



Brotherhood
of St Laurence

Working for an Australia free of poverty

Response to the
*Stronger futures for all young
Victorians*
discussion paper on the youth
transitions system

Brotherhood of St Laurence

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Brotherhood of St Laurence
67 Brunswick Street
Fitzroy Vic. 3065

ABN 24 603 467 024

www.bsl.org.au

Contact

Emily Duizend
Strategic Development Officer
Through School to Work Transition
Brotherhood of St Laurence
Ph: (03) 9483 1392
E-mail: eduizend@bsl.org.au

Summary

The Brotherhood of St Laurence welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback and recommendations to the DEECD/DIIRD discussion paper on the youth transitions system. The Brotherhood has taken a leading role in trialling innovative approaches that re-engage disadvantaged children and young people in learning and skill building that leads to successful transitions to work. As the *Stronger futures for all young Victorians* discussion paper details, a substantial range of reforms to education and vocational training are being implemented through Victorian and Commonwealth Government initiatives. This commitment to improve both the quality and capacity of learning for young people is very welcome.

However, the Brotherhood believes that there is still a range of additional reforms required to both significantly improve completion rates and to enable stronger transitions through school and into work opportunities for all young people. Such reforms need to extend to young people throughout their school years and beyond. We note that the scope of this discussion paper is limited to the 15–24 age range. We are concerned that some issues related to successful transitions, including literacy and numeracy support and pathway planning, require attention earlier than the age of 15. A broader policy focus is required. In addition, we are concerned that, within the paper, there is little consideration of the distinctive needs of ‘older’ young people in the 19–24 age groups.

The Brotherhood’s research and service experience in the ‘through school to work transition’ area suggests that the government could improve completion rates and strengthen transitions through school and into work opportunities if it resourced more intensive and positive support for those with learning and behaviour difficulties; ensured a safe school environment; gave equal status in secondary schools to vocational pathways accompanied by meaningful work experience, as it does to academic pathways; provided active support for students returning to school or moving schools; and resourced a greater choice of flexible learning options and environments.

Beyond the specific questions considered in the discussion paper, we believe there are additional priorities that require policy response. These include further work to alleviate the impact of poverty, and to consolidate the plethora of youth programs currently delivered at all levels of government into an integrated, client-centred service model.

Our key points in this submission are set out below. Detailed recommendations are on page 24.

Consolidate youth services under one umbrella

There is a high level of fragmentation and overlap among current funded programs aimed at young people. Individual accountability and reporting obligations differ between these programs, compromising both efficiency and effectiveness. This fragmented program environment reflects a lack of a clear strong policy mandate for achieving the best possible transitions for all young people based on our understandings of social exclusion.

The Better Youth Services Pilots have sought in a limited way to better coordinate services for young people and their families. The Brotherhood argues that now is the time to restructure and consolidate the plethora of youth programs into a universal youth model that places the young person at the centre of assistance and support. We urge the government to invest in this consolidation, bringing together the Youth Transitions Support Initiative, Youth Connections, Reconnect, Youth Supported Accommodation Assistance Program and Family Mediation, and the Local Learning Employment and Networks, in a new single youth service, with local governance.

This would build on developments such as the Headspace co-located service model, and should aim to bring state and federal services under one umbrella.

Strengthening literacy and numeracy

The Brotherhood believes that all secondary teachers should be trained in remedial literacy and numeracy teaching strategies. Such teaching should be appropriate for students both in and above the post-compulsory years, using approaches relevant to young people's lives. There should be greater access to literacy and numeracy support for older young people, for whom lack of these skills is a barrier to employment.

More provision of learning and pastoral support

The Brotherhood calls for systemic funding for learning support programs for young people both in school and in their initial years of TAFE and university, and greater pastoral support for young people that assists them to complete their course of study, whether that is through TAFE, an apprenticeship or a degree.

Clear structure for welfare and career pathway planning

The Brotherhood sees an urgent need to restructure school management systems to create a legitimate place in every school, separate from teaching and administration, for student welfare and careers pathway transition support. This team would manage the use of the Student Mapping tool, welfare support and the best practice implementation of Managed Individual Pathways, with such tools underpinned by high standards and accountability measures. The Brotherhood also strongly urges the government to fund the further development and roll-out of the Parents as Career Transitions Supports (PACTS) program to the whole of Victoria, via the Local Learning and Employment Networks. We also call for the creation of free community careers advice and resource services for all those who require guidance, regardless of their age.

Strengthened local planning for a greater variety of learning options and settings

There is a need for a much greater variety and choice of senior secondary education options. The Brotherhood calls for the extension of the Technical Education Centre model, and greater provision of other adult learning environments, in every region, as well as the inclusion of academic pathways within such settings. Localised planning should be strengthened to better assess the need for different senior secondary options, and broker such options, leading to greater choice for students in Vocational Education and Training (VET), learning environments, post-compulsory pathways, and access to flexible learning providers for those young people who are at risk of disengaging. Localised planning should be overseen by the Regional DEECD office and should utilise the range of data being collected through Youth Connections and the Victorian Student Number.

Affordable and accessible education and training

The Brotherhood believes that there should be affordable and accessible education and training for all young people, including free access to VET in schools, stronger action from government to alleviate transport barriers, and brokerage funds available for those students who require help with expenses such as uniforms and equipment such as computers and internet access. There should be incentives and encouragement for business and industry to take a greater role in supporting the successful transitions of young people in every region. Initiatives should include educating the

business sector in employing young workers and involving business with young people while they are in education.

A strengthened Youth Connections Service

The Brotherhood acknowledges that Youth Connections is not yet part of DEECD. We commend the government for its forward thinking in considering Youth Connections within the discussion paper. The Brotherhood believes that the Youth Connections service should be extended, with greater funding for triage and data collection, and increased ability to broker flexible learning provision for Youth Connections clients. Youth Connections should also have increased access to family support expertise, improved support for refugee and migrant young people, and access to the Office for Youth *Advance* program funding to engage young people in meaningful projects that benefit the community and build young people's self-esteem and resilience.

1 Background on the Brotherhood of St Laurence

The Brotherhood of St Laurence is a community organisation that has been working to reduce poverty in Australia since the 1930s. Our vision is ‘an Australia free of poverty’. Our work includes direct service provision to people in need, the development of social enterprises to address inequality, research to better understand the causes and effects of poverty in Australia, and the development of policy solutions at both national and local levels. We aim to work with others to create:

- an inclusive society in which everyone is treated with dignity and respect
- a compassionate and just society which challenges inequity
- connected communities in which we share responsibility for each other
- a sustainable society for our generation and future generations.

The Brotherhood of St Laurence works to prevent poverty through focusing on those life transitions where people are particularly at risk of social exclusion.

Our recent research relating to education and youth transition includes assessments of Community-based education programs (Myconos 2010), learning support initiatives (Bond 2009), the cost burden of education for low-income families (Bond & Horn 2009), the experiences of early school leavers (Taylor & Gee 2009), and youth disengagement (Taylor 2009), and the information needs of socioeconomically disadvantaged parents (Boese & Gee 2009).

We continue to engage with government through submissions. The most recent of these in the area of education and youth transitions include submissions to the Review of Alternative Education in Victoria (May 2009), the DEECD consultation on a framework for flexible learning options (May 2010), the MCEETYA consultation on the National Declaration on Educational Goals for Young Australians (October 2008), the Victorian Government consultation on the Vulnerable Youth Framework (September 2008), the Victorian Government’s review of skills reform (June 2008), and its Blueprint for Early Childhood Development and School Reform (May 2008), and the Australian Government’s Australian Youth Forum Consultation (May 2008).

The Brotherhood’s service provision in the through school to work transition is testimony to its commitment to improved outcomes for school students, and to alleviating the problem of youth disengagement. Our current suite of services in the early years and the youth transition include:

- **PACTS:** The Brotherhood’s Parents as Career Transition Supports (PACTS) program equips parents to help their children make informed decisions by providing parents information about young people’s options for further education or joining the workforce through workshops that explore careers and how parents can help with decision making. The Brotherhood piloted PACTS in 2003, and now assists other organisations to deliver the program, by providing resources and train-the-trainer workshops.
- **Homework Centres:** Our homework centres in Fitzroy and Frankston provide a quiet environment where primary and secondary students can study with assistance from volunteer and staff tutors.
- **Youth Voice:** In partnership with Melbourne Citymission and UnitingCare, the Brotherhood has trained young people to conduct research among their peers, to assist those developing youth transition policies and programs.

- **Community Service Leadership Program:** This program assists disadvantaged young people to develop youth-led projects that benefit their community as part of their VCAL curriculum. The CSLP outcomes for young people include increased self-esteem, positive community and peer engagement, community connectedness, improved work-related skills and increased capacity to empathise through a broadening of the young person's world view.
- **Refugee Youth Development Program:** This program gives young refugees the capacity to find their own pathways, develop as leaders and become involved with their communities. It does this through a range of learning activities that build confidence, skills and resilience.
- **Peninsula Youth Connections:** This program assists young people who are most at risk of disengaging from education or training and therefore not attaining Year 12 or equivalent, and not making a successful transition into further study, training or work.
- **Pre-vocational training:** This focuses on areas such as occupational health and safety, time management and Australian workplace culture, and helps job seekers prepare for work or work-based training.
- **Vocational training:** as a Registered Training Organisation, the Brotherhood delivers accredited training through pre-employment programs, providing people with a nationally recognised qualification and the opportunity to continue learning through a traineeship or other educational options. Programs have included Furniture Works Frankston, STEP group training and Transition to Work.
- **Community-based education:** the Brotherhood has provided a Community VCAL program in partnerships with 'Skills Plus' (2006) and the Peninsula Training and Employment Program (2007). It has since been granted accreditation by the Victorian Registration and Qualifications Authority to become a CVCAL provider in its own right. It currently provides a Community VCAL program at its Frankston High Street Centre and an education 'taster' course, tailored for those of senior secondary school age who are alienated from mainstream schooling and who are considering their options.

2 Introduction

As acknowledged in the Brotherhood's submission to the Vulnerable Youth Framework discussion paper (BSL 2008), the pathway to sustainable paid work for those who do not progress to tertiary studies is more precarious than ever, due to technological change and economic pressures associated with globalisation, resulting in the loss of low-paid full-time jobs. The loss of entry-level, secure paid work for young people not moving onto tertiary study has all but eliminated a relatively smooth transition from education to employment for this group. It is no surprise that participation and attainment in education, as the most secure way of transitioning to meaningful employment, is paramount in current Australian Government policy on young people.

Recent state and federal government policies designed to increase inclusion and equity in education have included setting targets to increase Year 12 completion, increasing the proportion of university students from low socioeconomic groups, and increasing access to vocational training. This has been accompanied by raising the school leaving age, guaranteeing training places and withdrawing income support for unemployed early school leavers who are not in education or training (Taylor & Gee 2010).

There are many reasons why young people leave school early. Some actively choose to leave to take up employment; some leave school because they see it as boring or not relevant to them. The *On Track* data has shown that frequently nominated reasons for leaving school during Year 10 included: 'couldn't see where school was heading', 'schoolwork didn't interest me', 'not doing well enough to continue' and 'didn't get on with my teachers' (Teese & Polesel 2003, p.143). In the Brotherhood's Life Chances in-depth study of eight early school leavers, the reasons for leaving school centred on negative experiences at school, rather than attractive job or training options. The young people talked of difficulties with schoolwork, for example being overwhelmed with the work or struggling to catch up after missing school, of poor relationships with teachers, and bullying (Taylor 2009).

The *Stronger futures* discussion paper notes from the 2008 *On Track* data that over 50 per cent of early school leavers would have stayed at school if there were 'more vocational programs and a more adult environment' (DEECD & DIIRD, p.21). This evidence suggests that the inflexibility of formal school settings contribute to early school leaving.

The Brotherhood recognises that the government has made considerable progress in strengthening both the infrastructure and capacity of schools to improve the completion rates and strengthen transitions for young people and that the different measures outlined in the *Stronger futures* discussion paper are intended to continue to reduce early school leaving and weak school to work transitions.

However, we are concerned about the lack of focus in the paper on mitigating the impact of poverty. There is considerable evidence that poor school retention and educational achievement are linked to low socioeconomic status. Overall, students from disadvantaged backgrounds participate less, achieve less and enjoy school less. Those more likely to complete Year 12 are females; young people with parents with high-skill, white-collar occupations and university education; those from metropolitan areas; those from independent schools and those with high levels of literacy and numeracy (Curtis & McMillan 2008, cited in Taylor & Gee 2010).

Both school retention and academic achievement are associated with both family resources and school resources. Therefore the first priority for governments serious about supporting stronger youth transitions should be to provide education and training opportunities which are affordable and accessible for all. Governments need to do more to ensure that financial hardship does not preclude full participation in learning. Greater investment in education and training resources is needed to ensure schooling and further training does not exclude those on low incomes. There should also be adequate income support for young people from low-income families to allow full participation in education and training (Taylor & Gee 2010).

BSL strongly urges the Victorian Government to consider additional systemic reforms that take into full account the social context and related economic barriers to making a successful transition.

3 Responses to discussion paper questions

Focus area one: Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post-compulsory years

What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards [into VCE and VCAL] take?

The Brotherhood supports the proposal to introduce literacy and numeracy standards into VCE and VCAL. However, any such introduction would need to be accompanied by **professional development in literacy and numeracy intervention** both for existing teachers and for those who are in training—many of whom may not currently have the skills to provide the literacy and numeracy teaching some students require. It is critical that pre-service teacher training for secondary teachers incorporate literacy and numeracy intervention as a compulsory rather than elected subject area.

A teaching cohort trained in literacy and numeracy intervention at all age levels will also assist schools whose student body includes refugee students whose schooling has been interrupted. In addition, it would enable teachers to assist parents and carers with skills in providing literacy and numeracy support to their children at home.

It is also necessary to recognise that VCE and VCAL may be taught in a range of education settings (Community VCAL, TAFE, ACE), often by trainers rather than teachers. Therefore it is important to ensure that teachers and trainers within non-mainstream school settings are adequately skilled in literacy and numeracy education.

The Brotherhood's experience in delivering education programs to young people in the post-compulsory years strongly suggests that literacy and numeracy teaching should be embedded in 'real world' contexts. Innovative teaching methods should be employed, with teachers and trainers able to deliver learning approaches that can integrate literacy and numeracy with practical applications and in a way that is relevant and engaging.

Components of literacy and numeracy should also be incorporated in pre-apprenticeships and VET certificates, and as such trainers should be required to understand how to support young people with literacy and numeracy competence.

- Recommendation: Work with universities and training organisations to ensure both teachers and vocational trainers have skills in literacy and numeracy intervention relevant to the post compulsory schooling age group.
- Recommendation: Embed literacy and numeracy learning for students in VCE and VCAL in ‘real world’ applied learning contexts.
- Recommendation: Consider embedding requirements for literacy and numeracy standards within VET certificates.

In what other ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened in the post-compulsory years?

The Brotherhood would like to see school structures change to ensure, as outlined under Action 7 in the DEECD *Blueprint for Education and Early Childhood Development*, priority is given to quickly and effectively supporting students who fall behind (DEECD 2008). Our experience, for instance through the implementation of the Transition Workers in Schools project, has revealed the management structures in schools often inhibit a school’s ability to coordinate staff to be able respond to the needs of each student. This structural issue results in a lack of coordination and capacity to identify and respond adequately to young people’s support and educational needs as they arise.

As detailed in our previous submissions to the Vulnerable Youth Framework (2008) and to the Strengthening Student Support Services consultation (2008), the Brotherhood recommends the development of a ‘**Student Development Service**’ with a dedicated management line to bring together into a single system *within schools* the current array of student welfare and career pathway planning support programs. This service would consist of a team of staff focused on the students’ individual development and wellbeing, freeing teaching staff to teach. We consider the development of such a service to be an integral part of creating the conditions for effective teaching to occur, and for effective, responsive and timely support to be provided for each student as required. An example of a similar approach is that of Mount Clear College, a case study within the DEECD publication, *A guide to help schools increase school completion* (Rice & Lamb 2008). This school has developed a coordinated welfare and careers centre within the school called SHAAC (Student Health and Advice in Careers). While this is a useful example, the Brotherhood believes a broader direction should exist for all schools to create this type of service.

Using a triage approach that prioritises each student through a responsive assessment process, a Student Development Service within each school would monitor students’ progress, literacy and numeracy support requirements, as well as other risk factors for educational disengagement, ensuring these are identified and addressed expertly. Importantly, the service schools would use the student mapping tool, and collect and share data on student wellbeing needs. This would enable better regional planning and targeting of resources, and increase the whole school’s understanding of issues such as the impact of social exclusion.

- Recommendation: Create a discrete ‘Student Development Service’ and corresponding management stream in every government secondary school.

The Brotherhood is concerned that **learning support programs (LSPs)**, such as homework clubs, are not mentioned in the *Stronger futures* discussion paper. LSPs are a demonstrated means of engaging disadvantaged and at-risk students ‘beyond the school gate’ to improve their commitment to education, enable catch-up learning and strengthen attainment (Bond 2009). Internationally, recognition of the value of learning support may be seen in the United States’ 21st Century

Community Learning Centres and the United Kingdom's Extended School's Program. LSPs such as homework clubs are one part of what should be a suite of options for catch-up learning that connects with formal learning. Other components include summer programs, and one-to-one tutoring.

LSPs often provide vital assistance for disadvantaged groups including new migrant and refugee students. They also provide additional support for the school and teachers, especially in academically diverse classrooms. However, most rely on sporadic funding from community organisations, philanthropic trusts and donations. In its report on learning support programs, the Brotherhood found that in many communities there was little local collaborative planning and coordination for the LSPs (Bond 2009). We acknowledge that the Victorian Government has funded the Centre for Multicultural Youth's 'Learning Beyond the Bell' program to help coordinate and resource the sector. However, that funding was contingent on programs having a strong migrant and refugee component. This poses an equity issue, given the needs of other disadvantaged communities. While various state and federal education policy statements at recognise the potential of LSPs, there is still no consistent, long-term or coordinated approach to their provision.

We propose the broadening of programs such as 'Learning Beyond the Bell', so that all students living in disadvantaged communities have access to learning support programs. Funding could be provided for primary and secondary LSPs in 77 low SES postcodes, at a cost of \$62,500 per program.

- Recommendation: Broaden the support for learning support programs such as the 'Learning Beyond the Bell' program, so that all students living in disadvantaged communities have access to learning support programs.

Further consideration should also be given to the particular **literacy and numeracy needs of young people with a refugee or migrant background**. The Brotherhood's work with refugee youth, through both our Ecumenical Migration Centre, and our homework centre serving the public housing community of Fitzroy, has clearly revealed that the literacy and numeracy support needs of many young people are often unmet within current school capacity. Many of these young people have experienced disrupted schooling before arriving in Australia, and addressing their needs can be complex and require cross cultural understanding. Government-funded initiatives such as the Foundation House 'Schools in For Refugees' program are an excellent start; however there also need to be further resources both in the school and the community. Such support should include one-to-one contact with parents by a supportive person who understands their cultural background, and can help them engage with their child's educational progress and access the resources within the education system.

- Recommendation: Increase focus on the literacy and numeracy needs of youth from refugee or migrant backgrounds by funding more culturally sensitive family liaison and cross-cultural training in schools.

The Brotherhood would like to see a greater policy focus on the **remedial literacy and numeracy needs of older young people (those aged 19 and over)**. Remedial literacy and numeracy courses for young people who are unemployed are often oversubscribed, or not available to all those who need help. We welcome the announcement in the federal Budget 2010–11, of the Foundation Skills Package which will invest \$120 million over the next four years to tackle gaps in adult skills. The Brotherhood understands that this will build on existing federal foundation skills programs, namely, the Workplace English Language and Literacy (WELL) and the Language Literacy and

Numeracy Program (LLNP), and introduce innovative community-based places that will be based on the Foundation Skills Taster Courses pilot. However, we consider that this funding should target young adults as well as older adults. BSL also sees a need for the provision of the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA) to be expanded.

Places in remedial literacy and numeracy courses should be made more available for young people, with teaching approaches tailored to fit their contexts. We also recommend that the Victorian Government liaise with the federal government to create a referral pathway from the Youth Connections program and Job Services Australia. All levels of government should ensure a planning role for these organisations so that they are able to provide advice on the provision needs for older young people in each region.

- Recommendation: Expand the provision of literacy and numeracy support to young people up to the age of 24 and beyond, with a key planning role for Job Service Australia and Youth Connections.

Focus area two: Support for informed education and training choices

Will a career plan strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings?

Implemented well, a careers plan can strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices. However, the linearity that underpins some perceptions of 'career plans' is problematic. Career plans that are not flexible deny the shifts and flows of 'planning' particularly for adolescents. It can also overlook the changing labour market and associated job opportunities particularly in the 'blue collar' and low-skilled service industries.

Careers planning for adolescents should be delivered by **skilled and knowledgeable practitioners**. When planning is implemented by teachers without specialist training, within school systems where career planning is seen as an add-on to 'core' business, a careers plan too often becomes a valueless piece of paper.

The Brotherhood's experience, through the Transition Workers in Schools program, Youth Pathways, and now Youth Connections, shows clearly that effective career pathway planning for young people should be up-to-date, accurate and informative, allow for flexibility, work with each young person's individual strengths, and clearly demonstrate the connection between their current learning in the context of career pathways planning. This level of careers planning support and advice is beyond the capacity of many schools.

The current planning tool used by schools, Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs), was established with the intention to provide a holistic approach that would help young people develop plans they could continue to use, through and beyond school, and serve as a dynamic and motivational tool for engagement. However, in operation, the quality of provision of MIPs in schools varies widely. The delivery of the MIPs tool itself often lacks credibility, lacks priority and lacks appropriate school management support. The Brotherhood believes that MIPs provision in schools should be underpinned by high standards, with schools held accountable to meeting these standards.

Some young people have numerous personal barriers or issues which need to be addressed alongside their career aspirations. The Brotherhood's service experience and research shows clearly that careers

education works well as an engagement tool for disadvantaged students when it is linked with student welfare support. The experiences of early school leavers in our Life Chances study points to the engagement impact for young people of planning pathways to training and employment with the assistance of a knowledgeable worker with the capacity to assist young people to address barriers as well as identify goals (Taylor 2009). Similar findings on the effectiveness of this were experienced through Brotherhood services such as the Transition Workers in School Program, Youth Pathways, Youth Connections and community education programs. The Brotherhood believes that where possible, and especially where student disadvantage has been identified, MIPs should be delivered by a dedicated and skilled transition worker.

As described in our response to Focus Area One, the Brotherhood believes that each school should provide career planning for students through a dedicated ‘Student Development Service’ that connects education engagement, welfare and careers in a discrete team and management line within the school management structure. This would ensure that career pathway planning, and MIPs specifically, is linked meaningfully with welfare and engagement support, leading to improved educational engagement for all young people, but particularly those who are ‘at risk’.

- Recommendation: Ensure MIPs provision in schools is underpinned by high standards, with schools held accountable to meeting these standards.
- Recommendation: Deliver MIPs as part of a ‘Student Development Service’ with a dedicated management stream within schools.

Parents are often the most important influences on their children’s pathway planning decisions. The COAG Youth Compact policy released in 2009 provides an important opportunity to engage parents as career transition supports. As a result of the Youth Compact, Victoria has enhanced the responsibilities of the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) to develop partnerships that support parents and families to make links between their children’s learning and career aspirations, be better informed about diverse education, training and employment options and confidently and effectively engage in education and career decision making.

In 2003, the Brotherhood developed and implemented **Parents as Careers Transition Supports (PACTS)**, a workshop program for parents of young people moving into post-compulsory education, training and employment. The model used a workshop process that helped parents understand their influence and to engage and support their young people in a positive way.

The pilot, funded by DEST (now DEEWR) ran from late 2003 until December 2005, as one of 23 Career and Transition Pilot Projects around Australia. During the pilot, the Brotherhood delivered PACTS to at least 598 parents of students in Years 8 and 9 in partnership with 12 secondary schools. The program received the Australian Association of Career Counsellors Smart Start Award for Innovation in Career Counselling Excellence.

The outcome evaluation showed the program’s success in equipping parents with up-to-date, relevant information and skills. By equipping them with knowledge about the range of pathways to employment, the program enabled parents to better support their teenagers and allayed their concerns about their children making ‘the wrong choice’ about either subjects or career paths (Bedson & Perkins 2006).

Since 2006, over 200 people across Australia have completed the PACTS facilitator training through BSL, and PACTS is now delivered to parents throughout Victoria by a wide variety of organisations and schools. The popularity of PACTS training material is testament to both the

success of the model and the ongoing need to better engage parents in their children's pathway planning. The model has evolved as different organisations use it to meet the diverse needs of parents. PACTS has been modified for Indigenous parents and for parents of disabled children, translated into several languages for migrant parents, and delivered to parents of children in Year 7 as well as senior years. PACTS providers currently network with each other and share practice; however the quality of delivery can differ widely as there is no central monitoring or support body.

The Brotherhood calls on the Victorian Government to fund the further development of the PACTS model and support its roll-out to parents across Victoria. This process would include:

- an initial research project to document the range of practice in PACTS delivery and the effectiveness of delivery methods for different groups of parents. This would provide the necessary evidence to further develop the PACTS model targeting various communities and socio economic groups. A proposal for this research has been developed by BSL.
- development of a Victorian PACTS online resource centre to promote PACTS, informed by the research and its recommendations. The online resource centre would provide facilitator training, multimedia resources, a forum for shared practices and updates. These resources would support organisations and schools to provide PACTS workshops for parents across the state, in a manner appropriate to the range of family backgrounds. This would be coordinated by a State PACTS Manager
- funding for all LLENS to undertake PACTS facilitator training and deliver PACTS to schools and other educational settings using a 'train the trainer' model
- a Statewide Steering Group established to monitor the program and establish best-practice guidelines.

The Brotherhood estimates that the cost to develop the PACTS model and roll it out to communities across Victoria, as per the above process, would be \$1,609,000 over four years.

- Recommendation: Fund the further development of the PACTS model and support its roll-out to parents in communities across Victoria.

What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?

Career and pathway planning advice is required for a large number of young people, not simply those in or entering the post-compulsory years of school. This includes older young people (aged 19 or above) whose parents do not pass the means test to receive Youth Allowance. There is a huge gap in provision of free and expert career planning support, impacting not only on young people who have not made a successful transition from school to meaningful work, but also on those who enter university or TAFE but change their mind about their course of study, or leave university or TAFE with no firm career plan in place.

The Brotherhood supports the provision across Victoria of **impartial career pathways advice and resource services** that can be accessed by anyone in the community, regardless of age or background, who is seeking expert guidance and information on work, training and learning opportunities. These services could be collocated with existing youth or community hubs.

- Recommendation: Create impartial career pathways advice and resource services across Victoria, co-located with existing youth or community hubs that can be accessed by anyone seeking expert guidance and information on work, training and learning pathways.

How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?

Work experience has been shown to assist and motivate young people in setting goals and making relevant subject choices. In partnership with both schools and community education providers, business and industry should be encouraged, through the brokerage of the LLENs, to provide activities to assist students to make career planning decisions. Activities could include structured workplace learning opportunities, industry visits, collaboration between business professionals and students on applied learning projects with the school curriculum, and school-based traineeships and apprenticeships. To encourage this, a system of incentives could be made available for businesses that provide these opportunities.

- Recommendation: Through the LLENs, provide incentives for business/industry to provide a range of activities that will assist student's career choices.

Focus area three: Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications

What would further strengthen the delivery partnerships between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?

The Brotherhood calls for the development and strengthening of VET clusters in each region. The clusters should include mainstream schools and flexible learning providers, such as Community VCAL and TAFE, and should work together on local planning to ensure a wide range of VET subjects are made available to all students regardless of where they study.

- Recommendation: Develop and strengthen VET clusters in each region to ensure a wide range of VET subjects are made available to all students regardless of where they study.

What additional actions should Government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?

The Brotherhood's research on the costs of education and our Life Chances longitudinal study, and our own experience in program delivery, have shown the importance of ensuring that VET in schools is provided free for students.

We also believe the government should provide financial assistance to students above the age of 16 who face additional financial barriers to completing education and transitioning to employment. Such barriers include the costs of training, travel, stationery and books, uniforms and work tools, and software. Currently the government's Education Maintenance Allowance is only available to assist students younger than 16 years old.

- Recommendation: Ensure that VET in schools is provided free for students.
- Recommendation: Provide financial assistance for students above the age of 16 who face additional financial barriers to completing education and transitioning to employment.

Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?

The Brotherhood does not believe that specialisation within education settings, such as industry-themed VCALs, is useful in increasing student attainment, except for those young people who have a strong commitment to that area of career specialisation. This is due to the changing interests of young people as they travel through adolescence into adulthood, explore their interests and gain understanding of themselves. It is also due to changing labour market needs. Rather, we discussed above, we believe young people should have access to a wide choice of subject areas, and be able to change their mind without penalty.

How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and the Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?

The Victorian Student Number (VSN) and the data associated with each student should enable schools to better support young people throughout school, and in transitions between schools. However, in addition, we urge that VSN data is provided to Youth Connections and flexible learning providers, so that its benefits can contribute beyond the mainstream school system to the continued learning and development of young people.

The Brotherhood also sees an opportunity to improve local planning processes by linking the data collected through VSN, and school transparency and accountability arrangements, with information collected by Youth Connections triage and intake service. This would ensure data on early school leavers is used to improve delivery of education to young people and prevent further disengagement. However, it is also important to ensure that the sharing of VSN data occurs with student consent and privacy ensured.

- Recommendation: Allow access to VSN data by Youth Connections and flexible learning providers, so that the benefits of the VSN can extend beyond the mainstream school system to the continued learning and development of young people.
- Recommendation: Improve local planning processes by linking VSN and school transparency and accountability arrangements with information collected by the Youth Connections triage and intake service.

What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?

Poverty is a critical barrier to qualification completion, yet the *Stronger futures* discussion paper contains little consideration of its impacts. In 2007, a Brotherhood survey of low-income clients found that up to 56 per cent of parents said their children had missed out on aspects of their education (uniforms, books, camps, sports activities, excursions, lunch) and some 40 per cent had kept their children home due to the cost of these and other things such as transport to school (Bond & Horn 2008). The latest stage of the Life Chances study has also indicated that the costs of education presented an important barrier for 18-year-olds on low incomes. School costs that caused problems included the costs of books and other materials, uniforms, and additional tutoring. University students emphasised the high cost of textbooks, while fees were a problem for those wanting to attend TAFE, especially if not eligible for concessions. The researchers state that while promoting social inclusion in education has many aspects, it must include providing education that is affordable for all (Taylor & Gee 2010).

Further Brotherhood research into the costs of education has found that for a 16-year-old student living away from home, and reliant on government benefits and support, annual education expenses would account for 30 per cent of income and Term 1 costs for 68 per cent of quarterly income (Bond & Horn 2009). We recommend that state government should seek an increase the level of income support through Youth Allowance and family tax payments to ensure that students can afford to fully participate in learning.

- Recommendation: Seek an increase in the level of income support through the Commonwealth's Youth Allowance and family tax payments to ensure that students can afford to fully participate in learning.

As highlighted in the *Stronger futures* discussion paper, a wider variety of senior secondary pathways and environments would encourage more young people to remain engaged in education until they have achieved Year 12. To promote Year 12 retention, the Brotherhood believes that the education system needs to actively engage the less academic students in appropriate courses, for example by providing **positive support for non-academic courses such as VCAL and VET**. For students in the Brotherhood's Life Chances study, the availability of VCAL in their schools enabled some who would otherwise have left to remain positively involved in school. However, others saw their schools treating VCAL, if they offered it at all, as a low-value option that was poorly resourced compared with other options such as VCE (Taylor & Gee 2009).

The Brotherhood believes that schools need both resourcing and encouragement to promote and provide alternatives to VCE, as these are critical to increasing engagement but may carry negative community perceptions that discourage schools from offering them. We continue to demonstrate through our research and service delivery the effectiveness of integrated education models that merge applied education, meaningful employment and personalised support for senior school students. Such applied learning models enhance confidence and motivation, increase commitment to learning, and develop generic skills that are valued in the workplace, including problem solving and teamwork.

The Brotherhood urges DEECD to play a greater role in promoting a variety of senior secondary pathways to the community. We are concerned that some regions still have little VCAL or VET delivery through schools due to the community misconception that VCE is the only legitimate pathway for young people. Community, industry, business, parents, families and schools need to be made aware of the value of non-VCE senior secondary pathways such as VET, VCAL and traineeships so more young people benefit from a wider choice.

We commend the development of new Technical Education Centres, but believe these should be expanded in scope to include a range of academic and vocational qualifications. This may require a change of name to indicate this broadened scope. We also believe provision should be expanded across Victoria. We call on the government to develop more senior secondary learning environments with mix of academic and vocational courses, by extending the Technical Education Centre model to have at least one presence every region, and by incorporating both vocational and academic pathways within the model.

The Brotherhood believes that if all education settings and approaches were equally valued, this would shift public opinion from the deficit view of 'alternative education' towards a view of the education system as a socially inclusive education continuum that is able to meet the education goals of all children and young people in Victoria (BSL 2009).

- Recommendation: Play a greater role in promoting a variety of senior secondary learning options and settings to the community.
- Recommendation: Create more senior secondary learning environments with mix of academic and vocational courses, by extending the Technical Education Centre model to have at least one presence in every region, and by incorporating academic pathways within the model.
- Recommendation: Require all schools should be to promote and provide high quality alternatives to VCE in senior secondary levels to better engage all students.

Another key area overlooked in the *Stronger futures* discussion paper is the issue of **combining study with part-time work**. Over half of Australia's secondary school students now work part-time while studying full-time, and student part-time employment has increased rapidly over recent years (BSL 2009). The Brotherhood believes that more attention should be paid to the needs of students who undertake paid work and study. Part-time or casual work can have considerable benefits for students, including independence, confidence and work skills, and new networks; and these may assist them in getting more secure work in the future. However, students in rural areas, from low socioeconomic status communities or from refugee or migrant backgrounds may be less able to access part-time jobs. For those students who would benefit from part-time work while studying full-time, but who lack access to such opportunities, processes are required through community, business and schools partnerships to enable the development of safe, meaningful employment opportunities that benefit young people..

Given the number of students already involved, there needs to be a better policy response to maximise the benefits for young people of combining part-time work with full-time study,. Effective responses could include recognising and accrediting the skills gained through students' part-time or casual work. Another response might be to identify more flexible and innovative approaches to qualifications that recognise learning experiences, in a range of contexts including part-time work.

It should also be noted that for some young people juggling full-time work and study can be counterproductive, reducing their capacity to study at crucial times such as in Year 12 (Taylor & Gee 2009). In our submission to the House of Representatives Enquiry into Combining School and Work, the Brotherhood argued that for some young people, financial hardship may compel them to work excessive hours, and may risk their educational achievement. Given that all young Australians are compelled to engage with the educational system for a sustained period of their childhood and teenage years, government has an obligation to provide a truly free education, and adequate income support system, so full-time students do not have to work excessive hours for little or no educational gain (BSL 2009). There should be structures and safeguards in place to allow young people to maintain a healthy balance between part-time work and study.

- Recommendation: Develop components in qualifications that recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part-time or casual work.
- Recommendation: Encourage flexible approaches to attaining qualifications that support students to combine work and study.

- Recommendation: Encourage community, business and school partnerships to develop employment opportunities that benefit young people who may not have resources to access part-time work.

There is evidence that apprenticeships provide a strong pathway for young people who complete them, including early school leavers. However, we acknowledge that the number of young people who do not complete them is high, and applaud recent pilot projects aimed at supporting young people to complete their VET qualifications and apprenticeships. We recommend that there be **pastoral support** accessible for all young people in TAFE, and Apprentice Support Officers able to provide support to students for the duration of their apprenticeship. To further assist this process, we believe that these support personnel should be able to access a pool of funds to help young people overcome any economic barriers to completion, such as the cost of travel, tools, uniform or other equipment.

- Recommendation: Extend the TAFE completion pilot on to every TAFE institution
- Recommendation: Extend the capacity of the Apprentice Support Officer to work with young people for the duration of their apprenticeship, with capacity for post-apprenticeship support.
- Recommendation: Provide a pool of brokerage funds to apprentice support officers, and TAFE completion officers to help young people overcome economic barriers.

How can businesses and industry be involved in increasing completion rates – especially for apprenticeships?

The Brotherhood believes that businesses would be better able to play a part in increasing completion rates if they had better understanding of what is involved in employing young workers. Some of these issues, outlined in our research, include generational differences, the need for different communication and management skills, the need for more on the job training opportunities, better OHS and induction requirements, clear expectations, and increased discussions with young employees around employment conditions (Tresize-Brown 2004).

Consideration should also be given to how businesses can be more involved in assisting disadvantaged young people to complete their apprenticeships. In 2009, the Brotherhood in partnership with VECCI conducted joint research into employers' perceptions of employing disadvantaged job seekers. The research concluded that additional investment from government was needed to encourage and support employers to take on and retain disadvantaged job seekers as well as build the foundational skills and capabilities of job seekers (VECCI & BSL 2009).

The Brotherhood believes that there is a role for the LLEN in providing information to employers on managing young apprentices and employees, with incentives for businesses that demonstrate an understanding of what is involved in employing young workers and a plan of how they will apply this. All RTOs or GTOs should be able to check business readiness to take on apprentices, including appropriate induction and OHS processes, mechanisms for employee support, before the young person is placed.

- Recommendation: Equip LLENs to take a lead in providing information to employers on managing young apprentices and employees, with incentives for businesses that can show they understand what is involved in employing young workers and how they will apply this.

- Recommendation: Enable all RTOs or GTOs to check business readiness to take on young apprentices, before the young person is placed, as standard procedure.

Focus area four: Systems that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors

How can student transition to the VET sector, higher education and full-time employment be improved?

The Brotherhood sees a need for **more intensive transition support and follow-up** to be made available to young people at the time of their transition to a new course, institution or sector. This should include assistance for young people who are exploring their transition options (such as visits to potential institutions, and assistance with administration and enrolment) and follow-up assistance or intervention if barriers arise. At present, government schools have some responsibility to make sure this follow-up occurs, but the Brotherhood believes this does not go far enough. Schools and other education providers should be obliged to provide more intense and long-term follow-up and assistance to young people moving between courses, institution or sectors.

The Brotherhood also urges greater awareness at policy level that young people are likely to change their minds about study areas and career pathways, and as such should be retain the flexibility to switch between subjects and learning environments without penalty, or jeopardising their future ability to gain subsidised places in education. The Brotherhood recently collaborated with Melbourne Citymission and Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service, on a submission to the Skills for Victoria implementation review. The submission identified within the policy a number of significant flaws impacting on student transitions to further education and training. It noted the lack of provision of information about the policy to community services, which in turn affected the quality of advice young people were receiving. Key recommendations included:

- that the impact of debt as a deterrent for those from low SES backgrounds should be further investigated.
- that the potential long-term implications for those students who do incur significant debt under VET FEE-HELP should be further investigated.
- that all eligibility requirements relating to age and course level to access a government-subsidised place be abolished.
- that concession rates be reinstated, to a flat \$55 fee for all course levels.

The Brotherhood continues to call for these reforms as part of this submission.

Regarding the transition to university education, a Brotherhood report into learning support programs found that at a tertiary level, students coming from high school may lack skills in academic reading and writing, higher order thinking and problem solving, teamwork and managing their own learning. A range of evaluations have shown that learning support programs aid student retention and participation, help address tertiary literacy deficits and improve academic achievement. Such programs can ease the transition into first-year university and are associated with later academic success. As such, they have high value for students from disadvantaged areas and backgrounds (BSL 2009).

- Recommendation: Strengthen DEECD requirements for schools and other education providers to provide long-term follow-up and assistance to young people transitioning between courses, institution or sectors.
- Recommendation: Implement the recommendations of the Melbourne Citymission, Brotherhood of St Laurence, and Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service submission to the Skills for Victoria Implementation Review, including
 - that the impact of debt as a deterrent for those from low SES backgrounds should be further investigated.
 - that the potential long-term implications for those students who do incur significant debt under VET FEE-HELP should be further investigated.
 - that all eligibility requirements relating to age and course level to access a government-subsidised place be abolished.
 - that concession rates be reinstated, to a flat \$55 fee for all course levels.
- Recommendation: Increase the availability of learning support programs for university students to assist student transitions.

Focus area five: Opportunities to re-engage with education and training

How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training?

The Brotherhood acknowledges that Youth Connections is not yet part of DEECD. We commend the Victorian Government for its forward thinking in including Youth Connections within the *Stronger futures* discussion paper.

The Brotherhood, in partnership with Taskforce Community Agency, provides Youth Connections in Frankston Mornington Peninsula area. Our experience with this program since its commencement in January 2010 has demonstrated that the Youth Connections program is working well, with flexibility of delivery according to local needs especially important. However, we propose some enhancements. Our Youth Connections experience confirms other findings that the provision of qualification places is woefully inadequate in many regions to cope with demand, especially for young people who are at risk of disengaging from education, or who would prefer to undertake their senior secondary qualifications in a different education setting.

BSL believes that Youth Connections service data should be used as **a basis for local planning** to identify the additional education and training settings and programs required to meet local needs. For this to happen effectively, the Victorian government should provide increased guidance, funding and support for the Youth Connections triage and intake service. In addition, due to Youth Connection's position as the key agency in contact with early school leavers, the Brotherhood strongly urges that Youth Connections in Victoria be given the same resources and authority as in other states to identify needs for provision of flexible learning options and to arrange or negotiate their provision in partnership with the DEECD Regional Office and the LLEN.

Our current experience has also shown us that more consideration should be given to the extent that Youth Connections is able to **encompass family support**. The Youth Connections model acknowledges that families should be included in re-engagement planning for young people; however, many of our clients' families require more intensive support. Accordingly we see a need

for better coordination with family support services in each region, and additional resources for family support within the Youth Connections model.

There is a need to **better resource engagement activities** both to encourage young people into the service and to maintain involvement once they have a Youth Connections case worker. The combination of activities and casework is a particularly strong one for building engagement. The Brotherhood believes engagement activities such as participation in youth-led service learning, has a strong impact on young people's engagement with education. We have seen this with the successful outcomes of our own service learning model, the Community Service Leadership Program. This program was piloted with marginalised students in alternative education settings in 2008 and was awarded a NAB Schools First Impact Award. We urge the Victorian Government to broaden the eligibility for the Victorian Office for Youth's 'Advance' program, which provides funding for students to undertake community projects, to Youth Connections so that disadvantaged young people who are not engaged in education or training can undertake community service learning projects that build resilience, self-esteem, empathy, work-related skills, and community connectedness.

Finally, the Brotherhood believes there should be more specific services to address **the transition needs of refugee and migrant young people**. Balancing the cultural norms of their countries of birth with the unfamiliar norms of Australia, young refugees and migrants struggle with both typical youth concerns, such as identity formation and parental expectations, as well as challenges such as language difficulties and economic disadvantage. A report by BSL in 2009 found that the employment of young refugees is hindered by multiple factors:

- carer roles and burdens
- acculturation, competing affiliations and the socialisation of ethnic identity
- intergeneration tensions and parental expectations
- an unfamiliar education system
- lack of information on pathways into work
- underdeveloped computer literacy skills
- cultural disorientation and confusion
- sense of disempowerment
- financial pressures.

Refugees' engagement with education and training, and efforts to engage with the labour market and attain and retain employment are impeded by factors that may include psychological and/or physical trauma, the level of English language proficiency, the host country's attitude towards refugees, the length of residency in the host country, current labour market conditions, age and gender (Nguyen 2009).

The Brotherhood recommends that the Government fund a specialised transition program to be rolled-out through Youth Connections in areas with high numbers of refugee youth.

- Recommendation: Increase guidance, funding and support for the Youth Connections triage and intake service, so that it becomes a source of information that can be used to address gaps and guide local provision of education and training settings and programs.

- Recommendation: Give Youth Connections in Victoria the same resources and authority as in other states to identify needs for flexible learning options and to arrange or negotiate their provision in partnership with the DEECD regional office and the LLEN.
- Recommendation: Extend funding eligibility for the Victorian Office for Youth's 'Advance' program to Youth Connections providers.
- Recommendation: Strengthen the ability of Youth Connections to provide and connect with family support services.
- Recommendation: Provide additional funding for a specialised transition program to be rolled-out through Youth Connections in areas with high numbers of refugee youth.

Is the range of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people adequate? (Existing qualifications include VCAL, adult VCE, the General Certificate of Adult Education and the Diploma of Further Education.)

The Brotherhood believes that there should be resourcing for **'taster' courses** delivered in conjunction with career pathway planning. This would be an effective way for young people in Year 10 who are unsure of their pathways and who may be at risk of leaving school early, to experience a range of different VET as well as academic subject areas and learning environments. The Brotherhood found that its own Taster program provided an important means by which disengaged and often disaffected youth could take 'time out', while benefiting from valuable literacy, numeracy and vocational skills tuition, and an opportunity to achieve a Certificate 2 vocational qualification. To this extent, it fulfilled its purpose to engage with young people who were facing their transition to adulthood without having acquired important skills. It gave an insight into the world of vocational education and training, an opportunity to reassess their approach to learning, as well as their approach to acquiring the skills needed for work or further study, and an opportunity to gain a qualification on which to build (BSL 2010).

In addition, the Brotherhood calls for the extension of eligibility for the Victorian Office For Youth's 'Advance' program to flexible learning option providers such as ACE, TAFE, Community VCAL so that all young people, not just those in government schools, are given the opportunity and support to undertake community service learning projects to build resilience, self-esteem, empathy, work-related skills, contacts with community and connectedness, and where possible to obtain vocational qualifications.

- Recommendation: Create and resource 'Taster' courses in a range of education environments targeted at young people in Year 10 at risk of disengagement from education.
- Recommendation: Extend eligibility for the Victorian Office for Youth's 'Advance' program beyond government secondary schools to flexible learning option providers such as ACE, TAFE and Community VCAL.

4 Recommendations

Focus area one: Strengthening literacy and numeracy in the post-compulsory years

- 1.1. Work with universities and training organisations to ensure both teachers and vocational trainers have skills in literacy and numeracy intervention relevant to the post-compulsory schooling age group.
- 1.2. Embed literacy and numeracy learning for students in VCE and VCAL in ‘real world’ applied learning contexts.
- 1.3. Consider embedding requirements for literacy and numeracy standards within VET certificates.
- 1.4. Create a discrete ‘Student Development Service’ and corresponding management stream in every government secondary school.
- 1.5. Broaden the support for learning support programs such as the ‘Learning Beyond the Bell’ program, so that all students living in disadvantaged communities have access to learning support programs.
- 1.6. Increase focus on the literacy and numeracy needs of youth from refugee or migrant backgrounds by funding more culturally sensitive family liaison and cross-cultural training in schools.
- 1.7. Expand the provision of literacy and numeracy support to young people up to the age of 24 and beyond, with a key planning role for Job Service Australia and Youth Connections.

Focus area two: Support for informed education and training choices

- 2.1. Ensure MIPs provision in schools is underpinned by high standards, with schools held accountable to meeting these standards.
- 2.2. Deliver MIPs as part of a ‘Student Development Service’ with a dedicated management stream within schools.
- 2.3. Fund the further development of the PACTS model and support its roll-out to parents in communities across Victoria.
- 2.4. Create impartial career pathways advice and resource services across Victoria, co-located with existing youth or community hubs that can be accessed by anyone in the community seeking expert guidance and information on work, training and learning pathways.
- 2.5. Through the LLENs, provide incentives for business/industry to provide a range of activities that will assist student’s career choices.

Focus area three: Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications

- 3.1. Develop and strengthen VET clusters in each region to ensure a wide range of VET subjects are made available to all students regardless of where they study.

- 3.2. Ensure that VET in schools is provided free for students.
- 3.3. Provide financial assistance for students above the age of 16 who face additional financial barriers to completing education and transitioning to employment.
- 3.4. Allow access to VSN data by Youth Connections and flexible learning providers, so that the benefits of the VSN can extend beyond the mainstream school system to the continued learning and development of young people.
- 3.5. Improve local planning processes by linking VSN and school transparency and accountability arrangements with information collected by the Youth Connections triage and intake service.
- 3.6. Seek an increase in the level of income support through the Commonwealth's Youth Allowance and family tax payments to ensure that students can afford to fully participate in learning.
- 3.7. Play a greater role in promoting a variety of senior secondary learning options and settings to the community.
- 3.8. Create more senior secondary learning environments with mix of academic and vocational courses, by extending the Technical Education Centre model to have at least one presence in every region, and by incorporating academic pathways within the model.
- 3.9. Require all schools should be to promote and provide high quality alternatives to VCE in senior secondary levels to better engage all students.
- 3.10. Develop components in qualifications that recognise and accredit the employability and career development skills gained through students' part-time or casual work.
- 3.11. Encourage flexible approaches to attaining qualifications that support students to combine work and study.
- 3.12. Recommendation: Encourage community, business and school partnerships to develop employment opportunities that benefit young people who may not have resources to access part-time work.
- 3.13. Extend the TAFE completion pilot on to every TAFE institution
- 3.14. Extend the capacity of the Apprentice Support Officer to work with young people for the duration of their apprenticeship, with capacity for post-apprenticeship support.
- 3.15. Provide a pool of brokerage funds to apprentice support officers, and TAFE completion officers to help young people overcome economic barriers.
- 3.16. Equip LLENs to take a lead in providing information to employers on managing young apprentices and employees, with incentives for businesses that can show they understand what is involved in employing young workers and how they will apply this.
- 3.17. Enable all RTOs or GTOs to check business readiness to take on young apprentices, before the young person is placed, as standard procedure.

Focus area four: Systems that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors

- 4.1. Strengthen DEECD requirements for schools and other education providers to provide long-term follow-up and assistance to young people transitioning between courses, institution or sectors.
- 4.2. Implement the recommendations of the Melbourne Citymission, Brotherhood of St Laurence, and Good Shepherd Youth and Family Service submission to the Skills for Victoria Implementation Review, including
 - that the impact of debt as a deterrent for those from low SES backgrounds should be further investigated.
 - that the potential long-term implications for those students who do incur significant debt under VET FEE-HELP should be further investigated.
 - that all eligibility requirements relating to age and course level to access a government-subsidised place be abolished.
 - that concession rates be reinstated, to a flat \$55 fee for all course levels.
- 4.3. Increase the availability of learning support programs for university students to assist student transitions.

Focus area five: Opportunities to re-engage with education and training

- 5.1. Increase guidance, funding and support for the Youth Connections triage and intake service, so that it becomes a source of information that can be used to address gaps and guide local provision of education and training settings and programs.
- 5.2. Give Youth Connections in Victoria the same resources and authority as in other states to identify needs for flexible learning options and to and to arrange or negotiate their provision in partnership with the DEECD regional office and the LLEN.
- 5.3. Extend funding eligibility for the Victorian Office for Youth 'Advance' program to Youth Connections providers.
- 5.4. Strengthen the ability of Youth Connections to provide and connect with family support services.
- 5.5. Provide additional funding for a specialised transition program to be rolled-out through Youth Connections in areas with high numbers of refugee youth.
- 5.6. Create and resource 'Taster' courses in a range of education environments targeted at young people in Year 10 at risk of disengagement from education.
- 5.7. Extend eligibility for the Victorian Office for Youth 'Advance' program beyond government secondary schools to flexible learning option providers such as ACE, TAFE and Community VCAL.

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