research will focus on young people’s perception of SWL or workplacement.

Rationale

The project has been based on a process that allows for young people’s voices and perceptions to be heard. For this reason focus groups were chosen as a way to allow young people to think through the issues and questions and engage in discussion about the issues.

The focus group method allowed young people to initiate their own agendas—to directly shape the focus of the interview conversation, and the content of the stories that were being told.

When one young person makes links between the concepts and their lives, it triggers similar realisations in others. Through discussion, the concepts are being grounded in ever more concrete ways. The concepts make more sense and become more applicable to these young people’s lives more generally.

From this example we can see how group processes (in this case focus group processes) build understandings. Together in discussion, the young people create the links between their worlds—their own personal narratives of what they are doing—and the topics under discussion. It is opportunities for this dialogue that many are asking for, both in career education and schooling more generally. As ideas are linked to life, they become both relevant and accessible resources for negotiating their futures.

3. Methodology

(continued)

Selection of schools and participants

Interviews were conducted in 26 schools in all States and Territories. Schools were selected from the extensive database provided by EORU that was compiled to conduct the survey. A cohort of 396 young people was selected from schools in all States and Territories. A range of socio economic status schools in all schooling sectors were selected in rural, regional and metropolitan locations. As wide a range of young people as possible was selected but, as participation was voluntary, only students comfortable with participating in a focus group interview attended.

Location	Metro	Regional	Rural
Total	247	94	52

The largest proportion of students came from metropolitan schools, reflecting population density. The larger proportion came from Government schools reflecting the participation in the different sectors.

Participants by Schooling Sector

Government	200
Catholic	89
Independent	104

The researchers asked for a gender balance as well as a section of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI), Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CLD) and other students. In some schools, particularly in rural and regional areas, there were not many CLD students to be part of the focus groups. Student participation was voluntary. This meant that students effectively self selected to be part of the interviews. More girls than boys were keen to participate and representation was low from ATSI students. In schools with a high proportion of CLD students, the CLD students were as willing to participate as any of the other students.

Participants by Ethnicity

Other	316
Culturally Linguistically Diverse (CLD)	58
Aboriginal/Torres Strait Islander (ATSI)	19

Further data on participants is included in Appendix B.

3. Methodology

(continued)

Development of Interview Schedule

The interview questions were developed through consultation with both EORU initially and ECEF. The initial consultation with EORU drew on the questions that could be further developed from their survey and the responses to the pilot survey. These included the questions about VET and learning and young people as workers. These questions were then submitted to ECEF. ECEF was also interested in young people's perceptions of career education and planning for their future and enterprise education. These questions were developed in consultation with ECEF.

The questions were developed to explore young people's perceptions about VET, part-time work, career and enterprise education. There was no corresponding interview schedule for teachers or systems. Therefore, the perspectives presented in this report are from the young people only.

The questions were piloted in early August with a group of 30 students and minor alterations were made to the interview schedule. See Appendix C for interview schedule.

Focus Groups

The group interviews were conducted in the schools from August – October 2002. Each group had approximately four participants. Most groups were conducted with participants from one year level: year 10, 11 or 12. Some groups had a mixture of VET and non-VET students, depending how the schools organised the interviews. The interviews were approximately 45 minutes to one hour in duration.

The Year 12 students were interviewed a few weeks before they completed Year 12 and started their exams. For a number of students, this was a critical point in their thinking about their possible futures. Some students had realised, at this point, that they were not going to do as well as they had originally hoped and were having to rethink their career path and options. It was also a point at which they were most unsure of their future. They did not have a final score from their Year 12 studies but had some idea as to how well they would do. Their responses, therefore, could be quite different than if they had been interviewed at the beginning of the year.

One striking feature of the interview process was the way that the students developed their thinking and exploration of the areas being discussed as the interviews progressed. The students were thinking in a holistic manner about the areas and would often answer other areas in the interview schedule as they were talking about one area. Although the interview schedule was set out in separate sections, the students did not see their response as fitting neatly into a separate section. For the students, discussing VET and workplacement was also strongly linked to discussing career education and planning for the future.

For some students, this was one of the few opportunities they had to discuss these issues, so this time in the focus groups was actually forming their thinking about the issues. Because of this, the answers to some of the questions would evolve as the interview progressed. This was particularly so for the discussion around what they may do and whether they would own a business. As a methodology for exploring the issues of careers and linking them to young peoples lives, the small group format proved to be powerful in itself.

A sheet with a list of enterprising attributes (Commonwealth of Australia 2002: 24) was given to the students. They were asked to rate their enterprising attributes and then think about how these attributes were used in the school subjects, extra curricula subjects and in outside school activities. This sheet helped develop the students' understanding of

3. Methodology

(continued)

enterprising attributes and provided a basis for the future discussion. Many students had little knowledge of this area prior to the interview.

See Appendix D for Enterprising Attributes Sheet.

Analysis of the data

All the interviews were recorded in a database at the completion of the interviews. The database was then used to generate the themes and discussion for the final report. The final report also draws on the findings of the *Young Visions Final Report* for the survey (Polesel and Helme 2003) as a basis for comparison and discussion.

Pre-service teachers

Pre-service teachers attended the interviews. They were funded by ECEF as research assistants to be part of the interview process. They participated in the interviews and discussed with the students what the students thought made a successful teacher. The pre-service teachers wrote a response to the interviews. This is included in Appendix A.

4. Developing the Story

This section will introduce a career education framework (Patton 2001) that will provide the basis for linking young people's perceptions of career education, VET and workplacement, enterprise education and part-time work to be discussed in following sections. All these experiences and opportunities for skill development contribute to the young people creating a picture of what they are doing now and how they may live in the future.

This section of the report explores:

- ◀ Are young people receiving careers information, counselling or career education?
- ◀ What do the young people report that schools are doing?
- ◀ Sources of career information for young people
- ◀ Do the young people's subjects relate to their possible careers?
- ◀ Changing careers—young people's perceptions of the future
- ◀ What skills have the young people gained from school to make changes?
- ◀ What do they need?
- ◀ What can schools do?

Most young people in the focus groups expressed a need to be prepared for the next steps of their journeys. The Report of Survey Data (Polesel and Helme 2003) reveals that around 98% of students felt that an important task of a good school was to help them achieve good academic results. Around 90% felt that a good school would help them to learn about business and industry. Nearly 90% of students felt that one of the tasks of a good school was to prepare them for a job at the end of school.

Around 85% of the young people surveyed felt that their school was doing well on the first task. By way of contrast, this figure fell to 65% for the second task, and a low 59% for the third. Many young people are not feeling prepared for a job at the end of school (Polesel and Helme 2003).

These findings have been supported in focus group data, and elaborated further by the young people in their own words.

Careers information, counselling or career education?

Overwhelmingly, the young people in the focus groups reported that they had access to good career information, although many highlighted specific gaps in terms of their own needs. Some reported having access to useful careers counselling. In their own words though, they are suggesting the form and content of career education needs more attention. Their perspectives on this will be explored throughout this section.

Patton's distinctions between careers information, counselling and career education are useful. She argues that 'Career education is often confused with career counselling and career information, and the distinction needs to be clarified.' (Patton 2001:14)

Careers information:

"...is a very inclusive concept and consists of job and occupational descriptions; information about employment trends and consequent opportunities or declines in

4. Developing the Story

(continued)

opportunity; details about courses and qualifications...” (Patton, 2001:14)

while Career **counselling**:

“is a more intensive activity and is most often conducted in a one-to-one or small group setting. It is concerned with assisting individuals to identify, own and manage their career concerns.” (Patton, 2001:14)

Patton draws upon ECEF’s working definition of career education:

“Career education provides planned learning experiences to enable young people to make informed choices about their futures.”

She suggests that the subject matter or content of career education needs to contain three elements:

first:

“Self-awareness / preparation helps clarify personal values, strengths, potential and aspirations. The skills acquired in this phase are used throughout the lifespan.”

second:

“Opportunity awareness relates to the world of work (paid and unpaid) in which individuals make choices. Individuals need to understand issues and trends that affect education / training and employment opportunities, to learn respect for work of all kinds, and to learn about the full range of opportunities available to them and how to access them.”

and third:

“Decision and transition learning builds capacity to transfer skills to further learning and employment, and involves action plans to accomplish learning goals, including skills in: career management and decision making; seeking and maintaining jobs; making career transitions; managing unexpected change; and participating in lifelong learning.”
(Patton 2001:14)

In other words, career education is about:

- ◀ first, subjective realities (exploring what is meaningful, what matters to the student, their own stories about where I am going and why);
- ◀ second, objective realities (understanding opportunities, expanding their own stories about the world that they live in); and
- ◀ third, developing the reflective skills required to constantly and creatively link these first two together under changing (work) conditions.

We found an enthusiasm from students, not simply for career information, but for tools to make sense of the bigger picture that faced them. While many were seeking grounded information on specific jobs, their biggest challenge and the real gap related to finding ways of actually negotiating the world they were entering. This specifically related to the people that they saw as important to their career trajectory—wanting information from the people who are in that world at the moment (for example, university students or older brothers and

4. Developing the Story

(continued)

sisters). They wanted to be able to access not just the ‘what’ and ‘where’, but also the ‘how’. These major themes support and develop some key findings from the *Young Visions Final Report* (Polesel and Helme 2003). This, students tell us, is the ‘preparation for a job ‘that they need.

What do the young people report that schools are doing?

Focus group data lends itself to being reported through Patton’s framework: career information, career counselling, and career education.

Careers information:

All young people in the interviews could talk about some sort of career information that they had accessed. In general, the young people were very positive about the careers information that they received. They felt they were given many opportunities to find out about careers and the different options. While some schools had specific subjects at Year 9 or 10 or in home-room, these subjects were sometimes oriented to careers information rather than career education.

Some pointed to the particular courses that had allowed them to develop specific career skills:

In English com (commercial) they teach us how to write resumes (Year 12 Male Metro QLD VET).

Mainly in Work and Lifestyle and Outdoor Ed they give you guides about different jobs and you have to research it, but that is about it (Year 11 Female Rural SA).

The careers course basically just helped us with everything. Presentation of self, organisation of everything. As you go in for a job, what’s important, what’s not. What to say. Good and dodgy jobs (Year 10 Female Metro ACT VET).

Part of Year 10 is the Work Education subject that tells you what you have to do and what courses you have to do so they are pretty good in that respect. You do resumes, interviews, portfolios and how to research jobs. I think some people went off to do an apprenticeship and I think our school helped with that. (Year 10 Male Metro SA).

Business, enterprise and technology is the most helpful subject in terms of writing resumes (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

I reckon the careers class helped heaps. It taught me heaps about workplace relations—how to act, how to dress (Year 10 Male Metro ACT).

Some schools had dedicated careers centres, which the students found useful:

The careers department is active in promoting info about unis and stuff. They have notices in gas (home-room) meetings—news about open days, courses, and jobs. People go there too (Year 12 Male Metro ACT non-VET).

Through the careers advice I found a course in Melbourne and through my own research as well. The careers advice is very good. Other schools come here for advice

4. Developing the Story

(continued)

because the school is Year 11 and 12 only so it is focussed on careers (Year 12 Male Metro NT non-VET).

An interesting State and Territory difference emerged here. A number of students in the more populous States mentioned that they were only given information about the universities in their State and particularly those closest to them. They wanted information about all universities including overseas because there may be different courses on offer that they would be interested in:

There is a focus on NSW education. There is no information about other courses in Australia and overseas courses. I want to do equine studies which is about the breeding and management of horses (Year 11 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

In the Northern Territory the students spoke about accessing information from all universities in Australia. They would be applying throughout Australia and would be moving from the Northern Territory for their tertiary education.

Useful communication methods mentioned by students included e-mail on career options and being given internet addresses to follow up for themselves. Students commented that it was a sign of taking responsibility for their career that meant they had to find information themselves rather than having too much information given to them.

With careers it's there but you have to go and look for it. Because it's a college they think of you as more independent. They expect you to go to them. They are helpful but think of you as adult (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

Some suggested that work experience had been valuable:

Work experience—I worked at a legal firm. It opened my eyes and made me realise what I didn't want to do (Year 10 Male Metro ACT).

Work experience—I guess we just went out into the workplace, like adults more than children (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

Students were interested in having guest speakers but particularly liked it when the speakers talked about the steps that they took to develop their career rather than focussing on the career itself. The students were very focussed on how to get places rather than what the place actually was. Students who had experienced a careers expo had enjoyed the showcase of multiple choices and perspectives. The students found University students, or younger people interested in similar careers, of most use and interest.

The development of relationships between the careers people and the students was seen as important for some of the young people. This echoes the findings of the Pathways Project (Stokes and Tyler 2001) that found that young people needed about four interviews/interactions with the pathways negotiator to build up trust and start talking about possible futures. One CLD young woman found that this happened in her smaller ESL classes:

The careers teacher is the best. She catches up with you and talks to you. I have also filled in a pathways sheet and we talk about careers in home group each week. We get to hear about open days. You get looked after in the small classes like ESL classes. The teachers make sure you understand. (Year 12 Female metro VIC non-VET).

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(continued)

In the area of career information, we found an affirmation of the things that schools are doing and a hunger where these things were sparse:

We could have more speakers—people from industry know what they are talking about. Another Expo would be O.K. (Year 12 Male Metro WA).

They could get more people to come and talk to us. We could go on excursions to industries. (Year 10 Male Regional WA).

Discussion about these kinds of resources also highlighted some particular challenges for students from rural areas—who typically did not have a lot of guests coming in, and had to travel a long way to make use of expos and open days outside their own communities. They mentioned transport, time, and the expense to the school as being obstacles to accessing these resources. For those at schools with greater levels of resources available, these things were not barriers. Students at a rural grammar school reported being put on a bus and taken to Brisbane for a week to explore career and university options. Meanwhile, students from a small rural public school shared how, if their school had bussed them to town, this would have made a serious impact on another class's ability to run at all (for financial reasons): 'It doesn't happen.'

Career counselling

Most students had some form of career counselling around Years 11 and 12 to help with subject selection. Others found the career counselling from agencies that came to the school very useful.

The local training group person comes in every Monday and Wednesday for half a day. She sits in the library and you make an appointment to see her, especially if you are thinking about leaving school. She helps with apprenticeships and traineeships (Year 11 Female Regional NSW).

Own uni room. Own careers room. We have a uni person in every Monday (Year 12 Male Regional TAS).

At end of year the principal and Mrs B told us about courses. Teachers put in recommendations. (teacher's name) helped us with subject selection counselling. She's the Year 11 coordinator. Parents and kids talk to her (Year 11 Male Rural NT).

Good career office, the teachers are helpful, looking out for students. That's how I found my job (Year 12 Female Regional TAS).

We have an Employment Officer. She's not a teacher but a careers person. She helps us with our resumes and finding jobs. She doesn't like kids leaving school unless they have something to go to. She is in the study room (Year 12 Female Metro SA).

A number of the VET students commented on the assistance they were given in regard to careers by their VET Coordinator. It was the VET Coordinator who was assisting the young people to find apprenticeships.

The VET Coordinator helps with workplacement, work experience and apprenticeships (Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

We have the VET Coordinator and we have the careers teacher who tells you what

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(continued)

subjects to do to get into what you want to do. She organised our timetables (Year 11 Female Rural SA).

You can talk one on one to the VET Coordinator or the School Counsellor—I think that goes OK for people. (Year 10 Male Metro SA).

We have a counsellor and he has information on TAFE and uni, or you can go and see him for a one-on-one session. Can also talk to the VET Coordinator. There is work experience that you get to do as well, one week for Year 10s although it's more if you do VET, as you have to do a placement (Year 10 Male Metro SA).

Those who had missed out on counselling made a point of saying so:

One-to-one discussion of options would be good (Year 12 Male Metro NSW).

There should be more teachers who know about careers and work. You should be able to talk to them all about what you want to do (Year 11 Female Regional WA).

And when I went for help from our courses counsellor it didn't help. I got really stressed out. We should also have a (general) counsellor—they need to send you to a counsellor (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

Career Education

In focus groups, young people reported that there was value in the subjects that had allowed them to become 'reflective actors' in the social world.

At school we learn about resources, how to plan, negotiate. With dance you evaluate your performance (Year 12 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

[looking at list] In sport you learn to evaluate your performance, to be flexible, to be responsible, negotiate, understand authority. Team sports are about drive (Year 12 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Drama and English encouraged them to get inside other people's stories, and to reflect on their own position. PE studies encouraged them to reflect upon their own practices in relation to health and relationships. Sport and dance classes had taught them to reflect on their performances and explore what might be done differently the next time. These very general skills—constantly linking action with reflection—are also powerful career skills, equipping students for a changing labour market. These generic skills will allow young people, in any setting in which they find themselves, to recognise opportunities and reflect upon their own courses of action.

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(continued)

Sources of information

In focus groups, young people were asked who they would talk to about their futures, particularly their career choices. Where did people get their ideas from? People drew on their networks. Their responses show that they were drawing information from different ranges of trusted others.

- ◀ Family was the most likely source of information on careers.
- ◀ There was little difference between VET and non-VET students in regard to accessing family for career information.
- ◀ Non-VET students were more likely than VET students to talk to teachers about careers.
- ◀ Female VET and non-VET male students were more likely than their peers to access industry contacts.
- ◀ Males were a little less likely to talk to friends about careers than females; and
- ◀ In general, female students mentioned accessing a wider range of sources of information than male students.

I talk to my sister because she is in 2nd year uni and my parents who have degrees. I also talk to my workplacement employer who recommends things to me in the industry (Year 12 Female Regional QLD VET).

I talk to my Mum and family and brothers and friends about going to TAFE and doing hospitality (Year 11 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

I go and talk with the elders that have been there and worked there and my Mum about some things (Year 12 Female Rural SA VET).

The most common source of information that young people mentioned was parents:

Parents mostly (Year 12 Male Regional TAS non-VET).

I just went to army open day. My old man gave me a sheet on it. Old man's helpful—he did it when he was younger [National service league] (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

My mum knows this woman who has a graphic design business. I want to do that (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

Mum helps you make decisions and helps you map out your future (Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

This mirrors the findings of other studies (see also DETYA 2001:62).

Often they would be older siblings:

My older sister and her friends. I talk to them about what they have done and what they went on to study (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

Peers:

Friends—good to bounce ideas with (Year 12 Male Metro ACT non-VET).

Supportive friends help you become aware (Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

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(continued)

People who are just a bit ahead of them and doing the things that they might want to do:

People you know who are doing courses. I have networks already at uni
(Year 12 Male Regional TAS non-VET).

Friends doing TAFE hospitality—about the business and how it is
(Year 11 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

Friends who have left school, in the other school – they're a year ahead doing that course
(Year 10 Female Rural NSW).

Older friends:

I had a friend who was living with us for a while. His dad was in the army—working on the water stuff as a fitter and turner—which is kind of what I want to do. I used to talk to him about it. At the end of the year he took me to a military base and showed me around the info centre
(Year 12 Male Rural VIC VET).

Influences of elders generally. I mean parents, friends of parents, bosses, workmates and even friends' parents who look out for you, take an interest in your life and are there to offer advice if and when you need it
(Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

Teachers:

A lot of subject teachers
(Year 12 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

Some teachers you get along well with. And just hearing what they've done
(Year 12 Male Regional TAS VET).

I talk to my favourite teachers
(Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

I get bombarded by [teachers name] every day. She helps me to get through and she helps me get into uni. Newsletters, drama teacher info, read this, see that, do that...
(Year 12 Female Metro ACT non-VET).

Primarily though, as the comments above highlight, people were drawing upon those to whom they could relate their own stories. They are often also the people that students felt could shed some light on the bigger stories—or the ways to do things:

I talk to my parents. 'Cos they've got more experience in what I want to do. Friends don't really have that much experience to offer
(Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

In telling these stories young people demonstrated that they had different sized 'resource bases'. A common pattern among this age group and other groups is that young people will only draw upon trusted others for information or other more practical resources (see Wierenga 2001). Those that have extensive networks of trust relationships outside school are effectively resource-rich. Those that have limited numbers of people who they can trust also work from very limited resource bases as they negotiate their futures. Sometimes the school is the only source of support, but more often this is one of the sources that gets cut off earliest (see DETYA 2001).

Privilege or class showed up as extra opportunities through the out-of-school networks that

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(continued)

people were able to draw from.

I decided for myself because I've been in that domain (paid performing) since I was really little. Also my singing teacher and my ex-singing teacher (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

My parents are very good friends of the ex-chairman of Melbourne Uni, so we had a good talk (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

So differences in the ways in which young people can make use of the opportunities are about cultural capital (Bourdieu, 1974) and also social capital—the trust relationships through which resources flow (Putnam 1995). This all adds up to make a kind of ‘career capital’. (See *Discussion of the Findings* for expansion of these points)

Do the young people's subjects relate to their possible careers?

The majority of students in Years 11 and 12, whether male or female, studying VET or not, responded that their subjects were related to their future careers.

I think most subjects are relevant, about 99% are helpful. Subjects like work studies, English and IT are very helpful to my career (Year 11 Female Regional WA VET).

Female non-VET students and to a lesser extent female VET students and male non-VET students were more likely to be studying a broad range of subjects to keep their options open for university.

At the moment I am doing legal studies, international studies, politics and biology. That will allow me to do nursing as a back up (Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

Want to do nursing pediatrics or paramedic. I do health and human development, biology, maths and do food tech, if I am interested in hospitality. It gives me a few options (Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

I picked a variety. I don't know what I want to be, so I picked for interest: law, art, hospitality, all creative stuff (Year 11 Female Metro NSW VET).

I chose my subjects to keep my options open for uni (Year 11 Male Metro WA non-VET).

I chose mine not knowing they would coordinate and be really helpful. I chose things to go in different directions: biology, PE, English, food and hospitality, and drama. They all help because I'm not sure what I'm going to do, but they work together. I could go somewhere with beauty therapy, maybe food and hospitality and biology and PE is good for naturopathy (Year 12 Female Rural SA VET).

The vast majority of male VET students and the majority of male non-VET students did not mention this. They either found their subjects relevant or not relevant to their future careers.

My subjects are very relevant. I would like to be in the electrical field and I study physics, Maths B, engineering, tech studies, graphics and industrial skills (Year 12 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

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(continued)

I am doing drama, music and performing arts. I would like to be an artist or a teacher. All hopes and aspirations have to do with the arts. I would like to go to the Conservatorium of Music (Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

My subjects are relevant. I am doing music and media and I would like to do sound production at TAFE (Year 12 Male Metro VIC non-VET).

I was going to go into IT but not now. So they are not relevant now. After workplacement I can't stand the thought of being stuck in an office. So I haven't made a choice (Year 12 Male Metro NSW VET).

Male VET students were more likely to nominate one particular subject, particularly their VET subject that was relevant to their career.

Metal work is relevant; I can get a certificate I and go straight to being a mechanic. It will help with getting an apprenticeship. I want to be a mechanic (Year 11 Male Regional QLD).

Probably just Seafood and Industry. I don't think English and Australian Studies help me that much (Year 11 Male Rural SA VET).

In Year 10, the students gave a different response. They were far more likely to be undecided about a career and then were not sure what relevance the subjects they were doing had. They often responded that there was less choice and that they would have more choice in Year 11...

We do not have much choice in Year 10, only three electives and mainly core subjects (Year 10 Female Regional QLD).

The subjects are not really related. They are more when you get to Year 11. There are a huge range of subjects available. I want to do hospitality and workplacement at the Sofitel. I did work experience there this year. I want to do this so I can earn money at uni (Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

...and that the electives they were doing were the most relevant, if the electives were based on their areas of interest.

Electives are the most useful. The core subjects are not relevant. I suppose it depends on what you want to do (Year 10 Female Metro WA).

Other students in all years, talked about picking subjects that could enable lifestyle choices rather than picking subjects for a particular job...

I want to go travelling so I am doing VET to get hospitality work. I don't know what I want to be but I want something with travel (Year 11 Female Metro NT VET).

or subjects that would enhance their life skills.

Music isn't relevant to what I want to do in life. It's just enjoyable. They say you don't get an open mind until you do music and other things. Otherwise you just use one part of your brain and there is a whole other part. It's relevant to life but not to my job (Year 12 Male Metro SA VET).

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(continued)

One student commented on the relevance of her activities outside school rather than in school.

I want to be a legal officer in the airforce. At the moment what I do outside is most relevant. I go to cadets on Friday nights and school holidays and two weekends a month. I want to join the army reserve in Year12. The airforce pays for the degree and I get paid to do it. I have been doing recruiting work for the army. I sent out letters then talked at different schools at their assemblies for Years 7/8. I also teach classes on a Friday night at cadets. I have learnt cadets instructional technique to do this (Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

Changing careers—young people’s perceptions of the future

In focus groups, young people were asked, ‘What do you see yourself doing in five years, ten years?’ Their responses gave many clues as to who has been around to help them make sense of both their own lives and the changing opportunities around them. They were also asked if they expected to change careers during that time.

Half of the young people thought they would change careers while the other half felt they would stay in one career area:

Within same industry (Year 11 Female Regional NSW).

Hopefully I will be working as a travel consultant. I might change but still be working in the travel industry (Year 12 Female Metro WA).

We’ll have to change a lot. That’s why we have to keep our subjects pretty broad (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

I’d probably expect to change three times in my lifetime (Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

I think I’ll have to be very flexible (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

I would like to be working as something to do with the electrical field, and to have a family. I won’t change, I have always wanted to be an electrician (Year 12 Male Regional QLD).

Hopefully I will be finished my apprenticeship. I would like to stick with one job but I am not sure (Year 11 Male Regional WA).

I would like to finish my hairdressing apprenticeship and then I want to be on the first plane out of here to Europe and USA. I won’t change, I will stay a hairdresser. I am not the same as my sisters. Dad has different expectations but I like this job and there is one always there (Year 11 Female Metro NT).

Non-VET males and females and VET females responded that they were likely to change careers. VET males were far more likely to respond that they would not change their career. They more often responded that they were focussed on the career related to their VET subject and not likely to change. Comments like, ‘I have always wanted to be an electrician or a mechanic’ were not uncommon.

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(continued)

Some young people felt they would change within a related field but would not change the field, while others felt they had so many interests to explore that they would have a number of careers:

Bachelor in International Studies and language. I will be working overseas in a business diplomatic corp. I will change workplaces but not careers. Your degree confines what you do (Year 11 Male Metro NT).

Hopefully I will be working as a travel consultant. I might change but still be working in the travel industry (Year 12 Female Metro WA).

I'll change because I will get bored easily. I'll change within the arts area (Year 11 Female Metro NSW).

I will change a lot because I have four things that I am thinking of doing (Year 12 Female Metro VIC).

Responses were split between those who expected to change, and those who felt that once they had invested 'all that time' in training, they were going to stay where they landed:

Keep going on the same path—no use going six years and then deciding that I don't want to do it (Year 10 Male Metro QLD).

I'm just headed in one direction. I don't really want to change (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

Among the latter there seemed to be little understanding (yet) of the possibilities for lateral mobility within the same career area.

Financial considerations played a part as to whether young people thought they would change. Some felt that university degrees were so expensive that to change and return to study would leave them with too great a debt. Many mentioned the investment of time already put in after a university degree, and spoke of their unwillingness to consider change because of that. Particularly rural students explained that a university degree was going to cost so much that they simply could not afford to change:

In ten years time I will still be paying back HECS and still dollars in debt (Year 12 Male Rural NSW non-VET).

Answers to this question about change (more than any other asked in the focus groups) tended to be simplistic. Many saw the question as relating to their desire to change (boredom) and had not really put much thought into the surrounding economic conditions:

Probably often if I get bored with one I'll just switch and get an education in another (Year 12 Female Metro TAS).

Marketing industry in Sydney. I would like to stick to one thing. If it gets boring I'd like to have two careers in my lifetime (Year 12 Male Metro NSW).

No idea. I think we will probably change but I don't know. It depends on whether I am doing a job I like (Year 11 Female Regional WA).

Others had clearly put in a great deal of thought. This difference was about the clarity of

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(continued)

young people's own stories—'career narratives'—and also the sophistication of the larger stories that they had been able to integrate, about what was happening in the world around them. These in turn were a result of young people's different (socially varied) practices of reflection.

Psychology and part-time piano teacher. In Sydney. It's very likely that I will be involved in casual or part-time work. Because of technology we are losing permanent jobs, and new jobs are opening up (Year 12 Female Metro NSW).

(Paraphrasing the question for another student)—*how many career paths do you think that you will have. Isn't it that we should expect to change four times?* (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

I just hope that newspapers still exist because, like TV's mostly taken over. I'll always have to consider the possibility of changing because of, one, my own interest levels or two, things change around me (Year 10 Male Metro QLD).

Clarity in such 'career narratives' showed that these stories had been developed and rehearsed with an interested audience. Usually students referred to their parents and key teachers.

Some students showed a relatively clear understanding of workforce changes and articulated the implications for their own futures. These students were a minority. They were students who had schools who had intentionally coached them in these changes to prepare them, individuals whose (usually professional) parents had become 'coaches' to this end, and also individuals who had done subjects such as 'workplace practices' in VET. From some young people's comments in focus groups, it was clear that they had been talked through these topics in such a way that they really understood them. However, few schools appeared to be helping students to map the changes in this way. The schools that did this well were rare, but they spanned the spectrum from a public school in a 'disadvantaged area' (staff comment) to an elite high fee paying independent school.

What skills have the young people gained from school to make changes?

The young people were asked what skills they learnt at school to enable them to make changes in their occupations in the future. They were asked about school in general not about a specific subject. The breakdown of VET and non-VET students was dictated by the responses of the young people. They were students either studying VET or not studying VET. The response to this reveals an interesting split:

- ◀ The vast majority of non-VET males and females felt that the schools were giving them skills to make changes later in their working lives.
- ◀ The vast majority of VET males and females felt the schools were not giving them skills to make changes later in their working lives.

The VET students were not saying that VET did not give them skills to change, rather school in general did not give them skills to change.

The type of skills that both non-VET males and females mentioned were the generic enterprising skills including: time management, communication, research, confidence, team work and leadership.

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(continued)

We learn time management, juggling, productivity, finding information and using it in different ways. Gaining knowledge and understanding to use in real life situations. Communication skills, specifically what I learn in English, oral and written skills like how to be a better speaker and writer. The school encourages extra curricula performing arts, music through the instrumental program (Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

Particular activities at school that would help included: having a range of subjects to fall back on, being involved in enterprise-like programs: for example Australian Business Week (ABW) and learning another language(s).

There are a lot of different sections in the subjects taught, so I have a range of things to fall back upon eg. finance in maths. The school teaches us to see change for what it gives not as a threat (Year 12 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

I could change though because the subjects I am doing will get me into most areas eg. Maths, Science, IT and English. The school teaches you to be self reliant. There are no bells and you have to get to class on time by yourself. They are setting you up to be responsible in your working life (Year 12 Male Metro NT non-VET).

Students from one school that had a very multicultural student population and taught a wide variety of languages, regarded this as a significant factor in helping them deal with change in the future. Through interacting with the diverse school population, the students responded that they had developed tolerance and learnt how to compromise:

This school helps you adjust to change. It is so multicultural and helps with developing tolerance and understanding that is useful in any industry or wherever I move to (Year 11 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

A few VET students, both male and female, spoke about having a range of subjects to fall back on, but a more common response was that the school did not teach them any skills to change.

This split was highlighted in an elite girls school that was visited. The girls not doing VET could reflect on a range of skills learnt at school, that would help them to make changes later on, but the girls doing VET replied that the school had not taught them skills to enable them to deal with change.

What do the young people need?

The interviewers would ask about jobs and hear about lives, or ask about a five year plan and young people would tell about everything else, and there might be a job somewhere in there. This was not so much evidence that young people were missing the point, but that a careers education program would need to take this richness and balance, as well as why the young people wanted to work in particular areas, into account.

Married maybe, nice house, go to Scotland, working in science—perhaps a genetic engineer (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

In another country, third world, do nursing in another country in hospitals—every six months to different countries round the world. Travelling—a ticket to the world.

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(continued)

Nursing gives opportunities—gives areas to work in, and have ability to do other things. I would like to do medicine (Year 11 Female Metro WA non-VET).

I want to be married with kids and working, maybe as a police officer or in marketing. I also want to go overseas and work at marketing. You have got to like a job, not just do it for the money (Year 12 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

Moving out of home. Stable job. Become independent and not rely on parents. Travelling (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

I'm not really sure—I'll be around!!! (laughter) In five years I reckon I will be in the youth field, if not I'll be trying to go to uni. In ten years time, I'm not sure then—ten years!! But thinking about that one I have two nephews who are disabled, so I was thinking about getting into the disability area and I've had experience of them. I might do some courses in this at uni. I'm impatient sometimes, so if I don't like working with the kids, I'll get impatient and do something else. I like hanging around with older people. They've got more experience and I can learn something off of them. I may end up working with elders, so I will probably shift (Year 12 Female Rural SA VET).

I would like to be doing a five year commerce engineering course in Melbourne. I will try out jobs and then move to a more specialized job from part-time to full-time. I will stay in the professional area depending on the salary and the boss (Year 12 Male Metro NT NonVET).

Probably still working in the tourism industry, travel and have a family (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

Working in a bar in England with my wife (Year 11 Male Metro QLD VET).

I might be finishing my study up in five years, or working in retail. In ten years I want to be somewhere on a boat. I don't want to be in Australia, I want to be out teaching diving. I think everyone has to change jobs sometime. They move up or move down or move out of the area. Everyone does, no-one stays in one job for all the time. It will be quite a few times for me, especially if I go overseas with my work (Year 11 Male Metro SA VET).

Working in Army—don't know what. Would like to live somewhere cold. Lived all over Australia—Perth, Brisbane, Darwin, and Tassie. Like to live in Melbourne. Will stay in army—join for five years—start as field engineer then go to something else. I don't mind moving. They make you retire at 55—so will have to find job after then (Year 11 Male Metro NT).

As a Christian I believe that if God wants me to be there in five years I will. In ten years, definitely, still be playing basketball in ten years, unless I've had an injury or something. If that happened I would be pretty happy with that for a while. If I do that, you'll have a big name and people may buy your paintings. Probably a very big chance for me because it is such a hard thing I am going for, so I'd have to say yes. If I went to uni, I might even be a teacher if I did., I don't mind teaching cause you need leadership qualities that I have; more little kids, not our age because we are jerks!!! I enjoy young kids as well (Year 12 Male Metro SA VET).

Young people's stories about 'what kind of job I want to do' are intricately intertwined with

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(continued)

stories about the kind of community that they want to live in, who they want to spend their time with, significant relationships, family, friends, personal interests, travel aspirations.

Never in office job, not in Sydney, in the country, maybe England. For career, something to do with horses, perhaps breeding. And family, depending on when Mr Right shows up. I want to be happy (Year 11 Female, Metro NSW).

In five years I'll be travelling overseas after uni. In London or Spain or still at uni. I always wanted to be architect. (Year 11 Female, Metro NT).

Five years—work in retail and be engaged (Year 12 Female Regional TAS VET).

Start a physio course down in Melbourne or Albury, a year's work experience in Australia, then travel. Have my own practice and marry B (girlfriend's name) (Year 12 Male Regional VIC non-VET).

In India, working with kids. Mission work (Year 12 Female Metro ACT non-VET).

Travelling hopefully in Northern Africa, Asia Europe and South America. My own business – professional coaching, or the chartering thing (Year 11 Female Metro QLD VET).

To bracket off these other interests and to ask young people about their futures is to only get a tiny fraction of the picture, and often one that is contingent upon all of the above. It is as constricting as the traditional question 'what do you want to be when you grow up?'. Job does not equal identity any more (if it ever did). In focus groups, young people are talking holistically about their own lives. For some of these young people, the development of this kind of holistic narrative is neither fostered nor facilitated in the institutions that would help them to shape their futures. The net result is that their career narratives can remain quite abstract—at the level of head knowledge—or fragmented, disjointed from, or jarring against their other real plans and the things that they find most important in life.

What can schools do?

Expanding the themes found in the focus groups, this section draws heavily on the framework provided by Patton's work at the beginning of the section. Career education needs to be built upon:

1. self awareness / preparation (personal narratives)
2. opportunity awareness relating to the world of work (bigger narratives)
3. decision and transition learning (practices of reflective action)

1. Self awareness / preparation (own stories / subjective realities)

Patton (2001) suggests that a significant part of the career education that needs to occur in schools is to encourage students to develop their own 'career narratives'. This is about developing subjective meaning, or making career education meaningful to the student.

The idea of young people's narratives or stories being central to the way in which they negotiate their futures is supported by other recent longitudinal work (eg. see Wierenga

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(continued)

2001, 2002). In this study, it is only the young people that can tell coherent, grounded stories about 'where I am going' and 'how I might get there' who become sensitised to recognise and make use of resources (eg. education) as opportunities appear. When the information on offer relates to the young person's own story, it become meaningful and accessible. 'Storying' one's life is a learned practice, a reflective practice, and the study shows that schools can be instrumental in the development of such practices.

The focus groups added to this picture by demonstrating the importance of linking both the 'subjective' meaning and the 'objective' realities. Where students were receiving information that was not connecting to their own stories, it did not make sense, and it was not useful to them.

Where is what you're teaching us going to be relevant?
(Year 12 Male Metro QLD VET).

My subjects are not relevant. In matric they will be related then
(Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

Drama, business studies. Everything else is chosen by my parents. I don't see the relevance of most of what I'm doing (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

I think school could do more to back us in what we want to do—like get a job
(Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

Part of the reason I'm starting to fail my subjects is that I just don't see the point. I just don't know where all this is leading (Year 12 Male Metro QLD VET).

If they want education reforms they have to change it completely. Not 'a bit more bog on the busted building.' We need to see how it is relevant
(Year 12 Male Metro QLD VET).

The things that young people have learned at school are very much contingent upon their own lived experience of being there. This is about whether they have found themselves able to engage with the things that are offered, or not. The Report of Survey data (Polesel and Helme 2003) demonstrates the diversity in young people's lived experience of their school, with the highest number of students likening it to a 'stepping stone' and the next highest number to a 'prison'. This is a stark contrast, highlighting the difference between being enabled or disabled by the experience of being at school.

Focus groups added some complexity to this picture, with the focus groups process itself embodying and revealing some of the ways in which young people have been able to make use of their experience of being at school so differently to each other. Some were fully able to engage in the process of reflecting, aloud, on their future lives and careers, and others were clearly not familiar with this kind of process.

School, like career thinking, appears to be far more accessible to students who have strong narratives of what they are doing at school and why. These were the students who, in focus groups, could explain what they hoped to be doing in five years, and ten years, and how they might get there. Correspondingly, they were also the students who could also explain what their subjects were good for, and why they were doing them. In focus groups it became clear that these linkages promote engagement with school. This relates directly back to the concept of 'career narrative' and the need for schools to work with students on the

4. Developing the Story

(continued)

construction of their own ‘subjective meaning’ in everything they are doing.

In focus groups, the young people were quick to provide some pointers about practical things schools could do to link in with their own stories:

Have more teachers who listen more (Year 10 Male Metro SA).

Talk to your students. Form relationships with them (Year 12 Male Metro QLD VET).

Go one on one. This is your problem (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

Tell your students how to get a better mark (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

2. Opportunity awareness (bigger stories / objective realities)

In focus groups, we found that students are asking for something a bit more holistic than they are getting from their schools. As demonstrated above, students’ personal narratives involve not just careers but their whole futures—life as embodied in the ‘doing’. Meanwhile:

You find that the teachers only care about their subject (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

In focus groups, students report often struggling to find the relevance of what they are doing in school, to their futures. Most broadly, this is about drawing relevance between what is being offered and why—how it links to the real world in which they live. This is needed in every subject.

If there was more overlap in areas of knowledge and understanding and if all subjects were to work together, that would make transitions and changes smoother (Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

To put the above observations in the terms of Patton’s framework (2001) within education, the silo arrangement—of different subjects each focussing on their own little bit – limits development of the narrative and makes it more difficult for the students to make links between their subjects, other activities and their lives.

3. Decision and transition learning (practices of reflective action)

Everything in school is organised for you but when you work you have to make a lot of your own decisions. We are not prepared to do that. (Year 12 Male Regional WA).

Am I ready to leave school? No—you need skills and I don’t think I have got those yet (Year 11 Male Metro WA).

In terms of ‘what works’ and what the young people have been saying, this is about ‘experiential’ learning (eg. VET workplacements). It is about doing, about practice, and about reflection, and skill development. Students mentioned appreciating being plunged into situations that stretched them and made them think outside their normal patterns. They appreciated courses that helped them to link things together.

Many students had trouble drawing links between what they were being offered and the world they were entering:

I think it discourages us from going into the field. It’s not applied. We get taught lots of stuff but I really don’t know what we can do with it (Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

4. Developing the Story

(continued)

Throughout all the topics was an overriding theme of generic skills and competencies that the young people need to develop to enable them to negotiate their world, to make sense of change, and to balance the many, varied aspects of their lives. In focus groups, the young people tell us that the generic skills were being developed in all spheres of life, and then they could be applied to their career work. This idea of generic skills enabling good career development and narratives links in closely with some of the work that has been done by ECEF including:

- ◀ support of SWL or workplacement; and
- ◀ its work around the concept of enterprise, for example ‘Enterprising Education in Schools’ (2002).

The value of part-time work and the generic skills developed through part-time work also connect with the development of career education and career narratives. The links between these areas and young people’s lives will be explored in the following sections.

5. VET and Learning

Both the theory and the practical workplacement are useful for understanding the industry. The workplacement puts the theory to use. The skills that you use and learn prepare you for work (Year 12 Female Rural QLD).

In this research, young people talk about the need to experience in order to understand. At its best, structured workplace learning (SWL) or workplacement currently embodies some of the best practice in vocational and career education. It allows young people to experience things that otherwise might remain as theory and disconnected from their own lives, their understanding and the world with which they are trying to engage. VET and workplacement link closely to the development of career narratives (Patton 2001) that are discussed in detail in Section 4. VET and workplacement provide an experiential learning basis for developing career narratives.

The *Young Visions Final Report* describes SWL, or workplacement, as a key aspect of most VET in Schools programs:

“SWL differs from the traditional work experience offered to students (usually in Year 10) in a number of ways. Firstly, it is usually undertaken in an area of work that is specifically related to the VET area in which the student is enrolled. Secondly, it is usually of a more extended duration than work experience, and thirdly, it allows students to acquire skills and competencies in a workplace setting that are recognised, assessed and accredited as part of their formal VET studies. ECEF, through its funding of cluster coordinators around Australia, plays a major role in facilitating SWL programs and in creating links between schools and employers”
(Polesel and Helme 2003).

In this chapter we explore:

- ◀ How structured workplace learning (SWL) helps young people to understand the industry area that they are engaged in;
- ◀ What else in VET helps young people to understand the industry area;
- ◀ Why SWL helps young people make choices and decisions about future directions;
- ◀ How SWL helps young people develop transferable generic skills;
- ◀ How VET relates to other subjects; and
- ◀ What support schools provide for students engaged in VET.

Understanding the Industry Area

“The Final Report of the survey data noted that 90% said the opportunity to undertake work-based training as their reason for enrolling in VET, and that 78% of the young people said that VET programs increased their understanding of the industry related to their area of study. Structured workplace learning provided theoretical training, competencies, practical experience and contacts with employers.”
(Polesel and Helme 2003).

These responses were followed up in the focus groups. The responses that the students gave concur with the results obtained through the survey. The young people studying VET in Years 11 and 12 were asked about how their VET programs helped them understand the

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

industry related to their area of study. The responses to this question emphasised the importance of SWL or workplacement to the students undertaking VET. In terms of gaining an understanding of the industry area, it was workplacement that the students valued most highly in their VET courses. However, they explained that the value was not just that it helped them to develop an understanding of the industry. Workplacement gave them grounded experiences, skills and understandings that could not be learnt through a book or teaching at school. This experience enabled them to make informed decisions about future careers and directions that they may want to follow.

Overall the students valued VET, and in particular workplacement to enable them to begin to build a portfolio of skills and qualifications that would give them start in the world of work:

The workplacement helps, it is practical rather than learning theory out of a book. It's better for getting employment (Year 11 Female Regional QLD).

VET subjects being undertaken

The students were undertaking a wide range of VET subjects. These included: IT, Hospitality, Business Administration, Tourism, Engineering, Metal and Engineering, Aviation Mechanics, Aviation, Interactive Multi Media, Sport and Recreation, Community Service and Electro Engineering. The majority of girls were doing either Hospitality or Business Administration while the boys were more evenly spread across Automotive Technology, Information Technology, Hospitality and Metal and Engineering.

Understanding the industry area through workplacement

A large number of the young people undertaking a VET subject also undertook workplacement. These young people responded that it was workplacement rather than the theory based work in VET that helped them most in understanding their industry area. The young people commented that:

You cook and learn about hygiene, learn about foods. It was sort of what I thought it would be about, that was what was in the book about it. I only really learned about working out in the industry from when I did workplacement and then worked in a pub. The study was nothing like working in it, it's heaps different; you actually have to do things. While I was at school it was a bit more laid back (Year 11 Female Rural SA).

We learn more when we are in the actual industry than when we are at school talking about it (Year 11 Female Regional WA).

It's the vocational placements and stuff that help you understand exactly what it's like (Year 12 Male Metro ACT VET).

Understanding the industry area if there is no workplacement

If there was no workplacement provided outside the school then a work-like experience was developed at the school. Examples of this included: the school workshop undertaking engineering work for both inside and outside the school, a restaurant catering for school and other functions or an office supply business undertaking business, office and design work for the school such as invitations for the school formal. It was the level of practical training that was seen as giving the young people an understanding of the industry. This could be gained through school-based training as well through the workplace:

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

The subject gives you an understanding of being a mechanic. We do practical jobs at school in the workshop. We build fishing gear, do small motor repairs to learn mechanical aspects but we don't do workplacement (Year 11 Male Regional QLD).

Students reported the greatest understanding of their industry when they were able to complete workplacement outside school and also develop knowledge of their industry through school either by completing modules on their industry area or having a simulated workplace at school as well:

I did dining, etiquette and coffee making when catering for functions. It's good to have hands-on experience while you are at school. If it is just working through the booklets it is a bit boring at school (Year 12 Female Regional QLD).

When there was no workplacement or simulated workplacement at school, the students reported that, while they might learn about the industry through doing assignments and class work, they were less satisfied with what they felt they were gaining from the subject:

I am doing sport and recreation. I don't enjoy it. We have done a project on the industry but on the whole the subject is boring. There was no workplacement. I have done a pool lifeguard course and first aid and a bit of research (Year 11 Female Metro Vic).

Some students who were studying their VET course at a TAFE rather than school responded that the TAFE courses were structured differently to school and that helped them understand the industry area. They completed a lot of practical work at TAFE rather than theory and were taught about the industry area by people with a good working knowledge of that area.

What I do in my TAFE is more practical. We don't study the background really. It's exposed me to the industry and I have learnt how hard it is to do afterwards. It's not just something you can get into easily. You can be a graphic designer but it's a bit different from going out and painting and doing portraits (Year 12 Male Metro SA).

VET—you kind of learn a whole lot of competencies. Occupational health and safety stuff. The option to do a bar course teaches you a lot about industry. So does tourism—attractions and theme parks in each state, international destinations, and the whole world (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

Workplacement and future directions

“The Final Report of the survey data noted that 80% of students responded that workplacement helped them think about alternative jobs, while 73% found that it opened up new possibilities and 61% found that workplacement related to longer term job plans.” (Polesel and Helme 2003).

The focus groups help unpack these figures, in particular the data about thinking about alternative jobs. The real experience of the workplace was a ‘crunch time’ for a number of students. Workplacement helped in providing an understanding of the industry area but young people responded that this could be both positive and negative and helped them make decisions as to whether they wanted to continue with this particular career direction in the future. They commented that:

Yeah it has done. It's shown me that I really want to be a chef

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

(Year 11 Male Regional TAS VET).

I have learnt about the standards expected in the industry through the workplacement—how you dress, one ring, no make up and now I understand I don't want to be involved (Year 11 Metro Female VIC).

The first two terms at school were boring written work. Workplacement at the Sofitel (Hotel) gave me a different environment to school. The chefs talk to you as they would to a trainee chef—blunt—I like the way they do that. It gives you a good idea of what it would be like. Chefs get angry under pressure, so you have to have a thick skin (Year 11 Female Metro VIC).

Workplacement gave me a good understanding. The teachers helped, treated me like their own staff, gave me jobs that they do and made things much clearer (Year 12 Female Metro NT).

I worked in a refinery and it really motivated me to try to succeed at school (Year 12 Male Regional WA).

For some young people, workplacement allowed them to extend their knowledge and career horizons about the industry area. Through the workplacement they found that the industry area was much broader than what they originally thought:

It taught me a lot of the OH&S and where I can go with mechanics. It is not just simply about working in the workshop or about cars. It has shown me more areas available to me. (Year 12 Male Metro SA).

I go out and work with the fleet helicopters, driving vehicles and refuelling tankers. It's helped with contacts and where to get jobs and what to look for. It costs \$38,000 to get a helicopter licence but I have a mate with a helicopter who will give it to me at a cut price. Then I can earn \$60,000 – 80,000 a year flying helicopters (Year 12 Male Rural NSW).

For students who were managing complex work and study arrangements and using non-study time to earn income, workplacement could place restrictions on the capacity to earn.

I do every Saturday at the travel agency. I had to make up 70 hours of workplacement time on Saturdays. But I found I was not interested and I don't want to do Tourism now. It was boring. Workplacement was an inconvenience. I had to take time off. I would have used that month to work (Year 12 Female Metro NSW).

Development of transferable generic skills

Some young people spoke about the attitudes and skills that they built up while learning about the industry area and doing workplacement.

It has given me confidence. I had no idea how the industry worked until I did SWL (Year 12 Female Metro WA).

It has given me confidence. I wasn't confident before that. It has taught me about responsibility, independence and initiative (Year 12 Female Metro WA).

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

It has given me some idea how to approach each day. It has shown me you have to have good communication skills (Year 12 Male Metro WA).

Workplacements get you out there mixing with older people (Year 12 Female Regional TAS VET).

VET and qualifications

The Final Report of the survey data found that nearly 90% of the young people enrolled in VET to gain the qualification (Polesel and Helme 2003).

In the focus groups some of the young people spoke about the particular qualifications and accreditation that they could gain through the practical training components of their course. This was not necessarily achieved through workplacement but provided a similar outcome in terms of industry understanding and contacts established:

I do aviation but there is no workplacement. The aviation course gives me a good idea of what to expect and how to get there. I do pilot licences. There are two after-school classes each week. I need 50 hours of flying time and I have 45 hours. So I am just off getting my pilot's licence. You make contacts and speak to people while you are doing the training. I have applied for a cadetship with Qantas next year (Year 12 Male Regional NSW).

The VET course is practical, easier and more fun and the qualification is a big motivator (Year 12 Female Metro Vic).

Learning from VET—approaching other subjects at school

The Final Report of the survey data found that students did not link VET in a positive way with their other schoolwork. Just over four in ten students agreed that it had helped with their other subjects. More male students found that it helped with other subjects, and that it improved their attitude to school work, while more female students were likely to perceive a connection between VET classwork and the tasks that they would expect to do in a job (Polesel and Helme 2003).

In the focus groups, over six in ten students found that VET helped with their other studies and attitudes to school. Of the students who gave a positive response, two thirds of male and female students responded that VET helped with the subject content in other subjects, while a third responded that it helped with their attitude to school. There was no discernable difference between the young women and the young men.

There was a difference though when the young women talked about how VET subjects helped with their world outside school. Far more young women mentioned that their VET subject had helped them relate better to, and understand, their outside community and gave them skills that they could use at home and in their part-time work:

Tourism helps because you go out into the community. So it helps with getting information and communication and meeting other people and that helps with Aboriginal studies. I am looking at drugs and alcohol among Aboriginal girls in town. Because of that I am talking to a lot of people in the community (Year 12 Female Rural SA).

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

The young men from the Indigenous communities in Northern Territory also made the links between their VET subject and how it helped in the community:

I weld up cars back in the community so engineering helps back home
(Year 10 Male Rural NT).

but few other young men mentioned the link. The vast majority of the young men were not making the links between the particular vocational subject and their wider world.

When talking about how VET helped them with other subjects, the young people in general responded that it was the subject content, and whether that could be used in other subjects, rather than particular ways of learning that could be transferred.

Some subject content could be transferred across if students were doing subjects in related areas. Examples of these are clear in respondents' stories.

For example, in aviation, the content can be transferred to physics and computer studies:

There is a relationship between aviation and computers. We work on new cockpits for planes and have a (computer based) heads up display like in fighter planes
(Year 11 Male Rural NSW).

When we do aviation, we learn about radio waves reflecting. This can then be transferred to physics (Year 11 Male Regional NSW).

In hospitality, the content can be transferred to food technology, biology and finance:

We have talked about germs and hygiene in biology and hospitality so there is a bit of a crossover with subject content (Year 11 Female Regional Vic).

Our school's VET coffee shop—I'm learning more about finance there
(Year 12 Female Metro ACT).

Information technology, computer skills can be used in most other subjects:

In IT we learn basic computer and this helps with every other subject and assignments
(Year 12 Female Regional QLD).

Tourism—content can be transferred to maths and accounting:

I put in more effort and it relates to maths sometimes. It doesn't help me with maths theory but just understanding how the concepts work. Tourism also helps with accounting. I am learning to look at the business side of accounting because I am learning different points of view – it helps you take all sorts of things into consideration (Year 11 Female Metro SA).

It has helped my approach to other studies. In tourism we learned about what makes a tourist destination, how to get jobs and everything (Year 12 Female Metro QLD).

Electrical engineering—content can be transferred to chemistry, physics and maths:

Electrical engineering helps with angles and measuring and with chemistry and physics (Year 11 Male Metro NT).

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(continued)

In their stories, young people also shared examples of how a method of learning could be transferred. A few responded that VET gave them knowledge on how subject content could be delivered in a practical way. Indigenous students from communities in the Northern Territory mentioned this in particular. They found that engineering showed them a practical way to learn measurement that could then be transferred to maths when they had to learn measurement from a book:

Engineering helps with a practical way to do measuring in maths and that helps when we go back home to the community and we are able to use the equipment like the oxy cutters and welding up cars (Year10 Male Rural NT).

Other students found that the module-based approach helped with their learning and would like to learn that way in other subjects. Three students had a dialogue about VET being based on modules and how it helped their learning:

(VET) I thought mine was good. I liked that it was module based (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

Our subjects should be module based (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

Yeah, I think that way, classes could run at the pace of each person—and the teacher would go at their speed (Year 12 Male Metro QLD VET).

Another student found that VET helped with the planning, researching and writing of assignments. This increased expertise was transferred to her other subjects:

In hospitality we had six or seven assignments, action plans and research. It really helps you because you write better as the year goes on and you understand it better. All the writing helps you analyse things and your writing gets a lot better—I went from a C in English to an A this year because of all the continual writing and research (Year 12 Female Rural SA).

Other students responded in a more general way as to how VET developed their understanding of their whole course overall.

You can take stuff and you can learn to apply it somewhere else—like a short cut (Year 12 Female Metro SA).

A lot of my subjects have combined really well. It's like a puzzle and it all fits together slowly. You don't see it at the beginning of the year but I can really see that VET has helped me in other areas now (Year 12 Female Rural SA).

And there was the occasional exception among the boys studying VET who were making the broader connections:

It opens your body and mind and you can think a bit more widely (Year 12 Male Metro SA).

Some students responded in regard to time and stress management, motivation and people skills that were learnt in most of the VET subjects:

You have to be pretty organised in VET. You go out in the community and do surveys and meeting people, so that helps with communication (Year 12 Female Rural SA).

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

VET motivates you. You have to focus on what you do I didn't do that before and it helps me focus at school. My grades are going up because I can focus better.
(Year 12 Male Regional WA).

Aviation gets you out of school and helps you relax. We go out to the airport and fly single engine planes (Year 11 Male Rural NSW).

Other students found that the VET subjects did not help them with their other school work and had not experienced different learning styles. In fact, they had found some of the teaching in VET similar to how they were taught in school or more boring than other subjects:

This subject has not provided any different learning styles. We just take notes from the board (Year 11 Female Metro Vic).

Sport and recreation doesn't have much to do with my units three and four Physical Education. There is a bit of first aid but it's just like doing another subject. You wouldn't know it was a VET subject except it is easier than the other subjects
(Year 11 Female Metro Vic).

Our VET teacher just reads the information out and we write it down. We have her for three subjects and she does the same for each one (Year 12 Female Metro SA).

It doesn't help. Most of the work you do in VET is being given a book and you have to work through it and answer all the questions (Year 12 Male Metro SA).

VET is regarded as a way to develop more practical 'hands on' approaches to learning. It has been one of the pioneers in school community partnerships involving schools, employers and the community in learning. VET is able to engage some students who have not been able to engage with the more abstract academic curriculum. Some students, though, did not have this opportunity even though they were studying VET because the teachers involved in delivering VET in these particular situations were not using the practically-based learning principles used in most other VET subjects.

Support from schools

The students felt most supported by their school when the school had put the VET subjects within a curriculum line—when it was like other subjects and did not place an extra load on the students. There was most dissatisfaction expressed when the students had to attend TAFE outside school and school times and the students perceived a lack of understanding of their workload and commitments by both the TAFE and the school. VET delivered in school was organisationally easier for students than VET delivered at TAFE. VET delivered at TAFE could offer industry contacts outside networks not available to VET delivered in schools.

Schools provided support through allocating one day a week as a VET day and having a VET Coordinator who would try to negotiate some of the complex organisational features needed to make the VET program work. The majority of students reported that they felt supported by the school. But it would appear that although these problems with VET have been around for many years (see Stokes and Holdsworth 1998:22), there are still some students having problems with combining study in and out of the school environment. Some students report that there is still a lack of awareness of the students' commitments by all

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

teachers at the school level and an unwillingness to accommodate the different options available to students.

VET within the school:

The VET subjects are blended in with the other subjects. Everything is supplied at school and we work from school. There is not anything more it could do (Year 11 Male Regional QLD).

VET delivered outside the school:

You have to do school-based TAFE assignments as well as what you get from TAFE, so this is like double work. It is too much work: it is hard enough as it is because you are doing it part-time at TAFE, and then you have to do school. Sometimes I get a hard time when I am not at school because of TAFE or because I worked late, and the VET Coordinator calls me. Could be a bit more lenient on you because they need to understand how much work we are doing for TAFE, both at TAFE and at school. Maybe not set the school-based TAFE stuff: the VET Coordinator doesn't seem to really look at it or mark it properly anyway. He doesn't always listen and seems to worry more about the TAFE assignments he sets us rather than the ones we get at TAFE (Year 11 Male Metro SA).

The TAFE course was from 1.45 – 5.45pm down near the beach and we didn't get home till late and it was dark. There were other schools there as well and there were lots of clashes in personalities. The TAFE was not willing to change times to accommodate us (Year 12 Female Metro Vic).

Students reported struggling to catch up with the rest of the school work:

They do things like organise us. The VET Coordinator is telling us what is happening or if there is another course and if we want to do it. He's been pretty there for us. But with the other subjects that you do, you have to catch up the work when you are away from school for a day or two. The teachers don't help you, they don't like it. They don't understand why you aren't there and they want you to catch up on all of the work. Instead of holding work for us they say we have to come and ask them for it every week and that sometimes that gives you the shits. It's not that we are slacking off or anything. We are working longer over there from 8am until 4:30pm. They don't think we are wagging, because we tell our home group teachers and they tell other ones, but they don't like it that much still. There is nothing really that the VET Coordinator can back us up on (Year 11 Male Metro SA).

A lot of girls are not coping because they are not putting in the time so they get behind. We have to work individually so you have to be motivated because it is taught at TAFE (Year 12 Female Metro Vic).

Last year we did a voc ed class with workplace training and Certificate II in Retail—with a statement of attainment [certificate]. We were the first Year 10 class that did this. It was a lot of time out and it all needed to be caught up in our own time. That really got to me. I got diagnosed with depression—too much stress (Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

In the expedition skills / PE Recreation VET unit we go away. If you do you have to get

5. VET and Learning

(continued)

a note signed. Teachers are whinging because it means nine days off school—they think you're bludging. Hey, I'm not going to spend \$700 on this thing just to not come to school. I'm going to learn skills like leadership, lifesaving... and when I get a job, that will help (Year 12 Male Metro QLD).

A few students also expressed concern at meeting the costs of TAFE courses.

They could help you pay for the subject. With my scuba diving it was going to cost \$300 to do the whole lot and I asked my parents and they said they could pay for some, so I asked the school to help and they said they could give me \$50, but that wasn't enough (Year 11 Male Metro SA).

A few students had difficulties with their understanding of the VET subject prior to taking it on, and would like the school to provide more information so that they could make a more informed decision about the VET subject. They also gave suggestions for how to improve the presentation of information.

I would like to have had the subject introduced more thoroughly. I didn't understand what was needed. The introduction needed to be more interesting and then more students would do the VET subjects if they knew how helpful they were. The seniors should go to the Year 10s and talk about the subjects (Year 12 Female Regional QLD).

The school needs to help more with information about the VET subjects. It is hard to find out about the subject. There is some information but I wanted more details about the VET courses. It is easy to find out about hospitality because it is run at the school but a lot of students don't know about small business because it is run at another school. People don't know about it and play safe. Subjects conducted out of school need more information and support (Year 11 Female Metro VIC).

Workplacement and the other practical components of VET courses provide students with the practical experience they need to begin developing their career narratives. In the following section, enterprise education will be explored with links being made to career education, ways of learning and the role of schools.

6. Enterprise Education

There are a number of generic skills and attributes that have been identified as important for career education. Many of these are currently presented in schools under the guise of enterprise education. In this chapter we will unpack the concept and how it relates to young people, their school and their lives.

Conversations in the focus groups suggest that although the skills in question are vital, the package in which they are introduced—ie. ‘enterprise education’—may be less than accessible to students.

This chapter explores young people’s understanding of:

- ◀ the concept of enterprise;
- ◀ how their school subjects help build enterprising attributes;
- ◀ how extra curricular activities at school build enterprising skills;
- ◀ how activities outside school build these skills;
- ◀ the desirability or not of grounding these ideas through starting their own business; and
- ◀ the support they think they might need to embark on such a venture.

Understanding of the concept

In general young people were not familiar with the concept and replied ‘What’s enterprise?’

When asked again and prompted they could identify enterprising skills and attitudes such as: confidence, people skills, independence, dedication, flexibility, ideas, risk taking and research. One boy described an enterprising person as someone who:

Likes to take risks, is highly motivated, has a set path, is passionate about something and is innovative (Year 11 Male, Regional NSW).

Other interpretations included:

An entrepreneur, with evil finance, and a big booming company
(Year 10 male metro TAS).

Someone who can picture things a different way (Year 10 Female Metro TAS)

Figures out what they have and makes the most of it
(Year 12 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

I always thought it was about taking things in your own hands
(Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Drive nice cars, well organised (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

A Japanese business suit looking serious (Year 11 Female Metro ACT VET).

Enterprise, as a concept, is not at all congruent with the ways in which young people are thinking about themselves or processing the career information that they are given. It had the feeling of an imposed language—one that would not naturally come up in young people’s stories about what they were doing. The question—‘who is an enterprising person’ was a

6. Enterprise Education

(continued)

powerful conversation stopper in the focus groups: students would flounder for answers, and / or lose interest at this point. In fact, unless students had been in classes which had specifically related the concept to them (and done so well), the meanings associated with the word ‘enterprise’ were strictly about other people—some of them caricatures, and some of them negative. As a concept, largely, it meshed neither with young people’s current self-concepts, nor their expectations and aspirations for their futures:

....So the image is fairly stereotyped then? (Interviewer).

Hey, we didn’t even think of women!!! (Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

or

Someone shrewd and ruthless, who gets what they want. Not particularly thoughtful. That’s how they get there.

So this is a negative image? (Interviewer).

Definitely (Year 12 male Rural VIC VET).

Enterprise also had negative connotations for some other students. Some students who were not doing well academically at school had been put in ‘enterprise programs’ to support their school work. These students regarded themselves as being in the ‘vegie’ or ‘dumb’ class and that enterprise meant doing easier work than the other students in their year level. This is supported by other research into enterprise programs in schools that found they were often provided for students at risk as an alternative to a more formal curriculum (Erebus 2002:2).

It was particularly interesting to be involved in group interviews around this ‘enterprise’ topic. After the initial silence, interviewers grounded the concept by presenting a list of enterprise attributes (see Appendices) and asked students to rank themselves against these. It was at the point where these attributes met their own stories—the things that they do: ‘oh yeah, we do this in sport’; ‘Oh yeah, I do this when I baby-sit’; or ‘oh yeah, we do this when we organise a party’—that the topic of enterprise itself became relevant. Recognition among some students would set other students off. ‘Oh yeah...’ Within this context most students were able to relate the attributes to grounded situations, and this provided a sense of what an enterprising person might be like.

As part of the focus group interview, the young people gave themselves a rating for the different enterprising attributes. Some patterns emerged:

- ◀ Young women rated their enterprising attributes more highly than young men;
- ◀ non-VET young men and women rated their enterprising attributes more highly than VET young men and women;
- ◀ non-VET young women rated their attributes the highest while VET young men rated their skills the lowest.
- ◀ Metropolitan young women rated their enterprising attributes most highly followed by regional and rural young women. Metropolitan and regional young men rated their attributes slightly lower followed by rural young men.

Whether the differences were of statistical significance was calculated for the following groups. These groups included (from highest to lowest significant difference):

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(continued)

non-VET young women compared with VET young men:
significant difference at $p < 0.02$

non-VET young men and women compared with VET young men and women:
significant difference at $p < 0.02$

Young women compared with young men (both VET and non-VET):
fairly significant difference at $p = 0.05$

non-VET young men compared with VET young men:
fairly significant difference at $p = 0.05$

non-VET young women compared with VET young women:
not highly significant difference at $p < 0.5$

VET young men compared with VET young women:
not highly significant difference at $p < 0.5$

non-VET young men compared with non-VET young women:
not significant difference

The interview process itself highlighted the significance of dialogue, of two-way conversation. If concepts are not grounded and not relevant, young people could not make use of them. To explore the concept also required a space for young people to explore their own career narratives, and relate it to the topic in question.

Some of the Indigenous students from communities in Northern Territory had particular difficulty with the concept and terms. They could read the words on the enterprising attributes sheet but the words meant nothing to them. In discussion, using practical examples, they came up with practical ideas of how to integrate enterprise attributes into the school experience. They suggested that students could be involved in workplacement around the school such as working in the office and school maintenance. They also talked about their own experiences outside school where relatives in the community that they lived in were developing tourism businesses.

School subjects and enterprising attributes

The students were asked to name the subject that they thought most allowed them to enhance their enterprising attributes. Students looked at a list of enterprising attributes and then discussed their school subjects and activities. Students responded that it was not about the content of the subjects, but rather the activities and the way that the subjects were taught that enabled them to develop enterprising attributes. In this context it was drama, English and sport that were most often mentioned. The students felt that they learnt to plan, communicate and be creative in English in particular.

VET and enterprising attributes

The students doing VET also mentioned their VET subjects as helping them develop enterprise attributes. The male VET students were more likely to mention their VET subject, particularly metals and engineering and hospitality, but did not mention drama as often as the other students. The female VET students mentioned drama as well as their VET subject including business and hospitality.

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(continued)

When you are in sport you have to work as a team and be organised
(Year 11 Male Rural Vic non-VET).

In my VET subject I have drive and learn how to identify opportunities
(Year 11 Female Rural NT VET).

English helps me to plan effectively, locate resources, seek advice and learn from mistakes (Year 12 Male Rural Vic VET).

In the Music classes and in the band you have to work as a team and cooperate
(Year 12 Male Regional WA non-VET).

My enterprising skills are already good from being involved with drama
(Year 12 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

Business studies has given us a basis for this (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

Expo really got me thinking (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

Extra curricula activities at school and enterprising attributes

Students nominated a range of extra curricula activities that allowed them to develop enterprising attributes. Again with these activities, it was related to their ability to develop leadership, team building, planning, creative, discipline, negotiation and supportive skills that they thought enhanced their enterprising attributes. This was about the level of responsibility that they were given in these activities and that they felt they were doing something valuable and needed. This links with other research in the area including Holdsworth and Cahill 2002, Holdsworth 1998 and Stokes 2003).

The activities included peer support and tutoring, sport, debating, music groups and bands, Rock Eisteddfod, Tournament of the Minds, Cadets, school leadership positions, Student Council, school plays, school magazine, Duke of Edinburgh and Australian Business Week.

Some students though did no extra curricula activities at all. By the time they did their schoolwork and part-time work and had a family and social life, they had either no time or no particular need to be involved in other school activities.

A number of students mentioned Australian Business Week (ABW) as an activity that particularly helped them develop enterprising attributes. Students responded that involvement in ABW helped them plan, get to know the work force and find out how hard they would have to work to achieve success in business.

At one school, at the start of Year 11, the whole year level has a week to be involved in ABW. All the students form teams to conduct their own business for the week. But it is much more than just a business. The teams have to design a product, market the product put on trade displays, work to deadlines, be part of the share market, respond to financial reports and share prices and deal with the company profits and losses. All of this requires the team to work together, be creative, develop ideas and share responsibility. One team marketed a pill that you could buy to put in a microwave that would then turn into a meal. The students were very enthusiastic about the whole process and had enjoyed working in the different teams, out of their subject areas for a week.

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Outside school activities and enterprising attributes

The students were asked about which of their outside school activities helped develop their enterprising attributes. The activities the students mentioned most consistently were part-time work and playing sport.

Some students were gaining accreditation through their part-time work as well as enterprising attributes. While these students were not VET students, they were still interested in gaining skills and qualifications outside of school in the work place.

One student had started a traineeship at McDonalds and had become a crew trainer and also a member of the safety committee. She had been working at McDonalds for about 18 months for about 15–20 hours per week. She was also doing a Retail and Operations Certificate Level II through McDonalds. So far, she had completed eight modules of the certificate. She did not want to stay on to be a manager of McDonalds but wanted to transfer her qualification to be a manager of another shop.

Students consistently talked about a level of responsibility in part-time jobs that they did not have in their school life.

I work at the supermarket as a front end controller. I have done a CTI course that's about courage, teamwork and initiative, learnt office skills and how to manage the cashiers if they have problems (Year 10 Male Metro NSW non-VET).

Both VET and non-VET students talked about their family life and having friends as being an area where they developed enterprising attributes such as networking and being responsible for certain parts of running the household:

When you are doing things with your mates you have to put up with different sorts of people (Year 12 Male Metro WA VET).

Getting along with friends and just living with your family helps (Year 10 Female Regional WA non-VET).

Talking and negotiating and networking with my friends and doing things with my family (Year 10 Male Metro SA non-VET).

Having the influence of elders, friends of parents, bosses, workmates and even friends who look out for you, take an interest in your life and are there to offer advice when you need it (Year 11 Female Rural Vic non-VET).

Some of the rural students (both VET and non-VET) were a necessary part of the property that their parents worked and they learnt many of their enterprising attributes being a part of that, especially in the school holidays. These students were from a range of socio economic levels, from the small 'block' to large cattle properties in outback Australia:

I work on the property in the yards, branding and mustering, getting up early and being there for the long days (Year 10 Female Rural QLD VET).

One student spoke about the time he spent outside school working out ideas for his inventions.

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I would like to be an inventor and understand how things work. I like tech drawing to help me with my designs. I want to invent a dog collar that winds up so that the dog can go through the yard and not escape. I will try to build it soon. Most of the time I have ideas but no way to do them like a smell dispersing machine that would make video games more realistic (Year 11 Male Metro NT VET).

Developing enterprising attributes at school

Students were asked how the enterprising attributes that they had identified could be enhanced through changes to teaching styles, subject content and activities. Overwhelmingly students across all areas, both male and female, VET and non-VET, responded that they wanted more practical, hands on activities. This could be achieved through more excursions, more group work, simulation games, discussion, oral presentations, drama activities, community-based work and teaching material that related to the real world.

Interestingly, when they understood the concept of ‘enterprise’ it was not specifically business subjects that were drawn out by respondents, but the courses that taught them to reflect and consider their different possible responses to life-issues:

Actually, the most useful thing has been the PE life skills course. All sorts of issues (sex, drugs, alcohol), but it has been a real eye opener. The course has had us reflecting on what we do—so people have been thinking ‘perhaps I should have said this / done this, perhaps I could do it different’ (Year 11 female Metro NSW non-VET)

Drama gives you ideas so you think about things, so you apply that to your own life. We’re using real stories. Thinking about others who do different things, so that affects how we think (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

In so doing, these courses have actually given these young people the opportunity to develop broadly-based reflective habits about their own choices and different available courses of action:

My art teacher says it not just art, it’s training for life, ‘cos you gotta research every little thing. So that relates more to my life (Year 12 female Regional TAS).

The student responses corresponded closely with Mayer’s (1993) seven key or generic competencies that were developed to enable people ‘to participate effectively in the emerging forms of work and work organization and focus on the capacity to apply knowledge and skills in an integrated way in work situations.’ These included:

- ◀ Collecting, analyzing and organizing ideas and information;
- ◀ Communicating ideas and information;
- ◀ Planning and organizing activities;
- ◀ Working with others in teams;
- ◀ Using mathematical ideas and techniques;
- ◀ Solving problems;
- ◀ Using technology

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The young people responded that:

We need hands-on activities to environments to show practical applications. Things need to be visual and hands-on. Not just by hearing like in the old days before TV
(Year 11 Female Regional QLD VET).

The teachers need to give students an idea of why they are doing work and make a link between what they are doing to why they are doing it
(Year 12 Female Regional QLD non-VET).

Need to have more excursions around the local area. Do things in our community that are relevant to us (Year 10 Male Rural SA).

I do like VET. Why can't we do that in English – why can't we do practical things? Practical tasks where you get satisfactory or unsatisfactory achievement. In a VET subject we get feedback—it's more practical. For English board [pre-tertiary] we just keep doing the same thingsNothing to show you how you're doing—at least with VET you know that. We need that feedback in normal classes too
(Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

Both young men and women, either doing VET or not doing VET wanted to be given greater responsibility for their learning and discover things for themselves, be allowed to make mistakes, problem solve through activities and learn time management:

School needs to give us a chance to make decisions. They should listen to us and if we make the wrong decision that is too bad we have to live with that
(Year 11 Female Regional WA VET).

We could have more choice of options more hands-on stuff in class. We are told this and that. We need to work it out for ourselves (Year 11 Male Metro WA non-VET).

You need to be able to work at your own pace and decide what to do, not when the teacher tells you to do something. That would give you control over your learning and teach enterprising skills (Year 11 Female Metro Vic VET).

We need to do more activities by ourselves and do more self directed learning
(Year 11 Male Regional QLD VET).

I would like to have more group-based activities and get assessment schedules for whole year and work outlines for whole year so that I can plan within each subject
(Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

I think we should use theatre sports in most subjects. It's spontaneous and gets people involved and also have more outside class activities
(Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

If somehow the classroom structure could be more focused outside. I don't like the maths curriculum—we do maths every lesson. A few were doing 'career maths' we should know what it's about. Much more of the lessons need to be about getting out and doing. So about speaking to other people rather than being made to sit still. We should be making those enterprise skills we talked about
(Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

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One student noted that more practical subjects alone would not enhance enterprising attributes. In many practical subjects the emphasis was on working alone to complete tasks. She felt that the teaching method had to change to incorporate group work to further develop enterprising attributes. She felt that currently, at her school, this was only achieved in drama.

Some students responded that they felt the school did enough to develop these attributes:

The school already brings out these qualities. We are given work and have to be responsible for it, especially at Years 11 and 12. We also learn the skills through playing sport and interacting with others in jobs
(Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

School develops these skills enough. There are so many activities at school: music, drama, leadership activities and tutor group (Year 12 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

The role of friends

A number of students commented on the learning of enterprising attributes happening through their communication with their friends rather than in the formal classroom. This may be through involvement in sport or group activities that would happen throughout the day at school:

In sport you have to work with other people so you know what it is like when you go into your own business. Sport helps you work as a team. You learn to solve problems. You learn to set goals and you learn by your mistakes (Year 10 Female Metro WA).

The following quote emphasises the kind of ‘concrete’ or ‘grounded’ input that would make the difference to this young man:

You can learn more from friends than you do from teachers. When you meet them you learn how to talk and how to make friends with them. But at school you don't get on with the teachers anyway so you don't learn as much. With friends you learn about the personality of other people and that relates to school as well because you see someone else's attitude out of school. If you see a friend out of school who has dropped out and had no luck, you will want to stay in school and take their word more than the teacher's (Year 11 Male Metro SA VET).

Relationships with teachers

Teacher relationships were also of importance to the young people, especially to the boys. They sometimes found these relationships difficult and felt that they were given less responsibility and less leeway to make mistakes and decisions in the classroom than they would have liked. The boys doing VET were more likely to respond in this way. This links back to the Final Report of the Survey data that finds boys are more likely to see school as a prison (Polesel and Holme 2003:50):

The teachers are getting younger but they are still not relating to us as we are. They are thinking about who they might have been at our age, but they are not into our problems and how we are getting on. They are not helping enough with assignments, just giving us a sheet and not really helping. I want it to be more relevant to us and what we need. I would like there to be a better connection between teachers and students, and for them to listen. We'd respect them more than
(Year 11 Male Metro SA VET).

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I can talk to the teachers. It makes school easier but if I couldn't, it would be difficult
(Year 12 female Metro NT VET).

Developing enterprising attributes through leadership programs

A smaller number of the students interviewed had had previous experience of particular programs such as leadership programs and peer support programs. They responded that they would like more peer support and leadership programs that gave them the chance to show initiative, make decisions and problem solve in the school setting.

We have been trained to help the Year 7s with their reading. It is part of a peer reading program that happens every morning at the beginning of school. There are 15 Year 10s paired with 15 Year 7s. We could elect to go into the program. We had training from TAFE teachers who came to the school. They gave us different techniques to help with reading. We had ten hours of training. The program helps build the confidence of the Year 7s and it has helped with our reading as well because you have to concentrate on what you are reading. In the beginning of the year, the Year 7s didn't know anyone and were not reading very well. Now they have got to know some of the people in different year levels and have more confidence with their reading
(Year 11 Male Rural NSW non-VET).

In Year 7 and 8, all the students were involved in leadership courses for three periods a week. That was good. This year I have been to the State SRC conference. It was about promoting leadership, motivation and practical skills. We then have to bring back the skills to the school (Year 11 Female Rural NSW non-VET).

Developing enterprising attributes outside the curriculum

Many students responded that the development of enterprise skills was more likely to happen in the part-time job, extra curricula activities or in interaction with their friends than in the formal school curriculum. Others stressed the importance of developing these skills to prepare them for university when nobody would be chasing them up and making sure that they attended classes:

Learn these skills through my social life generally. Interacting with others, having a relationship, looking after brothers, cooking meals
(Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

Working with a community and part-time work helps build up relationships. It is nothing to do with subjects, it is more to do with how you relate to people. When you do part-time work you learn to get on with people
(Year 12 Female Metro WA non-VET).

I need to be prepared for uni. They don't care if I turn up. I have to look after myself, there is no role call (Year 12 Female Metro NSW VET).

Changing the school structure

Some students expressed the view that enterprising attributes could not be fully enhanced through just changing the teaching methods and relationships in classrooms. There also needs to be changes to the overall school structure.

All other teachers need to learn from VET teachers (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET)

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One group of non-VET rural students thought that the whole school needed to be reorganised. One of the students in the group described her frustration with the lack of communication between teachers:

“Wanting to be part of this focus group was a good example of how separate all the teachers are. One teacher asked me to be part but then I had to get permission from another teacher who did not want to let me out of class because I would miss what she was teaching. But I wanted to come to the focus group because I would get to talk about different issues and I was interested in finding out about enterprise education.”

As a group they then went on to talk about what they thought were the problems with the school and how they would solve them:

“We would start with the teachers and get them to network across the school not just in their subject areas and departments. At the moment they don’t network well across departments. They only see each other at Friday morning tea. The teachers would need to be mixed into different staffrooms across subject areas and year levels. The best way to do this would be to draw the teachers out of a hat at the beginning of the year. This might allow for more involvement between the year levels in class time as well (Year 11 students Rural NSW).”

Other students were interested in rearranging how subjects were offered at the school, so that they would have more choice, while other students liked the way that VET subjects were conducted in modules and would like this replicated throughout the school:

I want to have subjects that are elective-based. I like the idea of a school where we get to pick different bits and subjects (Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

We could get more chance to arrange our own programme—I think we could plan some of programmes but schools don’t let you do that (Year 12 Female Metro WA VET).

I really want a module-based school (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

With modules you can see progress, see what you’re learning, whereas in a classroom you have no idea (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

Or offered in Year 10:

Having a VET pathway at Year 10 so that we can go into VET at Year 11 (Year 10 Male Rural SA).

VET subjects and incorporating enterprising skills

Students had a few comments to make about the VET subjects they were in. They particularly liked the module-based nature of the courses:

In VET subjects, teachers aren’t going to do it for you – you have to do everything for yourself. It’s not about a pass or fail, it’s about life (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

With modules, you get confidence in yourself. Because you see work done. You see what you can do (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

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You need the opportunity to do hands-on stuff, so that they can see that you know things—this is important with on-the-job training too (Year 11 Male Metro SA VET).

VET teachers talk to you as individuals (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

Hospitality gives you practical skills—the traineeship modules—if you get them all done in Year 12, you get a certificate. It's a helpful format—if you want to go into hospitality it informs you (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

[in VET] There's your trainer. Versus a teacher who's going narky at 25 kids (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET)

While these subjects were seen as more practical there was still room for improvement to enhance enterprising attributes:

I would like more responsibility in VET subjects and be allowed to use power tools in VET subject and be trusted more (Year 11 Male Regional QLD VET).

VET is good in a way but it doesn't cover probably half of the skills that are out there. Maybe it could incorporate more skills for you to learn (Year 11 Male Metro SA VET).

Owning your own business

The Final Report of the survey data found that half of the students (54%) would like to go into business on their own. In this pattern there were no significant gender differences. There were also no significant differences between VET and non-VET students although female VET were slightly more interested than female non-VET students (Polesel and Helme 2003).

In the focus groups:

- ◀ About two thirds of VET students both male and female responded that they would like to own their own business;
- ◀ About two thirds of non-VET females responded that they would like to own their own business;
- ◀ A little over half the non-VET males wanted to own their own business.

There were more distinct differences when looking at location and owning a business.

- ◀ 80% of rural young people want to own a business;
- ◀ 75% of regional young people want to own a business; and
- ◀ 57% of metropolitan young people want to own a business.

The students in the focus groups gave a more positive response to owning their own business than in the survey. Again, the two-way conversation format of a focus group lent itself to this dynamic, with students' own career narrative in focus and under group discussion alongside the topics in question. As the discussions progressed in the focus groups, the students became keener to own their own business at some point in their lives. In part, this was a result of conversations that involved clarification as to what owning their own business

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meant (ie. it is not all retail sales). An example of this was some non-VET students who were interested in doing a professional degree such as law or psychology who did not initially think they would ever have their own business. During the discussion, they realised that these things could in fact be a business, and that building their own business might be an important part of following their own chosen direction.

I have never really thought about it. I might do it later. I would like to have something to do with performing arts, maybe a production company
(Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

I am not sure. My parents have their own business and it scares me. I am not good at finances. But I would like to have a business in film costumes, props and sets
(Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

Initially when talking to some students about future plans, they did not talk about having their own business. At the end of the interview when discussing what having your own business could mean, they were saying ‘yes’, they would like to. This shows the relevance for all students, not just those doing business studies, to have exposure to and discussion about owning a business and what it could mean for their employment and career and lifestyle. It also shows the importance of unpacking these topics within the context of young people’s own visions of their futures.

Location also affected the young people and their confidence in starting and maintaining a business. This was particularly relevant for rural young people. In some cases they could see something that was needed in their small town or rural location:

Maybe in a new town that didn’t have something like a youth centre. I’d need money and a little helping hand to get things organised, support from the community and others, information from other towns that have these services. It would be something for young people, a youth centre (Year 12 Female Rural SA VET).

I would like to have a business training Indigenous people for jobs, helping them get the skills to get a job like giving them work education (Year 10 Male Regional NT).

and in other cases they had seen their rural area gripped by drought and watched small businesses fail:

I reckon that running your own business would be too hard. I’ve seen how hard Mum and Dad do it—with the property—and now the drought.
(Year 12 Female Rural VIC VET).

Family influence and experience was a key factor in determining the choices of the young people. This could be either positive or negative depending on the experience. Some had watched their own parents struggle and work long hours and cope with a lot of stress and did not want to take the same path.

Dad has his own business and it’s too stressful (Year 12 Female WA non-VET).

My parents have had one. You need commitment and time. That’s not for me. It takes all their time. I don’t want to be the boss (Year 11 Female Regional TAS VET).

No, it all sounds too hard. My Dad is self-employed and with all this tax stuff coming in, it’s too hard. It just transports things around with all these forms to come in,

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registering for GST and all the other things. I'd rather just work for an employer where you go and do your job and that is about it. I'm not good at management, I'd rather sit back and let others take charge (Year11 Male Metro SA VET).

Others felt that they had learnt valuable skills in the family business and with support from their families, would be able to take on another business. For some young people, families were providing the networks and support. Confidence and know-how about owning and running a business were transferred as cultural capital to these young people:

I'll definitely own my own business, a big corporation in agriculture or possibly commerce or ag-farming. I live on a farm, 406 acres, horses, a good business, we supply produce and farm cattle. I'm interested in fish farming. Dad wants me to get into that (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

I have done it to some extent working in my parents' business and running a section. I wouldn't have a problem running another one or starting one up. I feel confident (Year 12 Female Metro SA VET).

In eco tourism I have the opportunity to work with my parents who have a place in Nth Queensland where they can develop a tourist venture (Year 12 Female Rural QLD VET).

I'd like to run a rugby club and train little kids or a tourism business. People would come into the community to look at the aboriginal paintings. My uncle does this. He runs three-day tours into the Gulf of Carpentaria. It's a seven hour drive so they fly in because the rain mucks up the road (Year 10 Male Rural NT VET).

I reckon the main reason I want to own my own business is that my parents do. They've had a lot of trouble, but I'd have it there as a backup (Year 10 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

Areas of business

The young people, both VET and non-VET nominated a wide range of businesses that they would like to own. These included: hospitality/tourism; IT; publishing and multi media; real estate, retail, fashion, transport, electrical, community development, dance, agricultural and animal care; interior design, exporting and importing; sport; architecture; mechanic; alternative health; building; law; hairdressing; financial services and entertainment/ music. Some patterns emerged in the interviews:

- ◀ Hospitality/tourism that included owning a café, nightclub, resort or travel agency was the most popular choice especially for females doing VET and females not doing VET.
- ◀ Some females doing VET were also interested in businesses with a community development focus such as owning a youth club or child care centre.
- ◀ The most popular choice for boys doing VET was mechanic followed by IT, hospitality/tourism and related businesses.
- ◀ Males not doing VET most often chose a business in the financial services, including accountancy.

I would like to have a record store or a music studio (Year 11 Male Metro VIC VET).

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A hotel or a tavern but something with minimum hours and maximum wage (Year 11 Male regional QLD VET).

I would like to have a coffee shop (Year 12 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

A shipping company would be good (Year 11 Male Metro NT non-VET).

I wouldn't mind it, not like a business down the street but owning my own boat, having an A class licence and fishing for small fish (Year 11 Male Rural SA VET).

Apart from an interest in particular agricultural businesses in rural areas such as aquaculture and farming, and homes for homeless kids in metropolitan areas, the businesses that the young people wanted to have were very similar, no matter where they lived. Bars, cafes and nightclubs were popular with young people from any location as were accounting, law and IT businesses.

For some young people it was about lifestyle—owning a bar or nightclub, having a boat and a fishing licence—that was the main motivator for owning their own business.

What do the young people think they need to start a business?

All students wanting to start a business were keen to spend time first developing the skills that would enable them to do this. Some saw this as being a fair way down the track after they had worked for other people:

I will probably not have my own business in the first ten years. I will consider it after I get sufficient qualifications in the field. I will work for a company and then move into business (Year 12 Male Regional NSW non-VET).

Later in life when I have a bit of money I would like to have a hospitality business (Year 12 Female Metro Vic VET).

I would think about my own business only after I had worked in the travel industry for a while (Year 12 Female Metro WA VET).

I'd like to own my own business but I'd want to learn everything I can about what I am getting into before I start on my own (Year 11 Female Metro Vic non-VET).

Some students were worried about their lack of organisational skills and did not feel that they had the confidence to start and run a business:

Hell no! No way, I will just work for someone else. It will be a lot easier (Year 12 Female Metro SA VET).

I can't keep my room clean let alone run a business (Year 11 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

I wouldn't start a business—it would be too much work (Year 11 Female Regional TAS VET)

6. Enterprise Education

(continued)

Own business? Haven't given it much thought. It's a big risk. Maybe a bit later in age and some money behind you. You'd need to understand how it all works, have a sound knowledge and be prepared to rough it all out. I can't really think of any business I'd like to do (Year 12 Male Regional TAS non-VET).

Having done VET subjects provided some of the students with some of the necessary knowledge and skills to help them feel confident about starting a business. It also provided them with contacts with other young people who are interested in starting a business in the same areas.

I know a few people from VET who want to open our own little business in mechanics so that might be good (Year 11 Male Metro SA VET).

You need to have business practices for tourism and also develop cultural understanding. You have to understand what other cultures regard as appropriate behaviour. You have to understand the industry to learn how to communicate with other cultures, not just respond to the stereotypes (Year 12 Female Regional QLD VET).

A number of young people talked about the other subjects that they would need to understand in order to run a business. These came into two distinct areas, either subjects to help with the financial side of running a business, or subjects that helped with particular skills needed for the business. They also made particular mention of business weeks that they had been part of when the whole year level worked in teams to develop and market a business. This was seen as particularly useful.

I'd need business skills. It depends what business you are going into. You need to know about it, and every business would have to have brilliant network. You have to have a couple of good friends to support you or a good [personal] partner. We had business week here, and doing the business in the community subject was good, and the mock business that you set up with the business expo. I also did Young Achievers two years that helped. This has helped me be more confident about doing it (Year12 Male Metro SA VET).

Yeah, I'd need money, probably a lot of information about how to run a business. I'd probably like to develop and try aquaculture in farming, try methods that will increase stuff. I heard they were growing saltwater fish on farms so it would be fun to try that stuff out. Anything that gives you a chance to set a standard and help other industries make things sustainable (Year11 Male Rural SA VET).

One young person spoke about doing a course that would enable her to think of ideas to start a business:

I would need a business degree and an understanding of how small business works and what makes them fail. I would then think of something innovative and new, do some study and then come up with an idea (Year 12 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

One theme that again becomes clear here is the importance of young people's own career narratives. It is clarity in their own stories that enables them to both name the resources that they need and recognise, and make use of them when they appear. 'Enterprise' education would be an example of this. As demonstrated above, the young people who can recognise what they are looking for will be the first to make use of opportunities when they arise.

6. Enterprise Education

(continued)

This section of the report has also demonstrated that, whether they wanted to start a business or not, the young people in the focus groups are asking for, not just the practical skills for the task ahead, but the generic skills—the ‘enterprise’ skills—that would allow them to think creatively into the situation in which they find themselves. This echoes the ideas picked up in the earlier discussion of career education.

The next section of this report will focus on young people as workers, and explore how this fits into the picture.

7. Young People as Workers

The *Young Visions Final Report* reveals that part-time work has become an increasingly important aspect of the lives of students: About one in three (36 percent) of the students in the study were working at least five hours per week in part-time employment. VET students are more active in the workforce than non-VET students, with 44 percent of VET students working at least 5 hours per week, compared with 32.8 percent of non-VET students (Polesel and Helme 2003)

The *Young Visions Final Report* also reveals that when asked to indicate their work plans for the following year (2003), around 95 percent of Year 12 students expect to be working, either part-time (69 percent) or full-time (15 percent) (Polesel and Helme 2003)

In focus groups, these findings were extended to look at the meanings attached to work by students, particularly why they work, what it gives or teaches them, and the issues associated with balancing school and work. This was another instance where linking the broader topic to individuals own stories provided space to think through the issues in new ways.

In this section of the report we explore:

- ◀ Where do young people work;
- ◀ Why do young people work;
- ◀ The skills young people learn at work;
- ◀ How young people are balancing school and work; and
- ◀ The link between workplacement and part-time work.

Where do they work?

Many of the young people interviewed in focus groups had part-time work. They were predominantly located in the service industries, for example fast food, supermarkets and retail. Some students interviewed were from the farming sector. These young people worked on the stations as station hands, mustering and branding cattle, and in agricultural ‘block’ settings (eg. picking fruit). On average the young workers were putting in 8–10 hours / week in one afternoon shift and one weekend shift.

Part-time work and future careers—why do young people work?

In focus groups, young workers were asked why they worked. Most promptly said ‘money’; they did so for the income. This reason was closely followed by the need for experience in the workforce in order to get a job later.

Money. And it mainly develops people-skills (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

It gives me money and experience (Year 12 Female Regional VIC VET).

A third reason was enjoying the experience: for example, relating to strangers and engaging with different types of people:

Being able to talk to people, meet people, personal contact, meeting charismatic people (Year 10 Male Metro ACT non-VET).

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

One conscientious young woman mentioned how work served as guilt-free time-out from study:

[work] actually gives you a bit of a break—especially during exams—you get to take your mind off it. You don't have to feel guilty for not studying
(Year 12 Female Regional TAS non-VET).

While others appreciated having something structured to do:

My own money. I'm not bored on holidays (Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

For approximately 90percent of the young people, the area in which they had part-time work was not related to their future careers:

No it's not related to anything to do with my job aspirations, don't want to be washing up dishes! (Year 11 Male SA Metro).

Occasionally there was some relationship to their future career—for example, one young person who wanted to be a builder had a job in a hardware store—and that was teaching them about the industry. A number of young people mention the skills that they were learning as being useful for their future career, even if it was not in the same field.

Skills learnt from part-time work

When respondents were asked if part-time work helped with schooling or learning, they gave mixed responses. Most initially indicated that their work lives and their school lives belonged to two separate worlds:

Nothing to do with each other (Year 10 Male Metropolitan TAS VET).

When asked if work had helped with their approach to school work or life more generally, some students said yes:

Talk to people more confidently. I've got a better understanding of world, looking at the bigger picture (Year 11 Male Metro NT).

Work taught me 'more people skills' (Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

Customer service teaches you confidence. I used to get up in front of a group and be really nervous. Now I've lost that scaredness. You learn how to interact
(Year 12 Male Regional TAS non-VET).

Some students had already thought about the links between skills learned and life more generally, while other young people spoke more about the linkages between work and the rest of their lives more as the focus group discussion unfolded:

Yeah, it's rubbed off at school a bit. It's more practical too so you realise you can do a bit more than you think you can. You are more willing to have a go at everything. A bit more confident because you realise you can only stuff up and you learn from it—it's OK to make a mistake, a little one! (Year 11 Male SA Rural).

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

You become more responsible with time management, time conscious. Teachers say 'Don't be late with homework—working last night not an excuse'
(Year 11 Female NSW Metro).

Yes, I kind of notice more things. Just more aware of things going on around me. Also I don't think I forget things as much—like doing my homework. I remember things—I have to remember so many things to do at work
(Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Yeah, a bit, because we have our own business set up and I take on responsibilities. That's a struggle—I'm not very organised so I'm having to learn to be
(Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

Many respondents, particularly young women stated how the value of their jobs was in learning transferable skills—for example associating with people and communication skills:

I think any part-time work helps future interaction with people and will benefit you
(Year 10 Female Metro Vic).

Any job involves dealing with people (Year 12 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

It's taught me a lot about organisation and basic manners, given me confidence. It still gives me a boost (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

In general young people responded that the communication skills they learnt in part-time work were useful at school and helped to build their confidence when communicating with teachers and other students. Transferable skills mentioned were problem solving and dealing with difficult customers:

You get customer service skills. You learn how to deal with customers, including rude ones. Helps me to be on time, but I am not on time for school, just for work (laughter)!!! Probably just working as a team when you see something that needs to be done, or you get help from other people—use initiative. It can rub off a bit at school, but more in VET than other subjects (Year 11 Female Metro SA VET).

You get to meet a lot of people and know how to handle situations. It gives you confidence (Year 12 Female Regional TAS non-VET).

Attitudinal skills learnt in part-time work from either positive or negative experiences were useful at school:

When I went into the workplace, I realised that most people don't work hard. I also realised that I can work anywhere as long as I put my mind to it
(Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

A number of students commented that in part-time work they had to learn to do as they were told and this was just the same as school. Students found it useful to bring concepts such as team building and teamwork to the school situation if they had had training in these in their part-time work place.

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

Some students pointed to responsibility as a significant learning experience:

I get a bit more responsibility, and I know what to expect later
(Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

As mentioned previously, the responsibility given to the young people in part-time work far outweighs that given to them at school.

Some young people were doing retail and operations certificates through a large multinational fast-food chain. While they may not end up working in the fast food industry, they could transfer their management skills to other work. However, students were also qualitatively discerning between the kinds of skills that they were learning in their jobs. For example, they mentioned the limited nature of skills learned in multinational fast food chains:

“Would you like fries with that?” is not exactly communication
(Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

Part-time work was a great motivator for some students to continue at school. It showed them the reality of low paid, unskilled work, which encouraged them to stay at school to learn skills to get a skilled job:

I thought that it [job at McDonalds) would help me, but I don't ever want to have a job where you need a resume. I'd rather develop an industry than work in a small shop
(Year 10 Male Metro ACT).

Subway – Name-calling by the manager. I don't want to work with food—want to work with people (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

One focus group was full of casual-work horror stories:

Recently I resigned. The pay was shocking and you were treated really badly. Pizza Hut was \$4.60 /hr. Work paid nothing, and didn't tell us anything. I didn't know how to get paid and I didn't know how to resign. I didn't know a lot of stuff that should be known in a part-time job (Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

I had one [job] but my boss skipped out and still owed me money. I'd like to be my own boss—self-employed (Year 10 Male Metro ACT).

Whole big drama—three hour shift [late]. I needed to catch a taxi home. Sometimes that cost me more than I earned all night (Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

Some said that having to manage and balance part-time work and school also helped with some time management skills. Their stories pointed to a significant social trend: young people now are learning about and living multi-dimensional lives balancing study, work and life commitments.

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

Part-time work and workplacement—Is there a link?

The Final Report of the survey data noted that:

of VET students, those who considered their part-time work as being related to their longer-term goals were more likely to also use their part-time work as part of their VET workplacement. However, the majority were not doing so, indicating that part-time work may be an under-utilised resource for VET students seeking workplacement options (Polesel and Helme 2003).

The students in the focus groups responded that the majority of the young people doing VET, who had completed a workplacement and who had part-time work, found that the workplacement did not relate to their part-time work.

There is no link. Work is just making money. Workplacement is where I see what I want to do (Year 12 Male Metro SA).

Less than a third of male students and a little over a third of female students had a connection between part-time work and workplacement. The strength of the connection varied enormously. In the occasional case the workplacement was the part-time work but in most cases the link was more through attitudes and skills learnt in a similar industry area.

There is a relationship between the type of work. You deal with customers and money and you need to be a people person (Year 12 Female Rural QLD).

From the very small sample, South Australia had far more students with a link between workplacement and part-time work than any other state.

I am doing retail. With my VET course and my work I will be going somewhere with my career and will look for more work experience there (Year 11 Male Metro SA).

Yes it's the same work as I did for my workplacement when I was studying the VET module (Year 12 Male Metro SA).

If the young person had a traineeship rather than workplacement they mentioned a stronger link.

My traineeship gives me extra shifts of part-time work. I learn people skills and interacting with colleagues (Year 12 Female Regional QLD).

Balancing School and Work

You have to be creative to fit everything in. It gets easier from here, they tell us this year. I hope so (Year 12 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Australian young people are increasingly both workers and students. Increasing numbers of casual service industry jobs are not being occupied by those who are unemployed, but by students (Dwyer and Wyn 2001). The issue of 'balancing school and work' has become a central concern for this generation of young people:

Work and school clash (Year 11 Female Regional TAS VET).

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

Shop assistant Thursday, Friday nights and Saturday, Year 11 and 12. Too many things I want to do, not enough time (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

I was worried about Year 11 and 12—if I get that wrong I'm wrecked (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

In focus groups many of the students expressed the view that that now is the time to get experience in the workplace, and that this may well be their 'ticket' to later employment:

You can't get anywhere without experience. It gives you an edge. My sister couldn't find a job. How you get experience if no-one's going to give you a go? (Year 12 Male Rural VIC VET).

At the same time, the challenges of balancing school and work are not necessarily recognised and supported by all workplaces. According to the young people, some employers did (eg. one student reported being told by McDonalds that 'school is first, work is second'). According to these young people, some employers were not so considerate of young people's other lives:

One manager will ring up and ask you to work, even if you just worked a shift (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

In focus groups, young workers were also asked 'What is the school's attitude to your part-time work? Does it support you working part-time?' Within most focus groups, there was still a strong sense of work and school being very separate worlds between which the student-workers moved:

School doesn't talk much about part-time work (Year 11 Female Metro WA).

Indifferent (Year 12 Female Metro NSW).

They have no attitude to part-time work (Year 12 Female Rural VIC VET).

However, upon reflection, some students also perceived quite different reactions from their schools to their out-of-hours work:

Encourage it. Get head start (Year 11 Female Metro NSW).

They encourage it, and put out flyers on new openings (Year 12 Female Metro NSW).

The school says to get a job. It gives you all the qualities you'll need (Year 12 Female Metro NSW).

I do work experience at a hairdressing salon. [Our careers teacher] saw it advertised. It's every Wednesday from ten. The school supports it (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

I don't think they really encourage you. They do tell you about jobs in the Bulletin, so some teachers encourage it but they still want you to get your work done (Year 10 Female SA Metro).

As long as we're not working in school hours they encourage it. They don't want us missing out on school (Year 12 Male Metro ACT non-VET).

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

They kind of encourage it but they don't want you to get behind in your schoolwork (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

They also tell you not to take on too much (Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

Within schools there was variation from teachers of different subjects:

The reaction is split—strong support from some and by others you're completely unsupported (Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Some individual teachers are difficult about homework, because sometimes you can't get out of work. The school as whole really encourages it. (Year 10 Female Rural NSW).

Some teachers are lenient. Others tell you that you need to organise time better. It's your own fault—it's all about time management (Year 11 Male Metro VIC non-VET).

In schools with different social and geographical backgrounds, part-time work has also taken on different sets of meanings. These are strongly related to cultural expectations about appropriate future careers for that school's students. One boy told the story of how his old school (an elite independent boys' school) had actively discouraged students from getting part-time work: 'school is your most important preparation now'. Did the school consider the boys had enough other social and cultural capital not to need the 'edge' gained through part-time work? He contrasted this experience to his current school, a public school in a far more economically depressed area, where school staff were actively 'brokering' jobs for students through their careers office as a vital way into the labour market. Conversations with the relevant staff revealed that they saw this as a key part of their responsibility to students and significant preparation for their futures. These patterns were replicated in many other schools (but not all). For example, the students at another high-fee-paying independent school explained that it was assumed that they would all be going to the local university—part-time work was, to a great extent, ignored by the school 'unless it gets in the way of school work'.

Some students spoke of their school and its reputation as being an excellent way to get part-time work. Employers would advertise at the schools to fill part-time vacancies and new employers such as supermarkets opening in the area would come to the schools for their new staff.

Some explained that the school had no opinion on part-time work and gave them no support while others talked about being driven to and collected from work in the school bus after hours to enable them (as boarders) to participate in part-time work. Students from one public school explained how classes had been rearranged to allow them to effectively participate in both school and work. In a minority of schools, students related stories that showed the school had an explicit understanding that the young people were trying to balance life, school and work:

I had 15–18 hours a week at the beginning of Year 12 and I couldn't handle study and part-time work. I told the VET Coordinator and he wrote a letter to my employer to say I couldn't work the hours they were giving me and could they cut it down or I would have to leave [school]. They have cut it down, because I have a good manager and he cut them to 8–9 hours a week now. He didn't have to write the letter but he was prepared to. The school supported the part-time work, but if it became too much to handle, he would help me to change it (Year 12 Female SA Metro).

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

The more common story, however, was that schools were making sure that students recognised school to be the current priority:

No guidance, we have to organise ourselves (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

Work is no excuse if you don't get your homework in (Year 10 Female Rural NSW).

When I had to go to after-school maths, she said I should work less shifts
(Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

They don't want it to get in the way. They have this recommendation
(Year 12 Female Metro ACT).

The policy is ten hours per week. They say it in the newsletter but they can't enforce it
(Year 12 Male Metro ACT).

You find that the teachers only care about their subjects. As long as you keep up with their subject you're O.K. (Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

No they just expect you to fit it all in. School is a big part of your life but it's not the be all and end all (Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

Whether or not they subscribed to the view that school is their most important focus now, student workers reported often finding themselves caught between conflicting expectations:

At school we're not allowed to have mobiles – that's kind of harsh when you work casual shifts. They ring during the day and tell you you've got to work straight after school (Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Another student in the same focus group explained that the 'phone issue' is not just about work-availability. It is also about being available at short notice while responsibly attending to their other commitments:

...so you need to organise not to be around for hockey training, and tell the person who was going to give you a lift. You have to cancel things, you don't have time after school, the public phones don't work ...(Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

These practicalities clash with school rules, placing working students in a compromised position. Regarding compliance to school rules (ie, not having a mobile phone at school), the students in this focus group explained:

Yeah, we all have phones in our bags, we just pretend not to
(Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Such stories indicate a lack of flexibility by school to respond to complexities in young lives. Mixing between the two worlds of school and casual work, young people are negotiating the demands of two worlds that have conflicting expectations. Casual work requires flexibility. Schools can be inflexible, as putting a large amount of young people through the system requires routines and set ways of doing things. As a casual worker, a young person has to be always available—they are seen as an adult casual worker in a way—assumed to be an independent person. At school they are not seen that way. The mobile phone discussion, above, is just one example that highlights the position that many working young people occupy, balancing the requirements of school and work.

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

The task of managing school and work commitments presents students with other challenges that are not always acknowledged, for example tight time frames:

I start work at 3:30. Teacher wants to talk after class. It's 20 minutes ride to work—I'm late (Year 10 Male Metro Vic non-VET).

Long days:

Mum was worried—she said it will ruin your grades. I managed but it was just fatigue (Year 10 Female Metro ACT VET).

(re working at a fast food outlet) It's really hard to describe how hard it is to work there. It might be easy to get a job there but it's much harder to hold it (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

Irregular shifts:

The good thing about [friend's job] is regular shifts. But I worked casual—sometimes seven shifts, sometimes Friday Saturday Sunday. It was hard not knowing (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

That work takes up all out-of-school time:

I don't go out anywhere. My friend just dropped her job for that reason (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

High teacher / subject expectations:

I do two art classes— and they're a phenomenal amount of work. The teacher also seems to have the attitude that "my subject is the only subject". (Year 11 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Some students also spoke of the need for part-time work to pay for expensive courses at school. Where schools and course costs are high, part-time work actually becomes integral to completing the school subjects. Several young people also mentioned that their parents wouldn't be able to afford the high costs of their materials or courses:

Teachers don't really understand you have to work. Stuff in arts is very expensive. Parents can't do it unless you are working (Year 12 Female Metro TAS non-VET).

Students report responding differently to the pressures of trying to balance school and work:

When I was working, I used to work every day after school and it wasn't for long, from after school until 7pm, but it was heaps tiring and then I had to come home from work and do homework and I was struggling a little bit. That was part of the reason I stopped working and my hours got cut down as well, that was the reason because it was too hard to do work and part-time work. It was more my parents that were concerned about my schoolwork. I didn't really care. I think the school knew, but I think they were getting a bit aggro because my work wasn't getting in on time. The school didn't say anything about work—I am not sure they knew—but my grades weren't going very well (Year 10 Female SA Metro).

7. Young People as Workers

(continued)

When I was working long hours I would get home and just want to go to bed, so if it was Sunday, the first two periods I was pretty tired. So no, work didn't help my schooling. It probably interfered with it (Year 12 Male Metro WA).

I had a job at McDonalds. Realised I couldn't hold a job and get the grades I wanted (Year 10 Male Metro ACT).

At school you just can't stop thinking about how you are going to manage at college—that's the rest of my life at stake. Now I'm just working for Mum (Year 10 Male Metro ACT VET).

It does interfere a lot, especially the traineeship. I'm missing a lot of school plus training two and a half days a fortnight—so I've started failing subjects (Year 12 male Metro QLD VET).

At the start it was a bit hard managing work and school-work. I talked to the manager about it at the start of Year 10. The manager was flexible so that was good. If 15 hours is too much I can change. McDonalds was harder to survive working at. Not many people last six months (Year 10 Female Metro ACT VET).

When asked, other respondents explained that the 'juggle' was not necessarily a bad thing:

I'm just allocating my time better—it is hard but it's probably good (Year 11 Female Metro VIC non-VET).

Yeah, the job gets you heaps organised and you sort of plan things better and you realise that if there is a half hour block, you can go and do something. Being on time is important (Year 11 Male Rural SA).

Many recognised the need to learn the art of balancing. This was largely something that they had needed to negotiate on their own. Several of the more articulate young people reflected that they saw learning to negotiate different worlds as a central life-skill that they would need in the future. Here, the most significant finding is that students are effectively needing to 'project-manage' their lives, and to develop the skills to do this. This fits with themes already found in the literature (eg. see Patton 2001, Furlong and Cartmel 1997, Dwyer and Wyn 2001)

To this end, the focus groups revealed students to be gathering resources and keeping options open, effectively 'amassing a portfolio' full of future options:

Get a heap of different qualifications and draw upon them. Keep them all on the same track (Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

The more you have on your plate, the better (Year 12 Female Metro ACT non-VET).

Can't just base life around school (Year 11 Male Metro NSW VET).

School is no longer the only focus in students' lives, but one of a number of competing life-focuses. Regarding balancing school and work, there are implications for working alongside this generation that need to be recognised. Through the focus groups, young people have communicated that they effectively need to 'project manage' their lives to make it all fit.

Prepared? No, I'm scared. But I don't think anything prepares you for what comes next (Year 12 Female Metro QLD VET).

8. Feeling Prepared to Leave School

As documented in other studies (Patton 2001) the work terrain with which these young people are engaging has and continues to change. In focus groups, the young people themselves were mostly optimistic about their own futures but, at the same time, unsure about whether they were ready to leave school.

This section is about the weaving together of objective and subjective realities in young people's career narratives.

In the focus groups, young people were asked:

- ◀ About their own lives: what they thought they would be doing in five years time, and then in ten years time;
- ◀ What they wanted to do and what jobs they thought would be available to them;
- ◀ About their understandings of the work terrain that faced them;
- ◀ What careers and industries might be growth areas in the future; and
- ◀ If they felt ready to leave school.

Aspirations: what do they want to do?

Echoing the findings of the Final Report of the survey data, young people in focus groups aspired to a wide range of careers. These included:

(in particular industries in order of popularity)

- ◀ Male VET students: Automotive, aviation, sport, fishing, IT, defence forces, hospitality, and financial industries
- ◀ Female VET students: Hospitality, arts related, psychology, journalism, IT, teaching, police, hairdressing, social work, insurance and veterinary industries
- ◀ Male non-VET students: Financial, arts related, journalism, engineering, sport, hospitality and electrical industries
- ◀ Female non-VET students: Arts related, financial, nursing, teaching, law, psychology, engineering and animal-related industries

The industries nominated also fit closely with the Final Report of the survey data that notes arts-related industries as one of the most popular (Polesel and Helme 2003).

Aspirations by gender

The difference between the VET males and females matches the findings from the report of the survey data that 'there is an emerging interest in VET among female students aspiring to academic pathways, and is consistent with the finding that female students are more likely than male VET students to report that keeping their university options open was an important reason for enrolling in VET (Polesel and Helme 2003).

Focus group data may give us some understanding of the above figures. Firstly, young women and young men are looking at different options because that is what is open to them in the communities in which they live. Some young women expressed how there was still not much space for them in traditionally 'male' apprenticeships.

8. Feeling Prepared to Leave School

(continued)

Also, a significant number of young women talked about their hospitality and retail training as being both a resource and backup, primarily as a part-time job, so that they could put themselves through university or other training.

I wouldn't mind finishing certificate in retail. I might go retail—that would help me out in Uni (Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

Aspirations by location

It is interesting to break up the careers aspired to in regard to location as well. The industries, in order of popularity, included:

- ◀ Metropolitan: Arts related, hospitality, IT, building/construction, financial, defence forces, teaching, tourism, fashion, journalism, nursing, social work, science, real estate, and animal related industries
- ◀ Regional: Arts related, building/construction, hospitality/tourism, aviation, health related, financial, IT and engineering
- ◀ Rural: Fishing, teaching, farming, hospitality/tourism, arts related, health related, sport, fashion and hairdressing industries

Rural young people were far more likely to define their activities in terms of practical 'hands-on' occupations, with the arts related industries being most popular with regional and metropolitan young people. A practical 'hands-on' career path would enable the young people to stay in rural areas and find employment. This trend was seen particularly with a group of young men doing VET sea industry related subjects in a rural area with a strong fishing industry. The young women from this area though were doing the traditional VET courses in hospitality.

These two quotes highlight the differences:

In five years, probably abalone diving for the family, fishing stuff and hopefully I would have done something at Uni and can help the family with what I learn from my studies. In ten years, hopefully I'll be involved in the family business and investing some money into family sort of stuff. My marine resource management stuff will probably be with family because we are big with fishing organizations so I would probably want to represent them in that (Year 11 Male Rural SA VET).

I will be working around Australia in bars in five years time, maybe in Queensland. In ten years I could be working overseas, somewhere tropical and running a bar or maybe in one of the bigger hotels rather than a smaller one. Yeah probably I may do some different things but in the same industry. I might own a flashy hotel or something, at least I'd like to but I am not sure what will happen (Year 11 Female Rural SA VET).

For another young woman in rural Australia, socio economic status was the defining aspect for her career possibilities. She already knew she was going to inherit the large cattle property that her parents owned. She was working out what career she would have as well as owning the cattle property:

I want to be a psychologist with two cattle properties and have a manager to run them (Year 11 Female Rural QLD VET).

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(continued)

Young people had different aspirations, reflecting the orientations of the different geographical, cultural, classed and gendered groups from which they came. For example, in their five and ten year plans, a few young women, and a few young men as well, clearly saw family as their primary goal, and careers would be shaped around these expectations:

I wouldn't mind having a business but after having a family. The family would come first. The business would be anything that would help people out or a mechanical business (Year 12 Male Regional QLD non-VET).

I don't want to be in Sydney—maybe in the country, maybe in England, something with horses and having a family. Depending on when Mr Right shows up. I want to be happy (Year 11 Female Metro NSW non-VET).

Would like to be running a tourism resort with small, specialised camping adventures and aboriginal tours. But I could change from being a career girl to a housewife and have a family rather than a career (Year 11 Female Rural QLD VET).

A QLD young man spoke of the importance of his education and work making his parents and wider family proud of him, and that his job should be one that enabled him to look after his parents when they were old.

Definitions of good work and expectations of schooling were varied among different social, cultural and geographical groups. Beyond this, they also changed with communities' circumstances. This case study briefly outlines the challenges facing some young people in rural areas to attend university without substantial financial resources.

A number of the young people in rural Australia had felt the impact of the drought and what that would mean for their future educational prospects. In one town the young people in Year 12 had been reliant on the big primary producer in the area providing scholarships so that they could study at university. The costs for these young people to attend university were more than the families could afford on their own. The closest university was three hours' drive away. The young people were worried about their prospects of getting to university. As a result of the drought, the primary producer could no longer afford to sponsor the young people to the same extent and their parents were struggling to maintain a livelihood let alone paying university costs. Much of the town was based on the one primary industry so, when drought hit it affected the whole town.

The young people had started looking for ways to supplement their income. One of these was pig shooting. Wild pigs were selling at \$1.00 a kilo to markets overseas where wild boar is a popular game meat. Each of the pigs weighed about 80 kilos and on a good night, with a few people shooting off the back of a truck, you could get about ten pigs to take to the commercial chiller (freezer) at the edge of town.

Occupations for the future

It is important not just to listen to the young people's individual narratives of where they wanted to go with their lives, but also to hear what they thought about the employment climate that they would be part of in the future. This conversation reflected what the young people felt was important to create a liveable future.

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When asked which occupations they thought were likely to be growth areas in the future, young people suggested two kinds of answers. The first cluster was about the occupations that young people felt were important for a sustainable future (environment, medical research, health, and teachers who care). The second was to do with lifestyle (tourism, hospitality, and entertainment). Technology spans both, and also got a mention:

Tourism. Ecology. Looking after the world after we stuff it up
(Year 12 Female Regional TAS VET).

Technology (Year 12 Female Regional TAS non-VET).

I think there's little chance of travel agents not existing
(Year 12 Female Metro ACT VET).

One young woman pointed out:

They reckon there'll be careers when we're older that we haven't even heard of
(Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

Aspirations versus realities?

The objective realities of the labour market will preclude many young people from the glamorous occupations to which they aspire. The Final Report of the survey data states that 'artist is the most popular choice of career, and highly favoured by young women and that 'airline pilots and professional sportsman were also strongly favoured by male students'. They raise questions as to whether this is evidence that students' choices are strongly influenced by romantic ideals and media images (Polesel and Helme 2002).

In focus groups we also found several aspiring actresses, a stage make-up artist, and several professional footballers. Other research projects (eg. Cote and Allahar 1994, Schneider and Stevenson 1999) also show repeatedly that young people tend to aspire to more glamorous jobs while the jobs that are available are more related to service industries. However, the young people's input in the focus groups also revealed that there are several other things happening that warrant further exploration.

Firstly, 'artist' is a broad (and expanding) category. Within focus groups, very few young people actually used these words. They were more likely to say 'produce video curriculum materials for primary school'; 'graphic design and layout'; 'singing at weddings and functions'; 'dance or singing teacher' or 'florist' ... and these descriptions better reveal the way in which the 'artist' has a viable, tangible and growing role within the labour market.

Secondly, in many cases, these artistic jobs are not simply aspirations but scenes in which these young people already play a part (see boxed stories below). We need to be paying heed to young people's own stories.

Thirdly, it is not so much the desire to be an actress that is problematic, but whether the desire is grounded in networks, skills, and real opportunities—the factors that denote the reality or not of a young person's aspirations. When young people express an interest in glamorous jobs, it can be tempting to say that these plans are unsubstantiated—the result of fanciful dreaming. The detail in the young peoples stories reveals a picture that is far more complex. The realism or otherwise of young people's aspirations is determined by their

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social context. Successful transition into these careers is likely to depend upon real, human, and practical linkages to the worlds of work into which they are planning to embark. An aspiring 'lawyer' who has no particular plans on how to become one may be equally influenced by romantic ideals and media images.

An aspiring performing artist can look like a romantic dreamer until she shares that she and her partners already have their own business, singing at weddings and functions. She draws her ideas from her singing teacher and her ex-singing teacher. She is aiming at the Western Australian Academy of Performing Arts which, she explains, has a 99% success rate of launching its graduates into professional jobs.

An aspiring TV host can look like a romantic dreamer until she shares that she has completed work experience at a local television studio, and that there are networks and openings now open to her, and an invitation to return.

An aspiring airline pilot can look like a fanciful dreamer until it becomes clear that he has a pilot's licence and the prospects of a traineeship with Qantas.

A writer can look like a romantic dreamer until he /she shares: 'I'm doing English, law studies, ancient history to develop my research skills and writing ability'. She shares details of the local papers for which she already works.

The boxed stories above highlight that the dreams are not always fanciful and are often grounded in experiences, relationships and possibilities, in the real and different circumstances that make up these young people's lives. It is an important move to link analysis of young people's aspirations back into young people's own stories.

This is not to advocate uncritically adopting young people's stories at face value. Particularly in the area of career education, it is vital that dreams are tempered with realism. There were, however, qualitative differences in the kinds of stories being told by young people. While some stories, like those above, were grounded in experiences, relationships, skills and opportunities, other young people in the focus groups were far less able to elaborate on these things. Longitudinal research reveals that it is these stories, grounded in real-world possibilities, that are at the heart of young people's successful career transitions (Wierenga 2001, 2002).

Patton (2001) highlights the importance, in career education, of equipping students to work with both 'subjective' and 'objective' conditions. The former is about strengthening students' capacity to find personal meaning in the topics being discussed. So, for example, in career education, this could be a story of 'what I want to do and why'. The latter is about the objective conditions that surround the topics. These are the opportunity structures, the possibilities, social changes affecting workforce. In terms of future career work, an awareness of each, and the capacity to move between these levels of understanding, is critical.

Optimism and Pessimism

Despite the objective (labour market) conditions being less than optimal, the vast majority of young people's responses to questions about their futures were optimistic. These findings echo other recent research (eg. see Dwyer and Wyn 2001).

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(continued)

Most young people in the focus groups talked optimistically about their own future careers. However there were qualitative differences in the kinds of stories they told about their futures. Most had some kind of concrete plan in mind for their futures (for example, going to university, armed services, TAFE). Many also had a contingency plan in case this first option failed. As above, contingency plans were often based upon their part-time work, usually in retail or hospitality. However, some students were optimistic but shared no particular plans—claiming that they were ‘leaving options open’:

Not sure. I've got lots of ideas though (Year 12 Female Regional TAS non-VET).

Just keeping my options open. I don't think I'm mature enough to make those decisions yet (Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

I chose my subjects in Year 10 to keep my options open
(Year 12 Male Regional VIC non-VET).

In relation to establishing their careers (in five years, in ten years) a small proportion of the young people involved in focus groups were openly pessimistic. These were usually the students who were the least academically inclined—those who indicated that they were also ‘doing time’ at school. They were also overwhelmingly male. These young people had found little place for themselves within the school setting and were expecting to find little place in the workforce. Their statements reveal a kind of lived ‘powerlessness’ about their situation:

I hate school. I'm just doing time (Year 10 Male Metro TAS).

(In 5 years time ...) 'hanging out playing Nintendo or something. I don't know how to get into it [work]—how do I get someone to take me on?
(Year 11 Male Metro VIC VET).

*Five years—in some retail job at a games store—still trying to get a job
ten years—being yelled at to get a real job. I'd never like being in charge, like a boss
or whatever* (Year 11 Male Metro QLD VET).

In focus groups, this small proportion of young people who were pessimistic about their futures were predominantly studying VET or had been placed in ‘Enterprise courses’. This adds another layer to the findings of the *Young Visions Final Report* (Polesel and Helme 2003), where it is reported that VET students are more likely than their peers to see their school experience as a ‘prison’. However, not all of these students find hope in the idea of becoming part of the ‘real world’:

I've changed me mind a thousand times, and I'll probably have to change me mind again. Everyone always says be optimistic but I don't want to. Just kid stuff. There's no spaces, and nothing appeals (Year 11 Male Metro QLD VET).

[in ten years] In music stuff, if all goes well, with a band—depends. Otherwise I'll just be working in a stupid dodgey job (Year 12 Male Metro ACT VET).

There were also conscientious students who expressed a kind of ‘depression’ about the situation they were facing. This may have been all the more evident because focus groups happened in the patch immediately before their exams, leaving them quite vulnerable, anxious and realistic. They were being confronted with the grim realities of their situation—some had not got the marks they had expected, and some of them had not done as much

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work as they had intended to. At this point, particularly rural students were anxious:

My pipe dream? To have finished basic training (navy) out at sea, welding. The horrible truth? Picking grapes on a block somewhere around here and still living with my parents. [To friend] Don't laugh, it will happen to you too
(Year 12 Male Rural VIC VET).

Friend: It will, I know (Year 12 Male Rural VIC VET).

Some rural students were more likely to express fears about not being able to establish the career they wanted locally. This was related to not being able to do the appropriate course of study in their own district (eg. law or wool-grading), or the lack of opportunities to fully engage in that career path locally (eg. journalism). As in other research (eg. Stokes, Stafford and Holdsworth, Looker and Dwyer 1997), rural students expressed concerns about access to and cost of the education they wanted, the need to move away from home and familiar people for either work or study.

Don't know. I've seen how hard it is for Dad. As much as I would like to work on the farm I know that I will probably have to get another job just to make a reasonable living (Year 12 Male WA Regional).

Alternatively, they talked of having some other ideas, but really expecting to settle for something that was available locally, for example 'block' (agricultural work).

Going with the flow and collecting resources

As indicated above, in the focus groups, individuals were mostly relatively optimistic about their own futures. This sits in contrast to the negative interpretations often placed on labour market changes by many researchers and commentators, who may have known times of full employment, and jobs for life (see Wyn and White 2000, Wyn and Dwyer 2001). In terms of objective realities, there is little doubt that the young people that we interviewed are launching into situations of precarious employment, increased casualisation of the workforce, and short-term contracts (Burgess and Campbell 1998). What is this (subjective) optimism about and where does it come from? How does it fit in with the objective conditions?

In focus groups, a kind of pragmatism was evident—an ethos of 'go with the flow and keep your options open along the way'. This was highlighted in the following kinds of comments:

Find something I enjoy. It all depends. If I don't like it then...
(Year 12 Male Regional TAS non-VET).

I don't think you can plan these things, you just have to go where life takes you
(Year 10 Female Metro TAS).

There's no one approach (Year 12 Male Rural VIC VET).

Dance, travel, design my own house, married and have kids, enjoy life, do something in science or dance, perhaps do something like Japanese interpreter or teach English as second language in Japan... as long as I'm dancing I'll be happy
(Year 10 Female Metro QLD).

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For many of the young people in the focus groups, life is made up of short-term contingencies, arrangements ‘for now’. Other research (eg. Dwyer, Harwood and Tyler 1999) also suggests that the post-1970’s generations are individuals who have grown up in a world where change is the norm—they have known no other world. These young people are planning futures but living now, being pragmatic and resourceful with what they have.

Some of these practices, learned from the social worlds in which these young people grew up, may actually serve to make them better adapted to the labour market situation in which they find themselves (Dwyer and Wyn 2001).

Recent writing has pointed to the way in which the nature of careers on offer to this generation of young people has changed. In her discussion of these changes and career education, Patton introduces Hall’s (1996) idea of the ‘protean career’. A person’s ‘career’ instead of being directly linked to occupation or employer, may now be made up of many jobs. In effect the individual is ‘in charge’, most helpfully seen as self-employed and their employer is, in fact, one of many possible ‘customers’ (Collin and Watts 1996, Patton 2001). It is interesting here to make a link to the discussion of owning your own business. In this sense the young people are their ‘own business’. Being self-employed or in charge of project self becomes owning your own business.

Rather than a simple answer to the question ‘what do I want to be when I grow up’, young people are likely to come with a list of possibilities and preferences:

Working down the coast. Something with electricity or lighting, doing productions. Or a locksmith. Or a mechanic. If I was doing that I guess I’d stay around here
(Year 12 Male ACT).

In five years I will have studied and started something in one of my fields of interest. Maybe have part-time employment. I will be in Brisbane. I’d like to do a gap year at the end of school. I’d do a course in hotel management. You can go overseas for that to study at international hotel management courses. I will change jobs. When studying will have part-time work that’s not to do with my career. Then I’ll have something career-based but not permanent to build to permanent position and move up the ranks
(Year 11 Male Regional QLD NonVET).

To this end in the focus groups we found at least half of the young people to be actively gathering resources from the world around them, both for the task of building a future but also as simply a way of living now.

It’s about keeping options open to get into almost all fields
(Year 11 Female Regional VIC non-VET).

I might go retail [VET]—that would help me out in Uni. It’s good having that edge to mention in my resume. Think employability (Year 10 Female Metro ACT).

Take advantage of anything you can (Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

This pattern, which we have called ‘collecting resources’ or ‘gathering a portfolio’, is a way in which many of the young people were reflectively engaging with the world around them.

Young people’s practices (telling of ‘career narratives’) and the resources with which they do this (vocabularies, attitudes and dispositions) are being shaped by the different social worlds

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in which they live. There were clear differences, for example, in the types of stories that were being told by young women at independent fee paying schools to many of their public school sisters. These differences often involved the kind of language being used, expectations about what work was appropriate, expectations about schooling and its value, expectations about getting ahead.

I don't want to be the kind of person who spends their life working in K-mart. I want to be the best that I can in life (Year 10 Female Metro VIC).

In ten years' time I will have done a performing arts / law course. Before that I will have done a GAP exchange year and teach in Russia at the University of Moscow. Dad's a lawyer so I will be able to take over his practice if I get into law (Year 12 Female Metro VIC).

These things are the 'cultural capital' that Bourdieu spoke of in much of his work. Bourdieu (1974) suggested that the things being offered by schools were far more likely to be available and useful to young people from more privileged backgrounds and well-resourced families. In focus groups, this was clearly the case in relation to career education.

Another way of understanding differences is in terms of 'social capital'. In focus groups, young people were asked who they turned to for matters of career advice and simply to discuss their futures. While some young people were able point to, and single out strong networks and close mentors (within schools, families and wider communities), others were not. These relationships form the space in which young people develop their own narratives about self and future, and in which their 'career narratives' are rehearsed and developed. Trusted others also served as 'role models', giving young people ideas about the things that they might do with their own lives. Finally, these relationships also offered the resources that help young people to enact their plans.

In these terms, rural young people were also clearly disadvantaged. With smaller, more localised networks, they had both less exposure to different ways of doing things, and less access to different pools of resources.

What this means

In focus groups it was clear that many of the young people were putting all the bits together to develop a portfolio. In many cases they were doing, and able to do, something practical about their futures. It was also clear that they are very differently engaging in, and equipped for the task at hand. This picture does not have to be deterministic. Research shows that schools can play a significant role in opening up options for young people. The keys to this are the things students highlighted in other sections, that they need to form part of whole picture. These included:

- ◀ Positive relationships with teachers;
- ◀ Developing career narratives;
- ◀ Exposure to new situations;
- ◀ Linking to new networks;
- ◀ Learning to think reflectively; and
- ◀ Developing generic skills.

9. Discussion of the Findings

In this section of the report we discuss the implications of the findings for ECEF's programs, strategic directions and broader youth strategy. The research has explored young people's experiences, their 'visions' of their futures, expectations, understandings and hopes. The challenge is to ensure that ECEF's policies and practices regarding their 'Transition Agenda' are relevant to young people's experiences and understandings. The data also provides information about what kinds of programs work for young people. The interviews with students provided an opportunity to hear, in their own words, what they thought of their experiences of careers education and counselling, structured workplace learning and Vocational Education and Training. This is important, because their statements provide explanations for patterns that are revealed in the large-scale surveys. Without this in-depth qualitative research, it would be necessary to extrapolate, based only on researchers' understandings. The interviews with young people also allowed the researchers to follow up on ambiguities and inconsistencies in young people's responses and discussions, to gain information about the complexity of their lives.

The questions to the young people were grouped in specific 'subject' groups such as career education, vocational education and enterprise education. Initially the responses to these questions were analysed in their specific areas. What became clear as we continued was that there were commonalities and overlap between the areas. The young people were not placing everything in boxes or seeing work, career, VET and school as separate topics. They were talking in general terms across all the areas and explaining how all of these areas impacted on their lives and their development of their career narratives.

Commonalities and recurring patterns

Across the different questions and topics (eg. career education, VET, enterprise, work) there were some recurring patterns in the responses that young people were making. There were gendered differences in the ways that young people were approaching each of these topics, and there were also differences marked by whether they were VET or non-VET students. These findings echo the findings of the *Young Visions Final Report* (Polsetel and Helme 2003), and tease out what is happening a little further.

The first thing that became evident was that young women, on the whole, were more likely than their male counterparts to tell stories that entailed a higher degree of analysis and a higher degree of abstraction:

So, for example, they were more likely to:

- ◀ identify themselves as rating highly with enterprise skills;
- ◀ talk about how work had shaped their character, and how this could be applied to other spheres of life;
- ◀ talk about how other spheres of life had equipped them to deal with current and future work.

In these ways, the career narratives that young women told were often more abstract and sophisticated than those told by their male counterparts. However, this gendered description is *too simplistic*, and does not represent fully the patterns in the data. There were many young men who would do the same things in the career narratives that they told, and some with clarity and complexity. Interestingly, these were non-VET males. The non-VET males were doing the things listed above, and clearly analysing and 'abstracting' were habits with which they were familiar. It was non-VET females and males who were able to draw skills

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out from their school experience that would enable them to make changes in the future.

VET females (in many cases), non-VET females and non-VET males were also telling complex and multi-stranded stories about their futures. These patterns are highlighted in Figure x, below.

Figure x: recurring patterns in focus group data

COURSES	Non-VET	Non-VET girls Abstracting and linking	Non-VET boys Abstracting and linking
	VET	VET girls Abstracting and linking	VET boys Grounded solutions Not abstracting
		Female	Male
GENDER			

This caused us to look again at what, specifically, VET males were saying in the answers that they gave and the stories that they told.

They were more likely to:

- ◀ make links between VET and the practical skills that they had learned (or the lack of these links);
- ◀ want to own their own business than non-VET males; and
- ◀ make links (or identify the lack of links) between their current work and the concrete or grounded things that they wanted to do. ‘I’d rather be...’

They were less likely to:

- ◀ think that they would change careers;
- ◀ report that school had provided them with skills to enable change;
- ◀ be studying a broad range of subjects to keep options open;
- ◀ aspire to a university pathway than VET females;
- ◀ make links between their VET subjects and their outside world;
- ◀ talk to teachers about careers; and
- ◀ identify themselves as rating highly with enterprise skills. (Was this about lack of familiarity or identification with these more abstract ideas?)

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A small proportion of VET males were less likely to:

- ◀ have positive relationships with teachers;
- ◀ be optimistic about the future.

In their stories, these men were talking about practical skills and practical jobs. They were likely to have chosen one job that they wanted to do, and be looking to their VET course to skill them to do it. For many of these young men it was the concrete VET course that was enabling them to experience success in an often abstract, academic curriculum that they had not been able to access. They valued specific networks or relationships that enabled them to make connections in their sphere of work. These were the students who really missed out if the VET courses were not well constructed and were delivered in the same way as all their other subjects (for example, in one case where all learning was within the school and taught from the blackboard).

In interviews, the VET young men were processing their world in far more concrete, practical ways than their peers, and in the stories that they told, they were not making great abstract leaps between spheres of life. Rather than leaving their options open, and collecting multiple resources to this end (jobs, certificates, courses), in the way that many of their peers were doing, they tended to look towards simpler concrete goals: ‘I have always wanted to be a mechanic—do a VET course, get an apprenticeship...’

The implications of this are stark in a changing world. Many of them will undoubtedly find the grounded solutions that they seek. They would not be necessarily unsuccessful in terms of finding a job. A number spoke of family networks and support that would enable them to find employment. However, these young men are also vocationally vulnerable. They are less likely to be able to adapt to a changing occupational landscape and to changing personal circumstances. They have not in general developed the reflexive tools to help negotiate change.

These findings are supported by research with other groups. In a longitudinal study of rural young people growing up in one town, Wierenga (2001) found that the working class males were far less likely to ‘do abstraction’ in their stories about their futures. They were also the ones who struggled over time as their local grounded solutions disappeared: as businesses closed down or automated; as the company with which they had chosen to do their apprenticeship folded; as they were injured in manual jobs and lost the chance to do the specific thing that they were skilled to do.

On the other hand a number of the other young people, especially non-VET girls, appeared unfocussed on a particular career. They were gathering generic skills and resources that would enable them to make decisions about their career further down the track. They also felt able to make changes when needed according to lifestyle and their career. There was less urgency to be focussed at this time because the skills or career capital they had developed would enable them to make decisions as needed.

These young people spoke about how the career they would choose would fit in or enhance their lifestyle involving travel, family and other interests rather than determining their lifestyle.

The interviews confirmed that young people have different needs, depending on geographic region, gender, socio-economic background and other social factors. These are discussed

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(continued)

below. Just as importantly, there were many common themes, despite the differences amongst young people. These common themes may be of most interest to ECEF in answering the question:

How does VET, Enterprise Learning and Career Education prepare a young person for successful post-school transitions and a life in the post-industrial age?

The findings alert us to serious gaps in provision and a number of challenges yet to be met.

Post-industrial education for a post-industrial economy

ECEF is correct in identifying the shift from meeting the needs of an industrial economy to serving a post-industrial economy. The findings of this report provide further evidence that there are distinctive new patterns of transition in the post-industrial age. For example, both the literature review and the statements from young people in this report give important clues to the ways in which the meaning and experience of work and career have changed. In the post-industrial age, the boundaries between places of learning (schools and workplaces) are being blurred. Many current initiatives recognise this, but are limited because they are attempting to build on old frameworks and structures (for example, the atomised curriculum and rigid timetables).

ECEF is positioned to become a leading organisation in recognising the nature and direction of this change. However there are a number of specific areas in which traditional frameworks, structures and thinking represent barriers. These are areas within policy and practice regarding the youth transition agenda that would warrant further attention.

Understanding the transitions from school to work

Young people's life patterns are turning away from the industrial experience of work as subsequent to schooling. In terms of work, leaving school is not the most significant transition point in young people's lives. In the post-industrial age, education and work are simultaneous, not linear experiences and it may take many years for young people to move beyond the necessity of balancing both study and work. The young people in this study are typical in that many (35%) both study and work while in secondary school and many more would prefer to (94% of Year 12 students intended to have part-time jobs in 2003). Research shows that this pattern continues beyond secondary school for many students. This feature of our post-industrial society means that young people do not experience 'the' transition from school to work, but rather a series of on-going transitions. This makes the relationship between education and work more complex and more unpredictable. This in turn poses challenges for the notion of careers education and for the question of what kinds of information the students need to maximise their own options. Becoming skilled in decision-making, and in gaining their own information, become important tools in students' quest to shape their future lives.

The relationship between school knowledge, work and learning

Young people value learning outside the classroom highly. VET is an excellent example of a school-community partnership that can provide that learning in a structured way. VET subjects that are provided at TAFE or off the school campus were an example of learning outside the classroom. While the students found VET at TAFE more organisationally difficult, they valued the different learning experience and the links made with industry. Students studying VET at school found it organisationally easier but sometimes found the

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(continued)

learning experience similar to other subjects at school.

The majority of students were undertaking workplacement. Students undertaking workplacement found it to be one of the most useful parts of their VET course, giving them the most understanding of their industry area, whether it was a positive or negative experience.

The students did not see learning outside the classroom as always being a structured learning experience, but something that happened through the whole range of experiences, activities and interactions that they were involved in. It was as important to them as their learning within the classroom, in a range of areas that they identified: schoolwork in the community; the workplace; the family; friendships; outside school activities for example: sport, music and drama.

Clearly, learning for the young people was not confined to subject content in the classroom. It was about developing generic skills such as working with people, negotiating and planning, that they would use in all aspects of their lives. Being outside the classroom gave the young people opportunities to develop these skills that being in the classroom sometimes did not. Young people talked of the responsibility given to them by their families, friends and in part-time work. Learning outside the classroom enabled the young people to make sense of what they were learning in the classroom. Although approximately 90% of the working students were engaged in part-time jobs that were not related to their future careers, most were able to see that they were learning important skills that were relevant to their education and life skills. In the interviews, young people talked of the importance of workplacement and part-time work in helping them make decisions about their future and their present life, such as why it mattered to stay at school.

Yet interviews revealed that it is rare for their work experiences to be integrated with the learnings in school. This is despite the fact that their work experiences often involve positions of responsibility and that the young people themselves can clearly express the skills and knowledge that they gain from their part-time jobs. The effect of this is that school learning becomes linked with more abstract knowledge (education) and young people seek to learn skills and knowledge that they consider relevant from the workplace. This separation of learning spheres represents a lost opportunity to educate young people, as many schools continue to utilise atomised subject and timetable structures, and to recognise rigid boundaries between school and ‘the world’ that are clearly at odds with young people’s lives.

Career and enterprise education

Students were overwhelmingly receiving extensive career information, some were receiving career counselling but few had career education. All three are important elements in a strategy to support young people’s transitions through school and beyond. Career education, especially, provides the important function of assisting students to see the bigger picture and to make sense of the complexities in their lives. The interviews with young people found that they sought to develop their own ‘career narratives’ that enabled them to develop a framework into which information about specific areas of study or specific jobs could be placed. Students were able to identify generic skills that they learned in subjects as diverse as Drama, Dance, Physical Education, Sport and English, that they felt would equip them for work. These skills included reflection on and improvement of performance, health and relationships.

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(continued)

This is especially relevant in a post-industrial age, because young people need to be able to make decisions about their futures based on ‘information-rich narratives’ that serve as their own map for their futures. The interviews with young people revealed that they see ‘career work’ as being about much more than simply getting a job. ‘Career’ is about integrating the different elements of their lives into a package that works for them. A focus on information about occupations and credentials seriously underestimates the challenge for career education.

Perhaps more challenging is the finding that while work is important, there is evidence that the answer to the question ‘what do you want to be when you grow up’ is not necessarily focused on the sphere of work. Other life interests increasingly feature as a priority in the formation of adult identities.

The related area of enterprise education revealed mixed findings. The term ‘enterprising’ itself appears to be confusing to young people because it has so many meanings in different contexts. Few students had any understanding or experience of enterprise education but could identify enterprising skills and attributes that they developed through a range of other subjects, activities and relationships. These skills and attributes were more likely to be developed outside the classroom than in. In general, young women were more confident about their enterprising attributes than young men, as were metropolitan young people than rural young people. Rural young people were far more likely to say that they would like to own their own business than metropolitan young people. It is significant to note that rural young people were most likely to see the need to start a business but felt the least confident about being equipped to do so (ie. confidence with enterprising skills).

Enterprising skills, to the extent that they are relevant to young people, are more likely to be relevant when they are integrated within a comprehensive ‘career education’ program.

Different resource bases

In developing their own ‘career narratives’, young people have access to very different resource bases. Both the interviews and the literature reveal that young people who are able to access a rich resource base, including school, parents, friends and community, are more likely to be equipped with the rich narratives about their own futures and the information they need.

There are three different—and related—kinds of resources being discussed here:

Firstly there is the richness associated with trusting, supporting relationships, strong, wide networks, and the practical resources and ideas that flow through such relationships. In other words, this layer is ‘social capital’.

Secondly there is the richness associated with social and cultural background through different ways of thinking about and processing the world. Vocabularies, ideas, habits of reflection and learning, dispositions towards school and work are paramount here. Socio economic background plays a strong part in shaping this. In other words, this layer is ‘cultural capital’.

These two types of capital are strongly related and feed into each other. Most clearly, in this research, this dynamic was revealed through young people’s ‘career narratives’. Their personal stories of what they were doing and where they wanted to go shaped the way in which they engaged with the topics of careers, school, work, VET, and enterprise. Their

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(continued)

relationships—sometimes forged through these encounters with school and work settings—in turn shaped their stock of ideas and stories. There is much more room for schools to make use of this dynamic. In terms of career education, these different resources could be seen as different kinds of ‘career capital’.

The literature tells us that school programs have the potential to fill gaps in students’ resource bases. However this research shows that even this area is uneven. For example, students in rural areas are especially likely to report that they were not exposed to a wide range of ideas and opportunities. Their own personal networks are more bounded by distance, and their chances of being exposed to different ways of thinking are more limited also. In a climate where many rural communities struggle, the resources (eg. jobs) that their networks (families, family friends) can offer them may now be quite limited also. This is reinforced at school, where they mentioned the scarcity of speakers and special programs, and the barriers of cost, transport and time to travel to other centres to gain information about careers.

What schools are doing

It is evident that there is a wide range of practices around career and enterprise education and workplace learning. Some of the variation reflects the different needs of students but some simply reflects a lack of response to their needs. This may be because this is a time of change, and inevitably some schools are in a position to respond more quickly to students’ needs than others. Career counselling and information were highly valued, but interviews showed that, in general, holistic programs were more likely to be seen by students to be meeting their needs. In order to make the most of their learning, students strive to see the relevance of what they are doing in their subjects to the world outside – in the present and in the future. While students were able to identify generic skills that they were learning in some of their subjects, teachers seldom made the link and students reported that teachers often appeared to care only about their ‘subject’.

The increasing complexity of linking future jobs and careers and life interests with educational qualifications and credentials poses a particular challenge for school-based programs.

What can schools do?

In terms of what schools need to be doing, focus group data point to the need for a three-way focus: support for students in establishing and refining their personal ‘career narratives’, (subjective realities) and the provision of tools to make sense of the external / workforce / conditions (objective realities). Beyond this, schools need to be equipping students with skills that will allow them to engage well and reflect upon their own actions in a changing world. In other words this means awareness of self, opportunities, and of how to continually and creatively link these things through reflective practices.

Practically, this focus should not only be limited to careers subjects. This links closely with a literature surrounding career education which points to the importance of developing generalised skills. Gonczi (1996) pointed out that there is no point teaching a very specific skill unless it is located in a more general skill. Work places change. Mayer (1993) highlighted that employers can teach the skills as long as young people have the key competencies.

This idea of reflecting on ‘career narratives’ and facilitating young people to develop skills

9. Discussion of the Findings

(continued)

in reflective action fits in with some current policy and program directions: for example ‘CATS’ (career and transition pathways) (DEST 2002) or ‘MIPS’ (Managed Individual Pathways) (DE&T 2002) or the UK’s ‘Connexions’ approach. However, the process of encouraging ‘career narratives’ will be no use unless young people are actually engaging in the process itself—ie. have a wider interest in, and the skills for the process of, reflectively making sense of their own lives.

The roles of school-based staff

The interviews have raised questions about who should be involved in ‘career and enterprise education’. The evidence suggests that both generalist and more specialised approaches and staff are needed. It is clear that there should be a greater focus on the role that all teachers play in equipping students with the generic skills that are relevant to employment. Reflective, performance and interactive skills that are developed in the arts, humanities and in physical education could be more directly identified. The relationship of other subjects, such as mathematics and science to occupations or employment could be made more explicit. In all areas of the curriculum, classroom teachers have the opportunity to enhance young people’s skills in developing their own positive narratives about their futures. All teachers can make these general contributions to young people’s skills across all programs.

There is also an important role for more specific and targeted information about workplaces, careers and pathways provided by careers counsellors and specialised careers staff. These staff need to be trained in providing this service, and to keep up with changes in occupational structures, areas of employment, education and training pathways and student outcomes.

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11. Appendices

Appendix A: Response from pre-service teachers

Their understanding of young people's perceptions

Pre-service teachers attended the interviews in each of the states with the researchers. From these interviews, the pre-service teachers gained an understanding of young people's perceptions of vocational education, part-time work, career education and enterprise education. They also gained an insight into young people's lives, combining work, study and other commitments.

These were some of their responses to those insights:

There appears to be a need for a better relationship between students' lives outside school and their lives at school. Many of the students interviewed felt as though they had two lives—school, and the outside of school. There are so many worthwhile learning experiences that go on outside of school, particularly in the workplace. Students may not realise that these experiences have so much educational relevance. It is important that teachers instil this knowledge into students, so that students realise that everything they do is a learning experience, and that education can also occur outside the walls of the school (pre-service teacher VIC).

Having had the opportunity to be part of this focus study group, it gave me a clearer idea of what students' needs are, with respect to future aspirations and careers. Although most students had not thought a tremendous amount about what they wanted to be in the future, they did give a clear indication that they wanted more information and advice. I think that it will be very important for me to make sure that my teaching relates to the real world, which will give students a clearer picture of what they may be interested in. Most teachers these days just go into their classroom, read the day's lessons, and go home. The students we interviewed made it clear that a teacher must include life in everything they teach, to make learning more interesting, relevant, and fun. The VET program is one of those programs that can motivate, inspire, and encourage students to set goals. This can only be achieved under the right conditions, conditions that can be made easier by future educators such as myself (pre-service teacher VIC).

It was a great experience to hear what students thought of VCE and career choices, how they were presented and what else was needed. On the whole I was impressed with how self-directed they were, both with school and careers. I was a little surprised that some students at Year 11 had no concept of what it meant to be enterprising. It was great to see that at Year 11 and 12 students do have a good idea of their immediate future but, on the flipside, disappointing they were less sure of their future five years on (pre-service teacher VIC).

Students commented that they were really appreciative of teachers who showed an interest in their VET courses, and who gave assistance with career prospects. I am now somewhat motivated to be one of these teachers who shows a genuine interest in students' study and career prospects (regardless of whether I am in the Coordinator position or not). It is because of this research that I will be more likely to facilitate and support schools in establishing and maintaining VET pathways (pre-service teacher SA).

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Their understanding from their teacher education courses

All the pre-service teachers, apart from the pre-service teachers in WA, had had little or no exposure to vocational education throughout their teacher education. The pre-service teachers in WA had subject methods in the vocational area and so had a far greater understanding of the area. While the pre-service teachers in the other states did not have their teaching methods in vocational areas, they also indicated a lack of exposure to careers education and enterprise education as well. For many it was the first time they had discussed these areas and issues with the young people.

Before becoming involved in this project, I rarely thought about the VET program or about enterprise education. In fact, I don't think I knew what enterprise education was! This research was valuable for me, as it has helped me to refocus my understanding of the role of education for young people.

When looking at the education system now, particularly with regards to curriculum in schools, I now view the VET program as being just as important in schools as academic success. While I have not in the past valued academic achievement over vocational achievement, it is easy to forget about vocational education, as it has not been in the forefront of my mind. The Diploma of Education and the Bachelor of Education provides little focus on vocational training, which I believe is a mistake. Unless more emphasis is placed on vocational training, there will be teachers graduating university with little knowledge or understanding of vocational education (pre-service teacher VIC).

Previous to working on the Young Visions Project, I had never heard of, nor had any prior knowledge of VET, careers, or enterprise courses in the educational setting. Taking this into account, I would have to say my present courses have little or nothing to do with educating future teachers in the areas of VET, careers or enterprise. I find this very surprising and disappointing since the students seemed to gain so much experience from these particular courses.

Nevertheless, through the interviews, I gained a greater knowledge of how students like to be treated and taught. I found it very fascinating to hear the students tell me their feelings towards certain teaching and discipline styles. I will definitely use this knowledge towards improving my own teaching styles (pre-service teacher NSW).

I had very little experience with VET programming in schools. One of my teaching rounds was at a school that included VET on campus. I had observed a class and was astounded at the length of the session. Apart from this experience I was totally unaware of the VET program and the diversity in the subject choices. Being involved in this research inspired me to find out more, especially concerning students' choices beyond university (pre-service teacher VIC).

I hope to be part of the 'new wave' of thinking which embraces VET options in schools to give students more options for choosing and studying for the diverse range of employment options that South Australia has to offer. This experience has been valuable (pre-service teacher SA).

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The pre-service teacher in WA gave this response to the inclusion of enterprise education in schools:

The most predominant factor that requires attention in schools is the issue of enterprise education. For those students who are even able to make some association with the word 'enterprise', it related solely to making money. The ability to do this successfully generally by means of devising a business plan and producing a product of some sort for sale was also a popular response to the meaning of the word. An enterprising person may do this but the word itself has the potential to mean so much more (pre-service teacher WA).

The pre-service teacher in WA had this response to the changes needed:

Students were pleasantly surprised to discover that they themselves actually possessed some of these attributes and were able to identify that school and outside activities were assisting in the development of these attributes. However I see the potential and a great need for enterprise education to become something much more in schools. enterprise education, if it is to be of any benefit to students, needs to take on a whole school approach with the full support of teaching and administration staff. I believe that Curriculum Framework in Western Australia is providing us with the basis to develop enterprise across all learning areas that will be of great benefit to all students. (pre-service teacher WA).

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Appendix B: Details of the research design

The original plan was to select a range of schools that had previously completed the EORU survey. This range of schools would include a mix of metropolitan, regional and rural schools from the different schools sectors and socio economic groups.

The focus groups were originally planned to be conducted after the survey data had been collated and preliminary analysis had been completed. Delays to the completion and analysis of the survey meant that the focus groups were started before the survey was completed and returned by schools. For the focus groups to include the perceptions of Year 12 students, it was necessary that the focus groups be conducted by term three, as Year 12 students leave early in term 4 and needed to focus on exams. This meant that, in some cases, the schools participating in the focus groups but did not complete the survey as well, but in most cases the schools had done both.

Each school was asked to select 15 students with five at each of the three year levels, 10, 11 and 12. Schools were asked to select half VET and half non-VET students at Years 11 and 12. At Year 10 they were asked to select half of the students doing an enterprise-based subject and half not. In Metropolitan NSW, VIC and WA a double cohort of 30 students was selected at each of the three Government schools.

School Numbers by location and sector

State	Location			School Sector		
	Metro	Regional	Rural	Government	Catholic	Independent
NSW	1 (1XDC)	2	1	1	1	1
VIC	2 (1XDC)	1	1	2	1	1
QLD	3	2	0	3	1	1
SA	3	0	1	2	1	1
WA	2 (1XDC)	1	0	2	1	1
TAS	1	1	0	1	0	1
ACT	2	0	0	2	0	0
NT	2	0	0	1	0	1
Total	16	7	3	14	5	7

(DC = double cohort)

Limitations to the selection of participants.

In most cases the schools were able to provide the number of students asked for. However there were sometimes difficulties doing this. One school was unwilling to let their Year 12 students be interviewed due to their study commitments. In another school interviews were accidentally scheduled on the Year 12s' last day when the students could not be interviewed. In two other schools recent tragedies limited the interviewing of students. Attempts were made to make up numbers in other ways when possible. As a result, the numbers are not even across all categories.

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Gender and year level of students

State	Totals	Gender		Year Level		
		Male	Female	10	11	12
NSW	69	38	31	24	24	21
VIC	67	21	46	20	24	23
QLD	90	31	59	29	35	26
SA	41	21	20	17	13	11
WA	54	26	28	18	18	18
TAS	29	8	21	9	7	13
ACT	17	6	11	6	0	11
NT	26	16	10	8	12	6
Total	393	167	226	131	133	129

Location and numbers of VET and non-VET students

State	Location			Yr 11/12	Yr11/12	Yr 10	Yr 10
	Metro	Regional	Rural	VET	non-VET	Enterprise	non-Ent
NSW	31	21	17	25	20	12	12
VIC	44	15	8	25	22	9	11
QLD	45	34	11	39	22	13	16
SA	29	0	12	22	2	8	9
WA	40	14	0	23	13	10	8
TAS	19	10	0	9	11	4	5
ACT	17	0	0	7	4	4	2
NT	22	0	4	8	10	3	5
Total	247	94	52	158	104	63	68

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Appendix C: Interview schedule

Young Visions Project

Questions for Focus Groups

1. VET and learning (Yr 11 & 12 only)

- 1.1 Has the VET in Schools program helped you to understand the industry related to your area of study? If so how?
- 1.2 Has the VET course helped your approach to other studies? Eg. different learning environments. If so how?
- 1.3 Does the school support your learning in VET? Eg diaries, timetable structures, advice, designated VET day per week.
What could it do better to support your VET learning?

2. Young people as workers

- 2.1 What is your history of part-time work?
- 2.2 Is the part-time work related to future job aspirations?
How? (Give examples)
- 2.3 Does part-time work help with your schooling / learning?
Eg skills/attitude learnt in part-time work
- 2.4 Is there a relationship between your part-time work and your workplacement?
If so what? (only VET students)
- 2.5 What is the school's attitude to your part-time work?
Does it support you working part-time?

3. Career Education

- 3.1 Has your school helped you become informed about different careers and industries?
If so how?
- 3.2 What else could it do?
- 3.3 How relevant are your subjects to your career interests?
- 3.4 Where do you go for information and advice about careers? Eg parents, friends etc.
- 3.5 What do you think you will be doing in five years time? And ten years time?
(Prompt: this is in regard to career/work choices)
- 3.6 How likely is it that you will be changing occupations and how often?
(Prompt: What skills have you learnt at school to help you make changes)

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3.7 Which areas and occupations do you think will be important in the future?

4. Enterprise Education

4.1 How would you describe an enterprising person? What skills would they need?

4.2 Enterprising skills may include: developing and using initiative, creativity, team work, time management, working with people, planning, evaluating and using IT. (Students to be given checklist).

Fill in the check list and write examples of the subjects at school which help you develop these skills?

What other activities at school help you to develop these skills? For example SRC, extra curricula activities, young achievers. Write examples of these.

Have other activities outside of school helped you to develop these skills?
For example: work, community involvement, sporting activities, activism, music, involvement in interest groups. Write examples of these as well.

4.3 Look at the examples the students have given.
How could the subjects be changed to help you develop these skills?
Eg teaching styles, subject content, activities (both in and out of the classroom).

4.4 Would you be interested in starting your own business?
If so, what assistance do you think you would need?
For example what subjects at school may help with starting a business? How?

4.5 What sort of business would you like to start or be part of?

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Appendix D: Rating My Enterprise Attributes (Commonwealth of Australia 2002)

Score yourself in relation to each of the enterprise qualities in the chart below

1. This is one of my strengths
2. This is an area that I could further develop
3. This is an area I need to work on to develop my skills
4. Unsure/ I need to find out more about this area

I have the following quality:	Self
Can identify opportunities	
Have drive	
Can locate resources	
Am creative	
Can network effectively	
Can plan effectively	
Understand authority	
Can seek advice	
Can negotiate	
Learn from mistakes	
Am responsible	
Match abilities to undertakings	
Am flexible	
Can focus on knowing how	
Am a good risk assessor	
Can cope with stress	
An able to resolve conflict	
Am able to evaluate my performance	

Where do you use these enterprise attributes?

1. Subjects at school
2. Other school activities
3. Outside school activities