Shedding Light
The role of private ‘for profit’ RTOs in training young early school leavers

Preliminary findings

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About the research

Purpose

- Provider level enquiry: learning from the private RTO experience

About the method (and us)

- Qualitative and semi-quantitative analysis

- Surveys of PRTOs; interviews of case study sites in SA, Qld, and Victoria; and of those in industry/govt

- Our key themes and interests
Context

- Contestable funding for VET
- Trends: Australia and beyond
- These ‘interesting times’
## The provider landscape

### All RTOs* (4,574)

- **Public/community owned (750)**
  - Tafes (54)
  - Schools, Uni, ERT (384)
  - Community based (312)

- **Privately owned (3,770)**
  - Schools, Uni (176)
  - Industry, ERT (388)

- **‘For profit’ (3206)**

* ‘Other’ (54)
The young learners

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Youth in VET (15-19yo)</th>
<th>ESLs in VET (no Y12)</th>
<th>ESLs in private VET</th>
<th>ESLs in entry-level programs in private VET</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Aust</td>
<td>453,369</td>
<td>306,616</td>
<td>86,364 (19.3%)</td>
<td>70,908 (15.6)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Qld</td>
<td>72,494</td>
<td>47,223</td>
<td>18,129 (25)</td>
<td>17,363 (23.9)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SA</td>
<td>29,798</td>
<td>12,335</td>
<td>6,113 (20.5)</td>
<td>5,675 (19)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Vic</td>
<td>134,891</td>
<td>89,376</td>
<td>46,560 (35)</td>
<td>35,095 (26)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The survey

Design: the range of questions

- PRTO profile: locale, size, mode, scope
- Student characteristics: background, skill level and readiness, barriers faced
- Practice, teaching, supports, engagement
- Pathways, completion and non-completion
- Partnerships
Distribution and response

N=130 (183 sent)
Enrolment trends (prev 5 years)

- Increased significantly, 23%
- Increased slightly, 36%
- No change, 34%
- Decline, 7%
The challenges faced by ESLs

- Centrelink requirements to be learning or earning
- Resume writing and interview skills
- Unclear career goals
- Unclear learning pathways
- Transport issues
- Low socioeconomic and/or disadvantaged
- Getting a drivers licence
- Managing personal finances
- Unstable housing and accommodation, including
- Anger management issues
- Hygiene and personal health issues
- Mental illness
- High levels of drug and alcohol use
- Caring responsibilities

Per cent of respondents indicating a majority/all early leavers experience this factor
Negative impacts on learning outcomes

- Low/limited literacy
- Low/limited numeracy
- Low/limited ICT skills
- Disengagement from learning
- Non-attendance

Strongly agree
Agree
Contributing to non-completion

“outside influences…drugs, alcohol, personal and health issues”

“multiple barriers to engagement e.g. family, social, financial behavioral issues”

“socio-economic barriers that have not been addressed in the job service contracts/system. Individuals not having opportunity to undertake career planning prior to commencing courses”
Contributing to non-completion

“boredom...distraction...difficulties extracting meaning from written learner materials”

“students ‘getting behind’ in their work”

“centerlink dependence” hence [they’re] compelled.
Contributing to non-completion

“long standing issues which we attempt to address in a 12-16 week program – not easy”
Overview

Contributing to non-completion

Factors – often interrelated – identified

**Socio-economic**
- Home life/family issues
- Limited resources/choice
- Housing
- Access (drivers license)
- Compulsion

**Wellbeing**
- Drug and alcohol use
- Anxiety and ‘mental health’ issues
- Irritation, anger

**Readiness**
- Poor LLN skills
- Poor time management
- Unrealistic expectations
- Uncertainty, indecision
- Low motivation
- Resentment
The skills trainers need

“they should possess empathy, guidance skills, ability to provide educational support to students and if required where to seek further assistance and counseling.”

“patience, sense of humour, flexibility, sound knowledge of issues facing younger learners, language and literacy skills.”

[rapport] “trainers over 45 are not respected”
The skills trainers need

“clear direct communication...Learner-centered teaching. Behavior management.”

“they need to be leaders in their field...young people respect that. They need to always be prepared; they need to share leadership within the class groups equally; even the shyest of young people can be a great leader if just given the chance; they need to encourage not discourage; they need to...lead by example and show consistency...”
Approaches to effective teaching

- Behaviour management
- Duty of care awareness
- Learner-centred teaching
- Use of real world learning
- Offering active learning opportunities
- Scaffolding learning
- Implementing flexible learning and assessment processes

Very important
Important
Programs/contexts’ impact on completion

- Strongly agree
- Agree

Higher in trades based programs
Higher in programs with SWL
Higher in programs with embedded LLN
Higher in EBT
Lower for those with below Year 11
Support services provided

- Available within the RTO, available to all students
- Through referral to an external organisation
- External organisation brought in to the RTO to provide this service
The relationship to ESLs

- The size of our RTO suits our early school leavers
- Deliverying programs to early school leavers is core business
- Engaging with parents is part of our approach to working with early school leavers
- The majority of our early school leavers are from the local community
- Many of our early leavers are referred to us by external stakeholders

Strongly agree
Agree
# Fieldwork

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<th>QLD</th>
<th>SA</th>
<th>VIC</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Participants</strong></td>
<td>PRTOs: Hospitality, retail, community services &amp; auto. Peak bodies</td>
<td>PRTOs: Hospitality &amp; security, auto</td>
<td>In process</td>
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## Themes

### Teaching and learning
- Relevance, immediacy, *in situ*, access, LLN needs, screening & support, online vexed, patience, empathy.

### Engagement and wellbeing
- Life skills, mentoring, growth, maturation, stage of life, empathy, funding problems, expectations, patience, empathy, accessibility, intimate, small

### Pathways
- Students’ expectations, readiness, advice, guidance

### System
- Funding policy and feeding frenzies, competitiveness, who’s responsibility? expectations
Impressions thus far
Growing market share of private RTOs for youth cohort without school completion

- 15 to 19 years
- 20 to 24 years
Market share of private RTOs for ESLs (by type / state)

- **ACT**
- **NSW**
- **NT**
- **QLD**
- **SA**
- **TAS**
- **VIC**
- **WA**