

Strengthening the role of vocational training for young people

Symposium

Kira Clarke, David Longley and Madeleine Morey

Social Policy and Research Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence

at AVETRA conference, 28–29 April 2022



Brotherhood of St Laurence
Working for an Australia free of poverty

www.bsl.org.au

Research at the BSL

- 1943 First research officer John Reeves appointed
- 1944 First BSL report The Forgotten Tenth published
- 1961 Publication of High Living: A Study of Family Life in Flats a qualitative study of life in the new Housing Commission flats
- 1967 **Research and Social Action Department** established
- 1972 Research component to accompany the development of the Family Centre project
- 1977 Connie Benn appointed Director of **Social Policy, Research and Innovation.**
- 1989 Launch of Aussie Battlers by Jenny Trethewey at a barbeque on the Atherton Gardens estate;
- 1993 Alison McClelland becomes Director of the **Social Action Research Centre**
- 2003 Formal partnership established with the University of Melbourne
- 2014 Shelley Mallett appointed Director of the RPC
- 2021 The Research & Policy Centre is renamed the **Social Policy and Research Centre**



Reeves research was commissioned by the Brotherhood to provide "first-hand information, supported by clearly stated facts and statistics, as to community evils, injustices and weaknesses".

Symposium overview

This year's conference addresses the theme of "Building a research community to shape VET's future".

VET policy levers used over last two decades have been shown not to work – new ways of reforming the system require new ways of evidence making

Understanding the ways in which the people, training products, pathways, practices and policies of our VET system interact and behave requires a diverse set of inquiry modes and adaptive evidence making approaches

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Building the evidence base for driving the future of Australian VET reform requires:

- requires **evidence making that leverages cross and inter-disciplinarity** within and beyond the existing research community.
- **framing Australian VET as a system** interacting with other systems rather than as single sector or collection of sectors of provision
- reorienting current debates that often centre on topics of industry leadership, graduate employability and contribution to the economy to **broader conceptualisation of the both economic and social good**
- **expanding opportunities for policy oriented evidence making** that has a line of sight to bold ambitions for systemic transformation



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In this symposium we will:

- Outline how we are using a **systemic change methodology** to enable place-based systemic change that maximises the utility of Australia's training system for enabling young people to access decent work
- Illustrate two case examples of how this methodology is being used to:
 - Unlock the potential of apprenticeships through new approaches to employment based training
 - Strengthen the role of the training system in enable secure job outcomes for young people through a new model of employability



What is systemic change?

Systemic change is applied social policy

BSL'S DEFINITION OF SYSTEMIC CHANGE

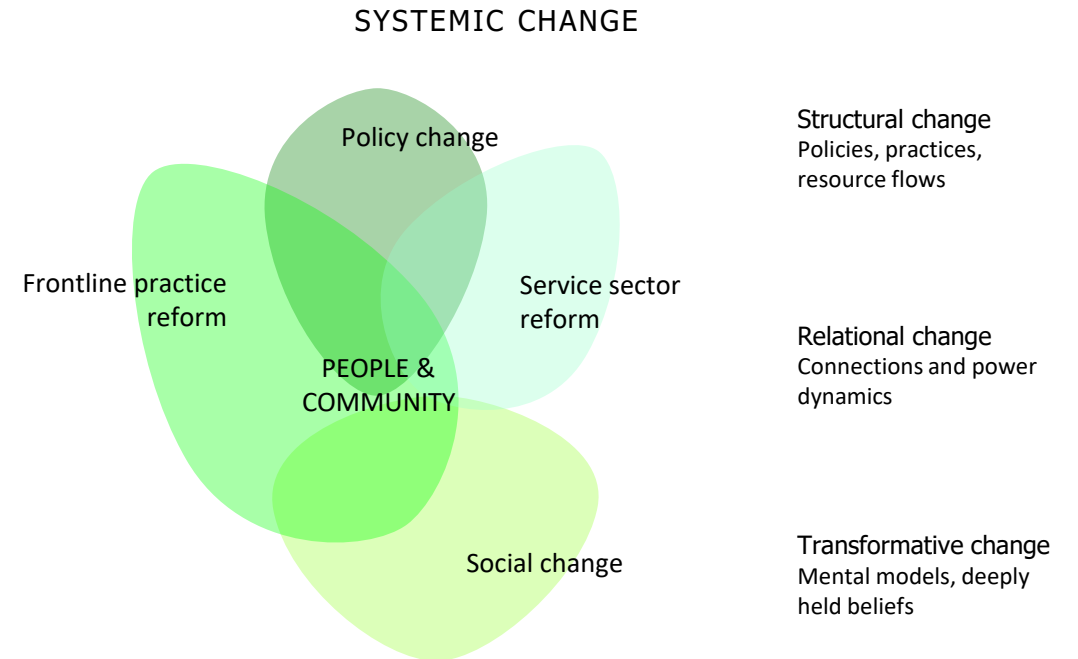
Systemic change is a form of applied social policy work that intentionally disrupts and (re-)aligns the human service systems that **hold inequality and disadvantage in place**. This work aims to advance equity and wellbeing by transforming ways of thinking, institutional structures and practices so that persons, communities and populations can **expand their capability** to pursue lives they value.

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How do you do systemic change?

The how

METHODOLOGY

The applied systemic change methodology consists of four practice components

PRACTICE COMPONENTS

1 Create opportunities for change

- Build momentum
- Establish legitimacy

2 Specify a change agenda

- Assemble a multiskilled team
- Pursue a bold ambition together

3 Develop an adaptive evidence making agenda

- Identify problem conditions
- Apply guiding ideas and frameworks
- Establish learning loops
- Develop impact measures

4 Develop better systems

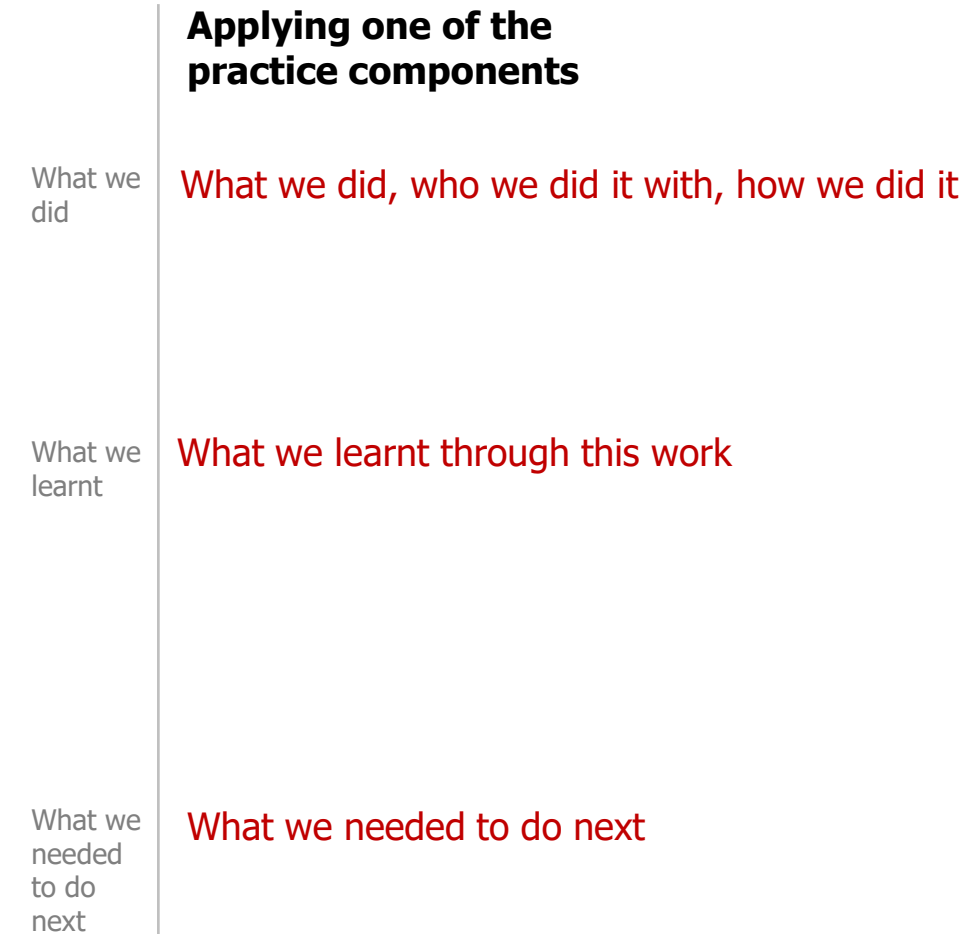
- Design and iterate
- Redistribute power
- Build implementation capability



A schema for telling a story of enabling change

Bringing the systemic change methodology from the abstract to the concrete requires telling a story of how it works in practice

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A story of enabling change

2019

Creating an opportunity for change

What we did

The National Youth Employment Body is established as a mechanism for enabling place-based systemic solutions to youth unemployment

The National Youth Employment Body (NYEB)

Brought together 117 stakeholders in 6 local communities

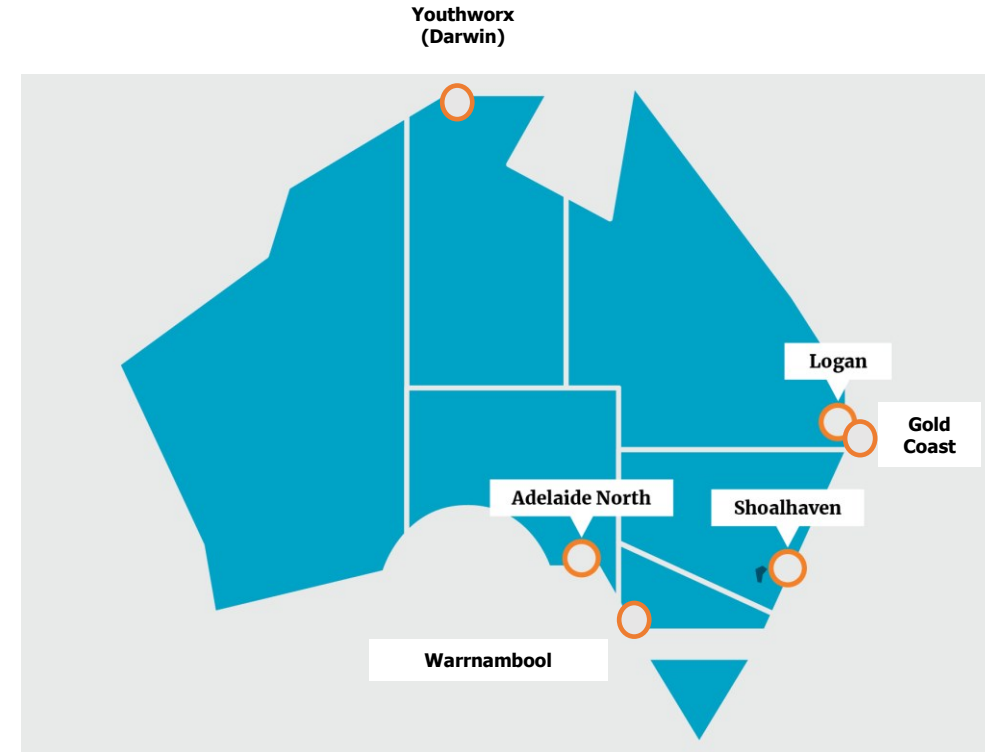
Through a governance mechanism called a Community Investment Committee

Membership of the Community Investment Committees, includes:

- Employers
- government at all three levels
- community organisations
- youth employment service providers, and
- **education and training system practitioners, leaders and policymakers.**

What we learnt

What we needed to do next



A story of enabling change

2019

Creating an opportunity for change

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The National Youth Employment Body is established as a mechanism for enabling place-based systemic solutions to youth unemployment

What we learnt

A network of likeminded place-based stakeholders were invested in coming together with a shared ambition to shift the systems that enable skilled pathways to decent jobs for young people

What we needed to do next

Deepen shared understanding of the specific structural barriers limiting the impact of the training system for unemployed and disadvantaged young people

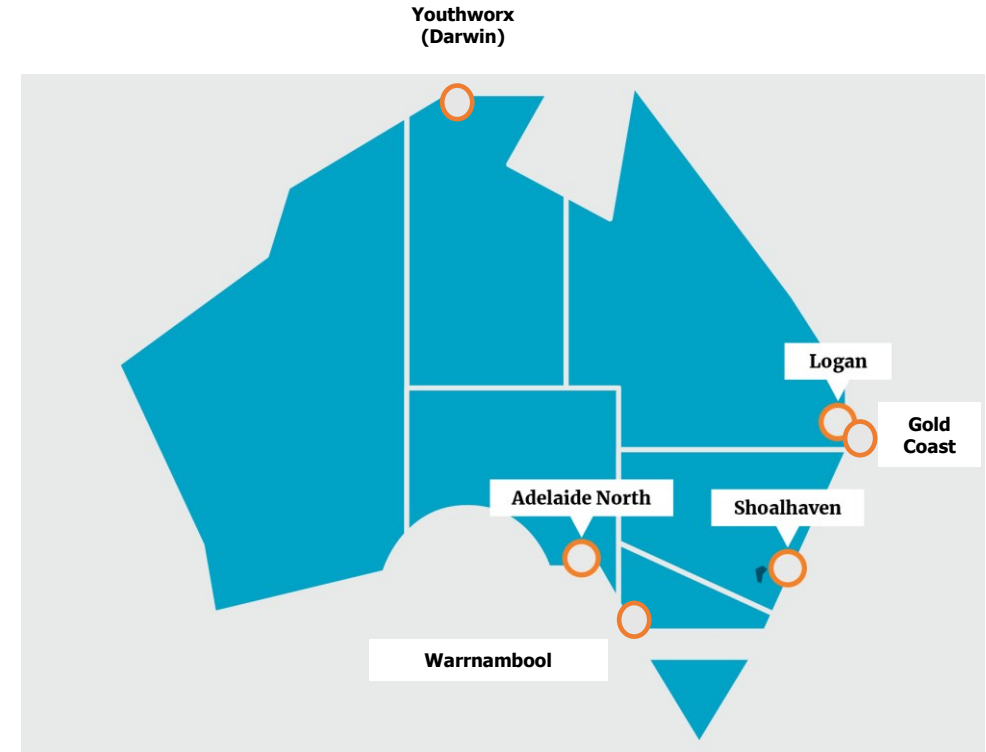
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A story of enabling change

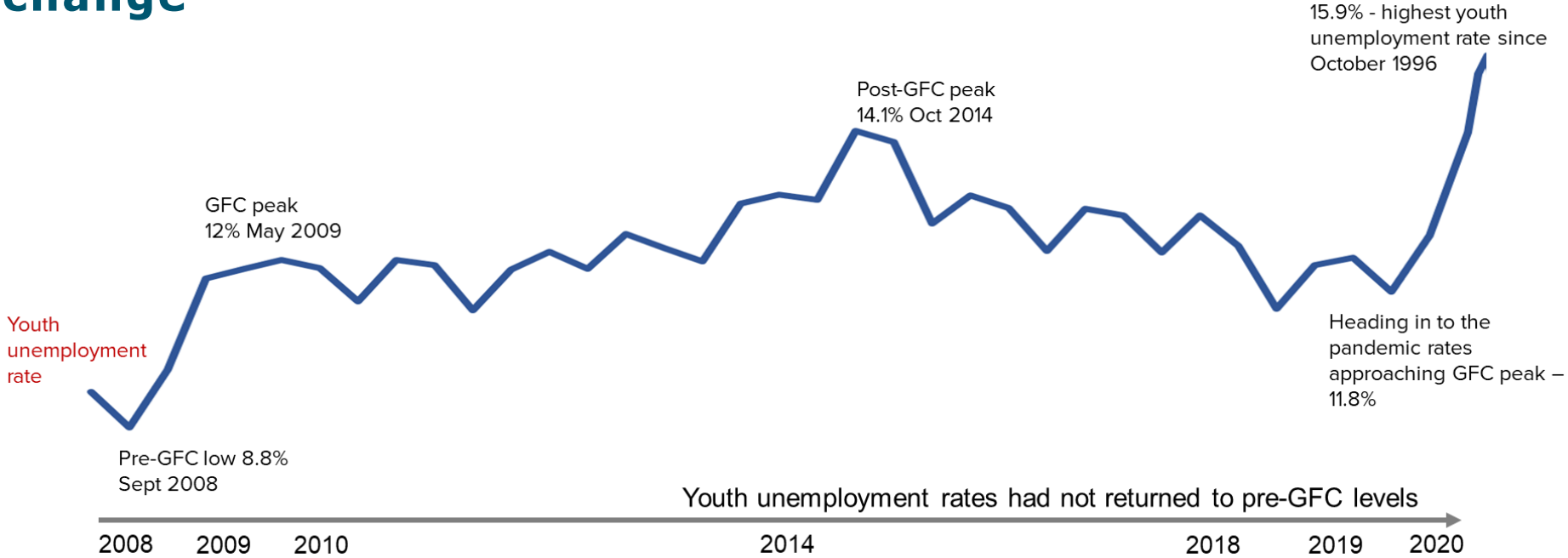
Early 2020 Systemic disruption

What we did

Adapted to disruption. The Covid-19 pandemic triggered the highest youth unemployment in 30 years and the lowest labour force participation since the 1970s. Our place-based and system partners were focused on avoiding labour market scarring and enabling short term labour market outcomes.

What we learnt

What we needed to do next



A story of enabling change

Early 2020 **Systemic disruption**

What we did

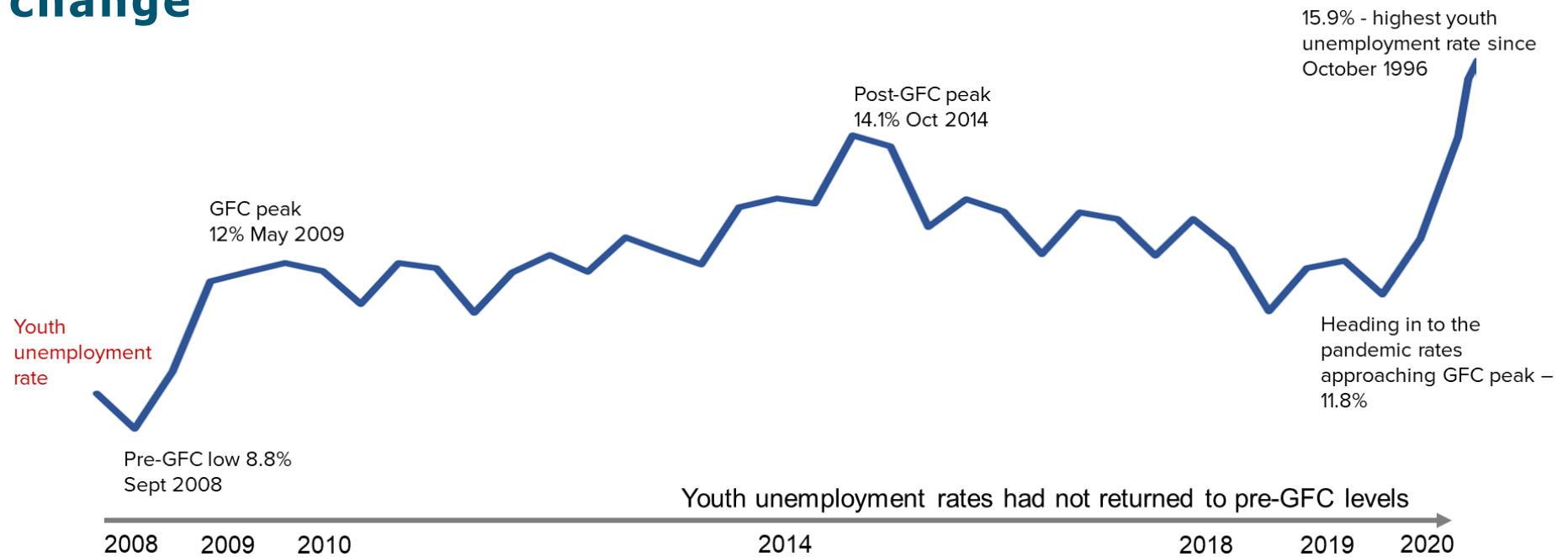
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What we learnt

Labour market disruption intensified the misalignment between supply and demand

What we needed to do next

Deepen shared understanding of the specific structural barriers limiting the impact of the training system for unemployed and disadvantaged young people



A story of enabling change

Late 2020 **Specify a change agenda**

What we did

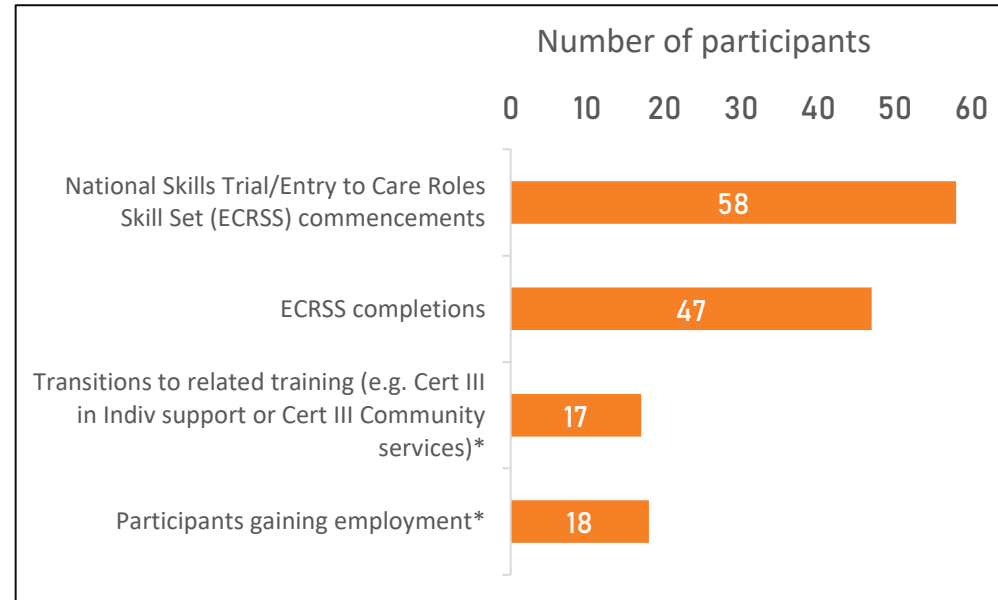
Test out a near term ambition for change through programmatic innovation.

Assembling youth employment services, training providers and employers in place to co-design and co-deliver a stackable skills pilot in the care sector

What we learnt

What we needed to do next

National trial: A co-designed training pathway for young people to work in the aged-care and disability support sector



A story of enabling change

Late 2020 Specify a change agenda

What we did Test out a near term ambition for change through programmatic innovation.

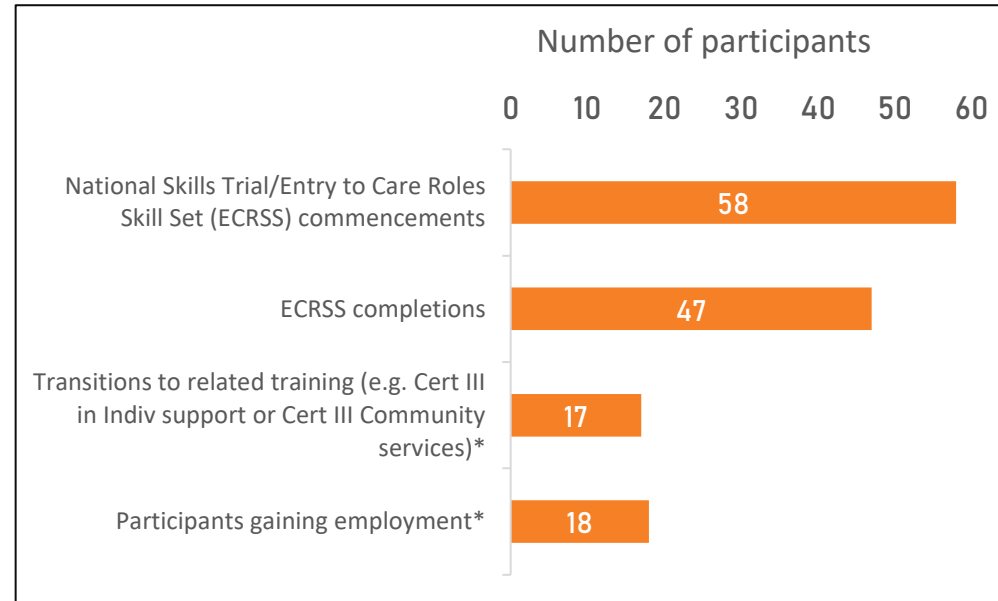
Assembling youth employment services, training providers and employers in place to co-design and co-deliver a stackable skills pilot in the care sector

What we learnt **Localised labour market disruptions require joined up responses from local employers and training providers together to formulate locally responsive solutions**

Engaging employers in co-design of pathways strengthened trust and willingness to invest in young people

What we needed to do next Leverage learnings through an evaluation to understand the systemic conditions needed to enable and sustain this type of placed based innovation

National trial: A co-designed training pathway for young people to work in the aged-care and disability support sector



A story of enabling change

Early
2021

Developing an adaptive evidence making agenda

What we
did

Completed a developmental evaluation of the entry to care roles trial to understand the systemic conditions needed to enable and sustain outcomes for young people and employers at scale

What we
learnt

What we
needed
to do
next

Core lessons from an evaluation of the national entry to care roles trial revealed the disabling impact of several structural barriers:

- **Siloes between** education, training, employment, and youth support services made cross-sector collaboration difficult
- **Diverse and complex barriers** facing disadvantaged young people are not adequately addressed by support services within or beyond education
- **Funding is sporadic** and the associated subsidized priority courses are limiting for young people
- **Career access and mobility** limited by a reliance on narrow occupational programs and pathways
- **A lack of clarity and consensus** on what constitutes work-relevant and assessable skills remains a difficult problem

National Youth Employment Body Entry to Care Roles Skills Trial: evaluation findings and implications for systemic change

Prepared by
George Myconos, Research Fellow
Kira Clarke, Senior Research Fellow
Christina Ng, Research Assistant
Youth Opportunity Team, Social Policy and Research Centre (SPaRC), Brotherhood of St Laurence
January 2022

We acknowledge the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the land on which this report was prepared, and on which we live, work and learn. We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.



A story of enabling change

Early
2021

Developing an adaptive evidence making agenda

What we did

Completed a developmental evaluation of the entry to care roles trial to understand the systemic conditions needed to enable and sustain outcomes for young people and employers

What we learnt

Funding models and systemic indicators were sustaining institutional reliance on certain types of entry level training products that are not enabling access and career mobility for young people.

What we needed to do next

Test learnings across a broader range of industry settings and deepen shared understanding of the conditions holding these systemic problems in place

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A story of enabling change

Mid-Late 2021

What we did

Developing better systems

Consulted widely with **100+** stakeholders from government, the training system and industry and employer experts in the agriculture, care and transport and logistics sectors.

Consultations fed in to a discussion paper that outlined shared framings of the structural problems.

Brought these stakeholders together for **three half day system design workshops**.

Systemic challenges identified in the care sector were also limiting skilled pathways in agriculture and the transport & logistics sectors. Alongside funding, training products and systemic conditions enabling a strong social partnership with employers were core focus of stakeholders.

What we learnt

What we needed to do next

Leverage the insights from this diverse network of experts to step out a program of solution oriented work.

Laurence

working for an Australia free of poverty

Extract discussion paper prepared from for system design workshop consultations

Themes	Stakeholder voices
Funding	"... <i>(we need to be) funding employers, the support base and the learning institute; so they (young people) aren't being set up to fail</i> " (Training)
Perceptions of young people	"... <i>it's the personal transformations that have the biggest impact on the students stuck in the system.</i> " (Training)
Role of employers and workplace learning	" <i>Fundamental basis for industry is they recognise the issues, they know the barriers, its about the solutions...What can your business do to solve your own issue? Its not the young person's problem</i> " (Industry)
Skills – transferability, mobility and 'stackability'	" <i>There is no safety net in VET for students who train and then do not get a job.</i> " (Training)
Training offer	"... <i>we are bound by the training package structure, enrolling into full qualifications before experience, current advocacy is about avenues that engage young people in multi sector experiences before they commit to a longer journey - unfortunately funding models don't support that – we need a model with enough flexibility to get that experience</i> "



A story of enabling change

Late 2021 Developing an adaptive evidence making agenda

What we did
Followed up the workshops with intentional consultations, critical policy analysis and reviews of the international literature and promising practice to identify specific opportunities for enabling change.

What we learnt

What we needed to do next

Extract from NYEB policy framework

Skills and Training policy focus

POLICY GOAL

A learner-centred training system that adapts to career entry development needs of young people

POLICY OBJECTIVES (improving benefits for users, ways of developing, products, models of delivery, governance/monitoring)

- **Equitable access to quality skills** development opportunities for all young people
- **Training products are fit-for-purpose** to learners and aligned to industry needs
- **Expanded models of employment-based training delivery** that enable and incentivise training pathways into secure and sustainable work, particularly for those historically excluded from training and work
- **Training system architecture and funding regimes that are responsiveness and adaptability** to place and stage of career as core operating principles of the training system
- **Strengthened role for employers** in enabling vocational development through expanded social partnerships in place

POLICY FOCUS AREAS

Employment based training (EBT)

Principles for reform

- EBT models are available to all young people and across all entry level occupations
- EBT models are flexible with foundational and occupational pathway options

Transversal capabilities

Principles for reform

- Certification and service delivery models that bring together foundational, technical and transferable skills in a real work context to build transversal capability.
- Transferable skills are funded and embedded in training delivery as core business

Clean skills

Opportunities for change:

- Victorian Skills Authority (VSA) Clean Economy Jobs and Skills Taskforce 10-year workforce strategy exploring renewable energy, circular economy practices and climate change adaptation.
- Explore opportunities to support skills demand in the clean economy with BSL's expert Climate Change and Energy policy area

Adaptive credentials for young people

Principles for reform

- A training system that supports lifelong learning and development for students at all stages of career development
- Design and delivery of differentiated training products that enable vertical and horizontal mobility (latticed)



A story of enabling change

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Followed up the workshops with intentional consultations, critical policy analysis and reviews of the international literature and promising practice to identify specific opportunities for enabling change.

What we learnt
Four key areas remained problematic in existing system and policy reform responses:

- **Clarification of employability for young people**
- **Widening employment-based training opportunities**
- **Preparing for clean economy jobs**
- **Fit for purpose adaptive credentials for young people**

What we needed to do next
Deepen understanding of what holds the conditions of the problems in place.
Build multi-skilled partnerships for leading the change.

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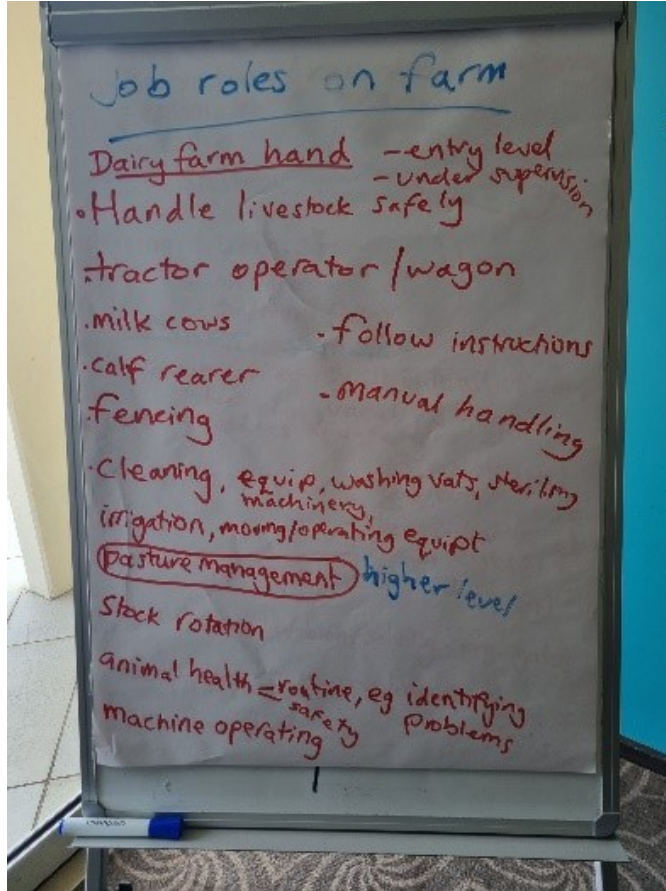
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David will provide an illustration of the work we are doing on **new approaches to employment based training**

Madeleine will provide an illustration of the work we are doing on **a new model of employability**

A story of enabling change

Co-design workshop with agricultural employers and training provider leadership and educators



Late 2021- Early 2022

Specifying a change agenda

What we did

Leveraging momentum from the workshops to assemble a multi-skilled team to co-design a systemic solution for testing a new approach to employment based training in the agriculture sector.

What we learnt

What we needed to do next

Warrnambool
Moyn
Community
Investment
Committee

brophy
family and youth services

**Skills
Impact**

**Dairy
Australia**

**SOUTH
WEST
TAFE**

food+fibre
GREAT SOUTH COAST

A story of enabling change

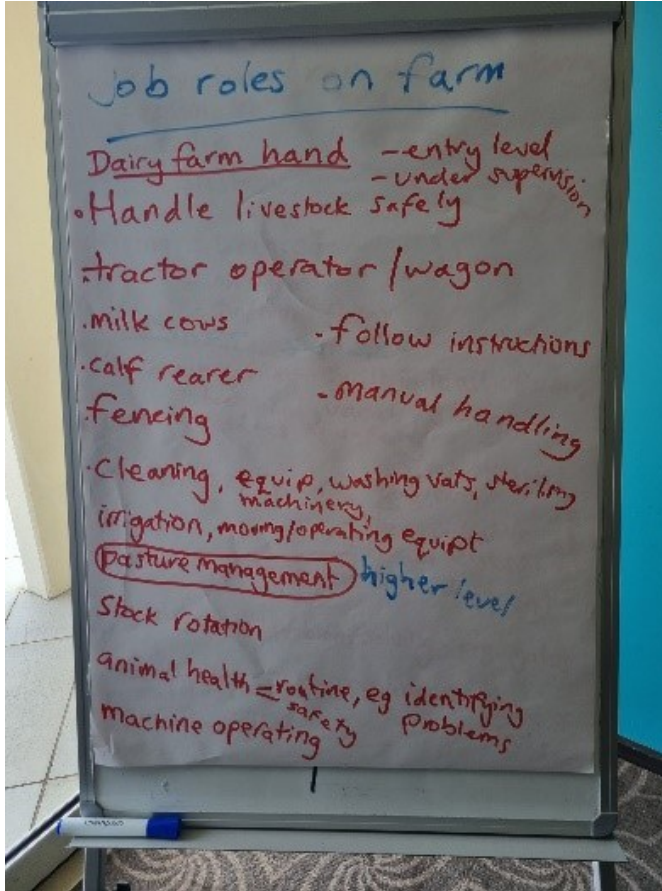
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Late 2021-
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What we did



What we learnt

It takes time to rebuild industry and employer trust in the training system.

Training providers share an ambition for change but are often constrained by existing funding and performance measurement frameworks.

What we needed to do next

Apply for funding and resourcing to test and adapt a place-based solution that aligns the needs of employers, training providers and young people.

Warrnambool
Moyne
Community
Investment
Committee

brophy
family and youth services

**Skills
Impact**

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SOUTH
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GREAT SOUTH COAST

A story of enabling change

Late 2021-
Early 2022

Developing better systems

What we did

Deepened understanding of why employability of young people remains unclear and the conditions holding this problem in place.

Leveraged diverse expertise, through a system design workshop and consultations, to test a new way of thinking about employability.

What we learnt

What we needed to do next

A new way of thinking about employability
The number one systemic challenge you identified was a lack of shared understanding of what employability means and what the role of vocational training is in developing skills for employability

A lack of shared understanding across the system is sustaining the following problems:

1. Conflation of skills that are crucially different and a lack of differentiation of skills development
2. Assumptions that employability is a by-product of participation in training
3. A lack of accountability for how and where these skills are developed

Programmatic innovation within some providers is not being sustained or converted to routine practice at scale, which is leading to:

- Inconsistent and inequitable experiences for young people across the training system
- A lack of **integrated and sustainable** training outcomes for young people across the training system as a whole

Inconsistent access to structured workplace learning within entry level training programs

Ad hoc access to job preparation skills (e.g. Interview, resume writing, workplace communication, etc)

Pitching the solutions and pressure testing their potential

Room 1 Solution Pitch:
holistic and individual focused pre-vocational assessment (**within VET or with partners**)

Room 2 Solution Pitch:
System level employer enabling, tied to incentives, employment based training as a public good, enabling more consistent and meaningful employment based learning.
AND
Organisational accountability for employability within training providers that drive transformational leadership.

Room 3 Solution Pitch:
Through increased diversity in management, decision-making, and stronger partnerships within departments/areas of VET institutions (i.e. bring together training/assessment, foundational skills, cultural considerations, relational and pastoral support) --> equip teachers and trainers with person-centred approaches to prepare young people to develop and communicate their skills

A story of enabling change

Late 2021-
Early 2022

Developing better systems

What we did

Deepened understanding of why employability of young people remains unclear and the conditions holding this problem in place.

Leveraged diverse expertise, through a system design workshop and consultations, to test a new way of thinking about employability.

What we learnt

General consensus that existing frameworks and core skills lists are insufficient for enabling a shared multi-stakeholder accountability for supporting the development of core skills for work.

What we needed to do next

Build multi-skilled partnerships for leading the evidence making and change work that tests this new way of framing employability.

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ment Body is enabled by the Brotherhood of St Laurence, in partnership with the the Australian Government. The NYEB is funded by the Paul Ramsay Foundation.

Brotherhood of St Laurence National Youth Employment Body

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Lessons from applying a systemic change methodology to a program of work on the role of the training system for enabling youth employment

Underpinning the operationalisation of these practice components is a set of practice principles

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PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

- Seize tactical opportunities**
- Nurture foundational relationships**
- Foster a learning culture**
- Redistribute power**



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PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

Seize tactical opportunities

Nurture foundational relationships

Foster a learning culture

Redistribute power

Creating opportunities requires seizing tactical opportunities

COVID-19 didn't create the problems within the training system, but it did intensify their impact on young people and create a shared urgency for change

Lessons from applying a systemic change methodology to focused work on youth employment and the role of the training system

Underpinning the operationalisation of these practice components is a set of practice principles

PRACTICE COMPONENTS

- 1 Create opportunities for change**
 - Build momentum
 - Establish legitimacy
- 2 Specify a change agenda**
 - Assemble a multiskilled team
 - Pursue a bold ambition together
- 3 Develop an adaptive evidence making agenda**
 - Identify problem conditions
 - Apply guiding ideas and frameworks
 - Establish learning loops
 - Develop impact measures
- 4 Develop better systems**
 - Design and iterate
 - Redistribute power
 - Build implementation capability

PRACTICE PRINCIPLES

Seize tactical opportunities

Nurture foundational relationships

Foster a learning culture

Redistribute power

Creating opportunities requires seizing tactical opportunities

COVID-19 didn't create the problems within the training system, but it did intensify their impact on young people and create a shared urgency for change

Specifying a change agenda requires nurturing foundational relationships

Solving long-term systemic and structural challenges requires harnessing diverse expertise, including input from government, training system leaders, local employers and young people.



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An adaptive evidence making agenda requires fostering a learning culture

It is not enough to just research, gather evidence and publish.

A culture of co-learning, openness to critical feedback through learning loops is core to progressing transformational change.



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A culture of co-learning, openness to critical feedback through learning loops is core to progress transformational change.

Developing better systems requires a redistribution of power

A shared ambition doesn't directly translate to implementation. Designing better systems requires redistributing power and building capacity for leading change.



Exploring two streams of this systemic work in detail

Employment based training and employability have emerged as two concrete streams of work in which our partners are pursuing transformational change

David will illustrate how we are using the systemic change methodology to **understand the limitations of apprenticeships** and to co-design and test a new form of employment based training

Madeleine will illustrate how we are using the systemic change methodology to **re-frame the prevailing assumptions regarding employability** and to design and test a new model of transversal capability

A story of enabling change

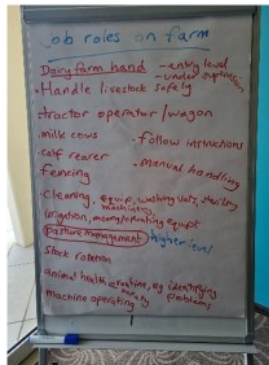
Late 2021 - Early 2022

Specifying a change agenda

What we did: Leveraging momentum from the workshops to assemble a multi-skilled team to co-design a systemic solution for testing a new approach to employment based training in the agriculture sector.

What we learnt: **It takes time to rebuild industry and employer trust in the training system.** **Training providers share an ambition for change but are often constrained by existing funding and performance measurement frameworks.**

What we needed to do next: Apply for funding and resourcing to test and adapt a place-based solution that aligns the needs of employers, training providers and young people.



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A story of enabling change

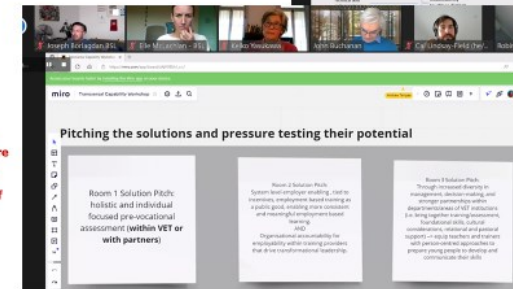
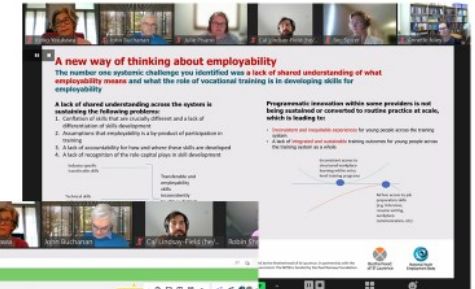
Late 2021 - Early 2022

Developing better systems

What we did: Deepened understanding of why employability of young people remains unclear and the conditions holding this problem in place. Leveraged diverse expertise, through a system design workshop and consultations, to test a new way of thinking about employability.

What we learnt: **General consensus that existing frameworks and core skills lists are insufficient for enabling a shared multi-stakeholder accountability for supporting the development of core skills for work.**

What we needed to do next: Build multi-skilled partnerships for leading the change that tests this new way of framing employability.



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Moving Beyond Apprenticeships and Enhancing EBT for Labour Market Entrants

Paper 2

Dr David Longley, Research Officer



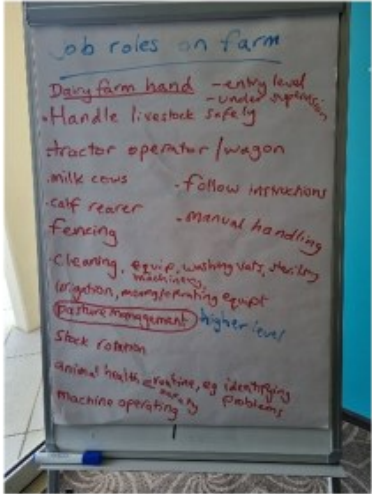
Social Policy and Research Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence

The systemic change methodology in practice

A research agenda driven and shaped by working with stakeholders

A story of enabling change

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A focus on apprenticeships

In the aftermath of the COVID-19 pandemic, and in the build-up to the federal election, both sides of the political divide are advocating for increased funding of EBT programs

\$2.7 billion

Expansion to the *Boosting Apprenticeship Commencement Program*

\$1.2 billion

Increase to the *Supporting Apprentices and Trainees* wage subsidy

\$900 million

Announced in state budgets for new apprenticeship initiatives in 2021-2022

Over \$2.8 billion

As an election promise, “to train the next generation of apprentices and trainees”



Volume as a metric of success

Both sides of the political aisle strongly support an increase to the volume of learners undertaking apprenticeships

“Right now, there are more than 350,000 apprentices and trainees in-training and a record 220,000 of these are trade apprentices, and these investments are about making those numbers go even higher.”

Scott Morrison, 27/3/22



Mission Accomplished?

The volume of commencements has seen a rapid rise from those during the peak of the pandemic

88.1% rise in commencements

In the 12 months ending 30
September 2021



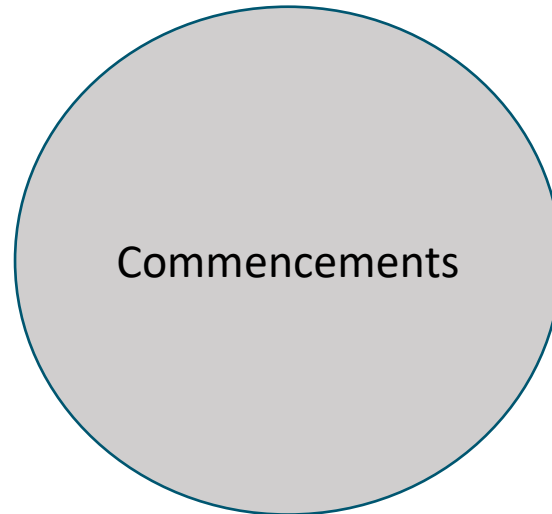
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All data courtesy of NCVET VET statistics 'Apprentices and Trainees'

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Looking either side of commencements

Focusing on commencements misses the wider story of Australian apprenticeships, including who misses out on the opportunities apprenticeships can bring



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Looking either side of commencements

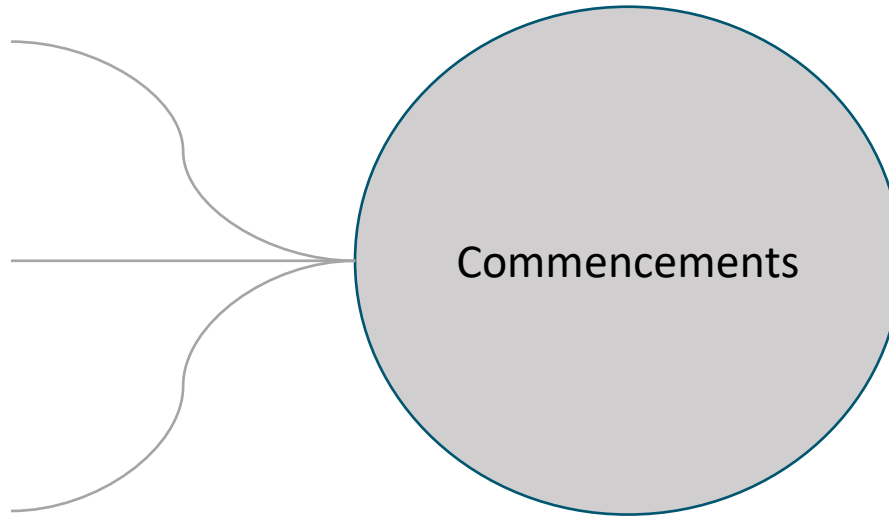
Focusing on commencements misses the wider story of Australian apprenticeships, including who misses out on the opportunities apprenticeships can bring

Who are we bringing in?

Not a reflection of the diversity of Australia's population

Inadequate alignment with the regional needs of industry, employers, and learners

Models do not account for the reasons for which young people undertake postsecondary study



Looking either side of commencements

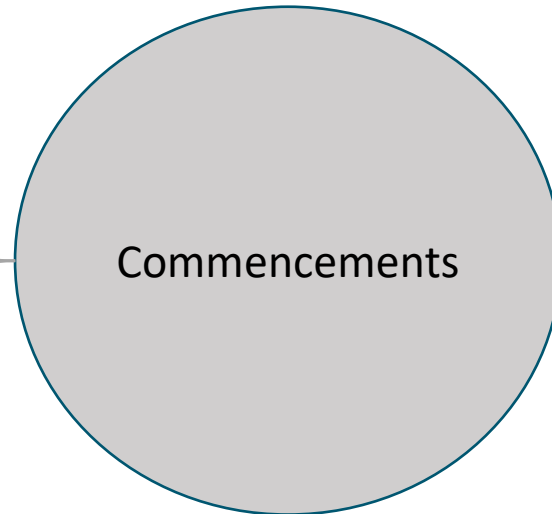
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Who are we putting out?

Completion rates are low, and in decline

Current pathways do not adequately enable inter and intra-industry mobility

Disproportionate representation of industries

Who are we bringing in?

Current apprenticeship models do not adequately represent the diversity of Australia's workforce nor their reasons for undertaking vocational education

25.1%

of those who completed an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2020 were women.

8.7%

of those who completed an apprenticeship or traineeship in 2021 spoke a language other than English at home.

41.5%

of those undertaking trade apprenticeships did so because they wanted to work in that occupation.

26.1%

of those undertaking non-trade apprenticeships did so because they wanted to work in that occupation.

Concerns of place

are often neglected in centralised approaches, which do not cater to regional differences or industry, learner, or of systemic barriers.

Who are we putting out?

A focus on commencements is too narrow, and does not capture the problems which exist post-commencement

56.1%

Of those who commence an apprenticeship or traineeship complete their course.

12.3%

Of those who complete their course do not find employment.

64.4%

Of apprentices and trainees enrolled in trade occupations.

2 of the top 10

Occupations by commencement for young people are sales assistants and hospitality workers.

Mobility

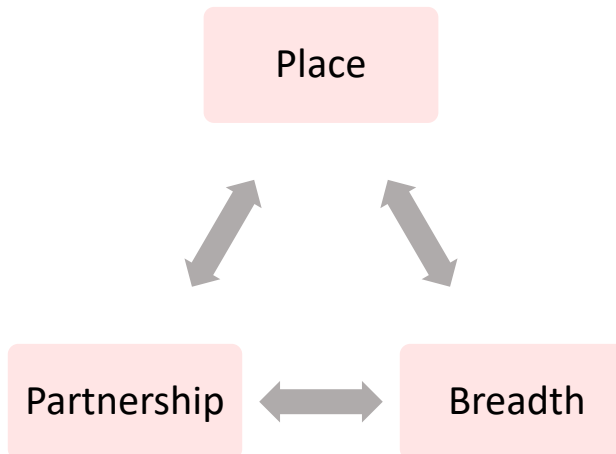
of current pathways is limited by occupationally-narrow models and competency-based delivery.

A new approach

These problems have been, are being, and can be addressed by shifting focus away from policies which drive enrolment increases, towards policies focused on three key pillars

A new approach

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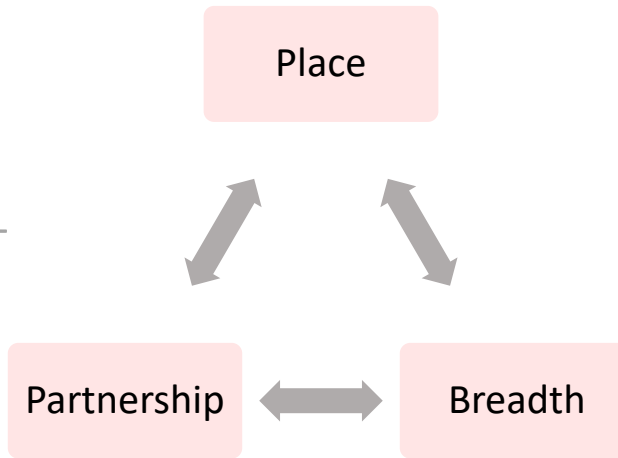
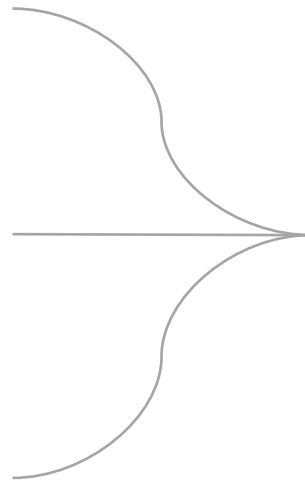
A new approach

A change of focus to from enrolments to the principles of place, partnership, and breadth, will enable approaches which address the six key issues identified

Reflects demographic diversity

Aligns course content and delivery methods with local needs

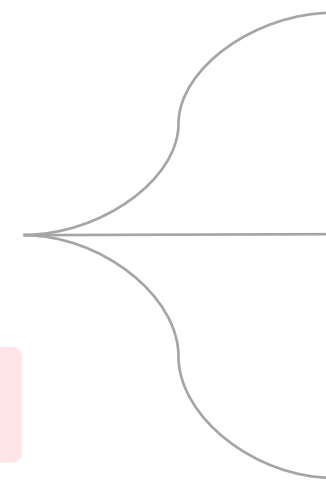
Accounts for variety of reasons for undertaking postsecondary study



Increase in completion

Enables autonomous mobility

Enables representation of wider range of industries



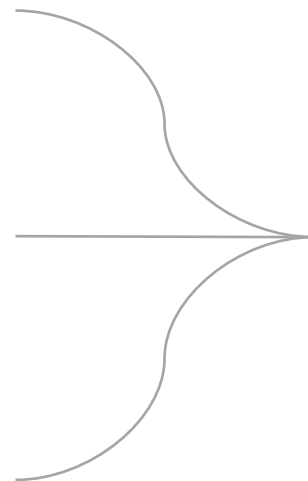
Place

Approaches which consider local contexts in the design and delivery of VET have the potential to overcome the limitations of a centralised approach

Reflects demographic diversity

Aligns course content and delivery methods with local needs

Accounts for variety of reasons for undertaking postsecondary study



Place

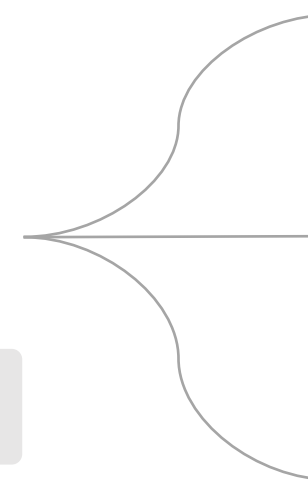
Partnership

Breadth

Increase in completion

Enables autonomous mobility

Enables representation of wider range of industries



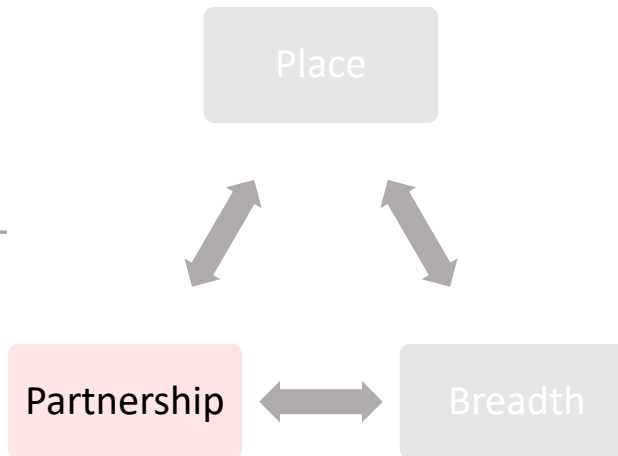
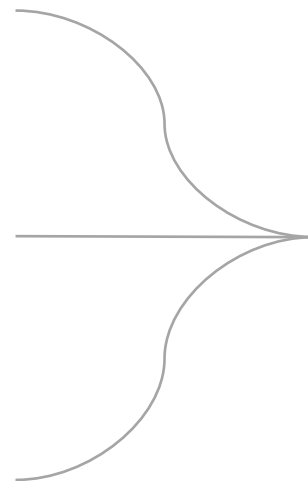
Partnership

Approaches which enable collaborative co-design and co-delivery between local stakeholders have the potential to produce more robust VET pathways for learners

Reflects demographic diversity

Aligns course content and delivery methods with local needs

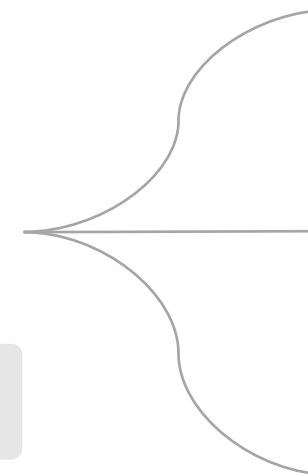
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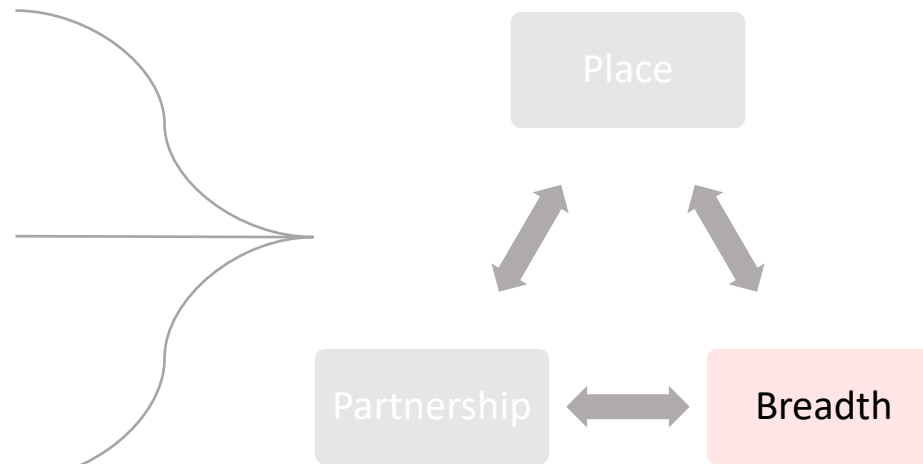
Breadth

Approaches which allow for the shorter, wider entry points into VET have the potential to overcome the limitations of occupationally-narrow approaches

Reflects demographic diversity

Aligns course content and delivery methods with local needs

Accounts for variety of reasons for undertaking postsecondary study



Increase in completion

Enables autonomous mobility

Enables representation of wider range of industries

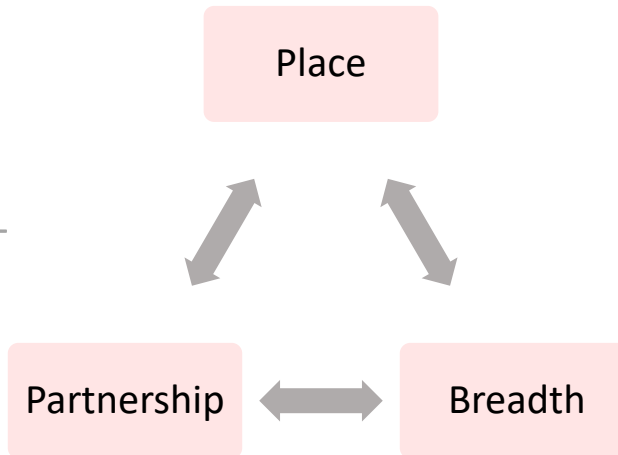
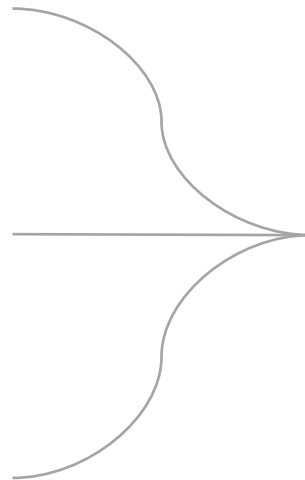
A new approach

It's when these principles are enacted together that each of the key weaknesses of the current system are addressed

Reflects demographic diversity

Aligns course content and delivery methods with local needs

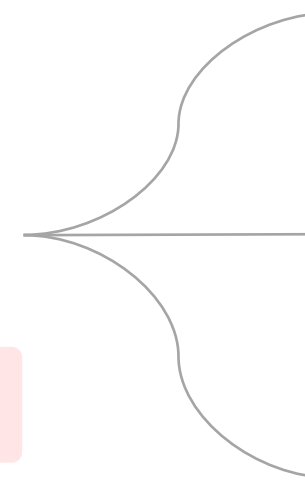
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Increase in completion

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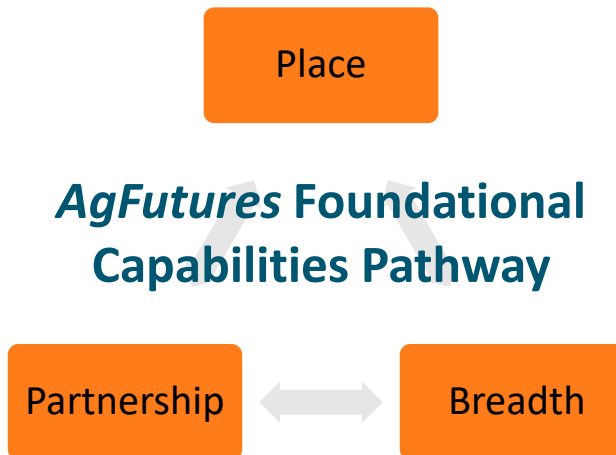
Enables representation of wider range of industries



Applied research in place

The Brotherhood's *AgFutures* Foundational Capabilities Pathway project seeks to test these principles in place, in an Australian context

The project builds a **partnership** between local stakeholders, to enable collaborative co-design and co-delivery which accounts for the **place**-specific needs of learners, educators, and employers.



Partners will co-design and co-deliver a six-month foundational capabilities pathway for the dairy industry. The **breadth** of this pathway will enable access to entry-level jobs in dairy, while also providing a strong foundation for mobility across the agricultural sector.

The path forwards

There is an opportunity to harness government goodwill to build a stronger and more representative apprenticeship system

- Despite the successes of the current focus on driving enrolments in apprenticeships, key weaknesses of the apprenticeship system remain unaddressed.
- Evidence demonstrates that an approach based on the principles of place, partnership, and breadth can address these weaknesses, and unlock the potential of Australian apprenticeships.
- The Brotherhood is looking for further opportunities and partners to test this approach across a range of regions and industries.

For more information, see *Unlocking the Potential of Australian Apprenticeships*

<http://library.bsl.org.au/showitem.php?handle=1/12920>

David.Longley@bsl.org.au



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Let's make change that lasts

Social Policy and Research Centre

SKILLS AND TRAINING FOR YOUNG PEOPLE

Unlocking the potential of Australian apprenticeships

David Longley and Kira Clarke April 2022

Despite being the most common form of employment-based training (EBT), Australian apprenticeships are not living up to their promise. Repeated funding increases and initiatives have failed to address declining participation and completion rates in Australian apprenticeship programs. They have also failed to widen and diversify the cohorts of learners engaged in apprenticeships. As the country emerges from the COVID-19 pandemic, with its impact on young people and the changes it has enforced on the world of work, an opportunity presents itself to address the weaknesses of the current system to improve its efficacy, suitability and reach.

An opportunity to strengthen Australian EBT

- **Changes to labour markets necessitate changes to training systems.** The increased use of technology, the shift to a 'green' economy, increased worker precarity and the COVID-19 pandemic all influence how young people experience employment. However, Australian EBT systems have not kept pace.
- **A well-designed, work-based training system is a powerful tool,** which can provide substantial financial benefits to students, employers and the wider community. Well-constructed apprenticeships can provide students with soft skills and intangible benefits that they will carry through their careers.
- **Youth unemployment remains an important issue Australian policymakers must face.** After more than a decade, youth unemployment still sits above pre-GFC levels. This has been exacerbated by the COVID-19 pandemic, which had disproportionately severe impacts on young people aged 15-24.

A new vision for EBT

- **Successful changes are being made to employment-based training internationally.** Globally, policymakers and educators are leveraging existing institutions and areas of expertise to create new systems of employment-based training. These approaches are built on the fundamental assumptions that:
 - **Leveraging place-based expertise will better meet the needs of educators, employers and students.** These needs vary based on geography, demographics, infrastructure and labour market demands. Programs which account for local difference, enlist local expertise and cater to local needs will provide better outcomes than those which are uniform and inflexible.
 - **Strong partnerships will produce more positive outcomes for stakeholders.** A system designed to facilitate collaboration between stakeholders will ensure that programs and procedures remain fit for purpose, agile and responsive to the demands of the labour market.

Skilled up for no job: a policy critique and conceptual framework for cutting through the debate on employability skills for young people

Paper 3

Dr Madeleine Morey, Research Officer

Social Policy and Research Centre, Brotherhood of St Laurence

WHAT WE HAVE HEARD AND LEARNT SO FAR

Application of the systemic change methodology to enable us to better understand what we mean by employability

Leading into the system design workshop

- Consultations with diverse stakeholders and the system design workshops in 2021 emphasised a lack of clarity as to what employability is and how and where these skills are developed

A story of enabling change

Late 2021- Early 2022

Developing better systems

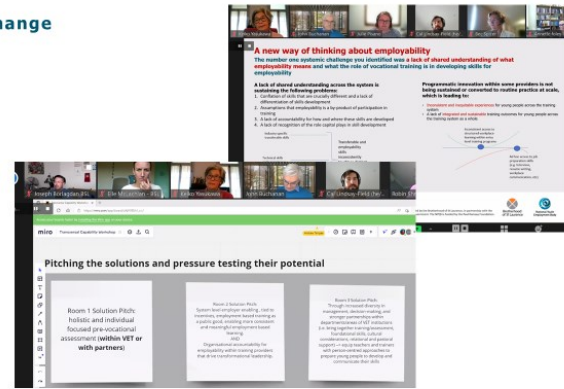
Deepened understanding of why employability of young people remains unclear and the conditions holding this problem in place.

Leveraged diverse expertise through a system design workshop and consultations, to test a new way of thinking about employability.

What we did

What we learnt

What we needed to do next



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What we learnt from the workshop

- Deepened understanding of the structural problems
- Testing of our new framing of employability and applicability of it

WHY A FOCUS ON EMPLOYABILITY AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

In Australia and internationally employability skills have been a policy focus over the last 40 years but the training system still does not adequately teach these skills

Timeline of policies and frameworks

1987- Skills for Australia

1992- Mayer Report

2002- Employability Skills for the Future

2013- Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework

2021- National Skills Commission

2022- National Foundational Skills Framework 2022-2032



WHY A FOCUS ON EMPLOYABILITY AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

In Australia and internationally employability skills have been a policy focus over the last 30 years but the training system still does not adequately teach these skills

“To be work-ready, graduates have always needed a **combination of technical skills and general employability**. While the balance of these skills may shift, we should expect students will continue to need training that builds both. **Training should aim to equip students with the skills needed for their first job, and the flexibility and adaptability to navigate future career transitions**. As we cannot fully predict the future workforce landscape and the skills required, we also need a system that supports workers to upskill or retrain throughout their lives.”

(Joyce review, 2019, p.8)

Timeline of policies and frameworks

- 1987- Skills for Australia
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- 2013- Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework
- 2021- National Skills Commission
- 2022- National Foundational Skills Framework 2022-2032

WHY A FOCUS ON EMPLOYABILITY AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Not enough is being done to enable the development of the employability and transferable skills needed to support young people to convert technical training and competence into a job outcome

43.1%

Completing apprentices who found work in same industry

1 in 10

Who complete apprenticeships don't continue in employment

Less than half

of 20-24 year olds who were unemployed before training have job after training

34.8%

of 20-24 years who completed their qualification were employed in same occupation as their training course

“Wrong skills matches can cause ‘unemployability’ – we all need to understand skills better – our own and how to match skills to opportunities.”

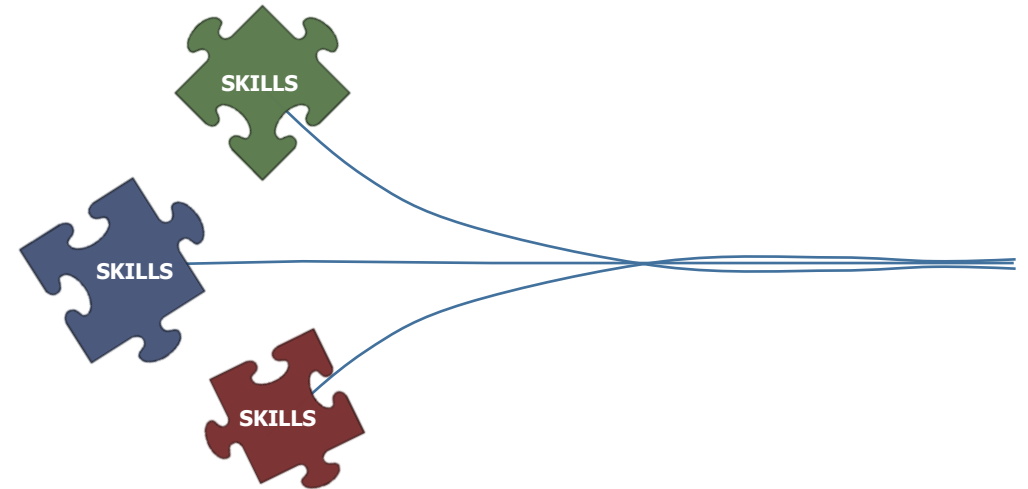
(Young woman, NYEB Youth Employment Reference Group member)

WHY A FOCUS ON EMPLOYABILITY AND TRANSFERABLE SKILLS

Mainstream training products and models of delivery used in entry-level programs do not reflect the breadth of employability and transferable skills needed by employers and young people for the changing nature of work

“the central ‘**magic glue**,’ connecting, reinforcing, and developing other skills (foundational skills of literacy and numeracy, digital skills and job-specific skills).”

2019 Global Framework on Transferable Skills, UNICEF 2019, ix



HOW WE HAVE SHAPED OUR FRAMING OF EMPLOYABILITY

Examination of academic and grey literature and consultations with diverse stakeholders has informed our understanding and new framing of employability

A story of enabling change

Late 2021
Early 2022

Developing better systems

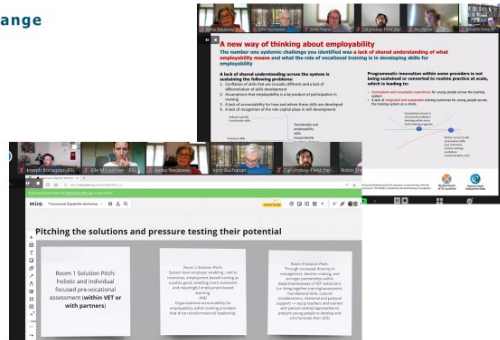
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Leveraged diverse expertise, through a system design workshop and consultations, to test a new way of thinking about employability.

What we learnt

What we needed to do next



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32 Consultations with stakeholders from:

- Academia
- VET sector
- Industry/employer
- Government
- Youth services

Scan and analysis of:

- National reports and frameworks released in Australia over the last 40 years¹
- Definitions used by the OECD, ILO, CEDEFOP, UNESCO
- International approaches to VET and employability
- Academic literature on employability, generic skills, delivery of employability skills, VET pedagogy and competency based training, capital²

1. For example the Karmel Report 1984, Skills for Australia 1987, Mayer Report 1992, Employability Skills for the Future Report 2002, Core Skills for Work Developmental Framework 2013, National Skills Commission 2021
2. Including Wheelahan et al. (2015); Buchanan et al. (2009); Buchanan et al. (2018); Smith (2010, 2019); Townsend and Waterhouse (2008)



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CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF EMPLOYABILITY

The lack of consensus as to what these skills are and how they are developed has meant that young people who are disadvantaged do not adequately develop these skills through the current VET system

Which skills are most commonly identified in the discussion of transferable or employability skills?

Myfuture	JobJumpstart	National Skills Commission
Communication	Good communication	Oral communication
Teamwork	Teamwork	Teamwork
Initiative	Motivation and initiative	Initiative and innovation
Problem solving	Following instructions	Problem solving
Planning and organising	Leadership	Planning and organising
Decision making	Reliability/dependability	Learning
Self-management	Patience	Reading
	Adaptability	Writing
	Emotional Control	Numeracy
	Resilience	Digital Literacy

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Our critiques:

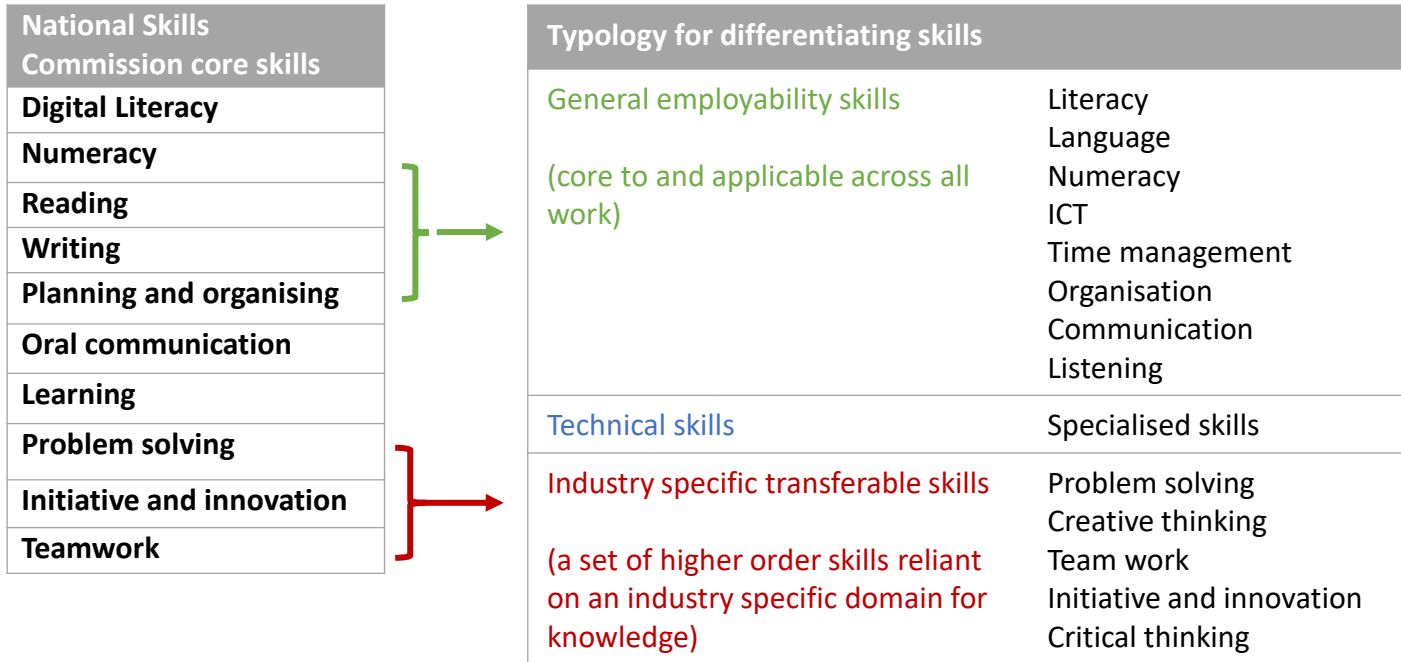
1. Conflation of skills that are crucially different and a lack of differentiation of skills development¹
2. Assumptions that employability is a by-product of participation in training²
3. A lack of accountability for how and where these skills are developed
4. A lack of recognition of the role capital plays in skill development³
5. Abstracted from the world of work

A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY

Framing employability as transversal capability is a way of cutting through the confusion of what skills matter

Existing lists assume these skills are all equally important and similarly developed

We argue that a) all are important to enabling employability and b) differentiating by type of skill is useful for informing intentional and purposeful development opportunities



A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY

Framing employability as transversal capability is a way of cutting through the confusion of what skills matter

Existing lists assume these skills are all equally important and similarly developed

We argue that a) all are important to enabling employability and b) differentiating by type of skill is useful for informing intentional and purposeful development opportunities

For example: A 'problem solving' coordinator of a preschool kindergarten cannot stop an uncontrolled fire on an oil rig (Buchanan et al., [2018](#))

National Skills Commission core skills	Typology for differentiating skills	
Digital Literacy	General employability skills (core to and applicable across all work)	Literacy
Numeracy		Language
Reading		Numeracy
Writing		ICT
Planning and organising		Time management
Oral communication	Organisation	
Learning	Communication	
Problem solving	Technical skills	Specialised skills
Initiative and innovation		Industry specific transferable skills (a set of higher order skills reliant on an industry specific domain for knowledge)
Teamwork		Problem solving
		Creative thinking
	Team work	
	Initiative and innovation	
	Critical thinking	

A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY

Framing employability as transversal capability is a way of cutting through the confusion of what skills matter

Existing lists assume these skills are all equally important and similarly developed

We argue that a) all are important to enabling employability and b) differentiating by type of skill is useful for informing intentional and purposeful development opportunities

For example: A 'problem solving' coordinator of a preschool kindergarten cannot stop an uncontrolled fire on an oil rig (Buchanan et al., [2018](#))

National Skills Commission core skills	Typology for differentiating skills	
Digital Literacy	General employability skills (core to and applicable across all work)	Literacy
Numeracy		Language
Reading		Numeracy
Writing		ICT
Planning and organising		Time management
Oral communication		Organisation
Learning	Technical skills Industry specific transferable skills (a set of higher order skills reliant on an industry specific domain for knowledge)	Communication
Problem solving		Listening
Initiative and innovation		Specialised skills
Teamwork		Problem solving Creative thinking Team work Initiative and innovation Critical thinking

Industry specific transferable skills

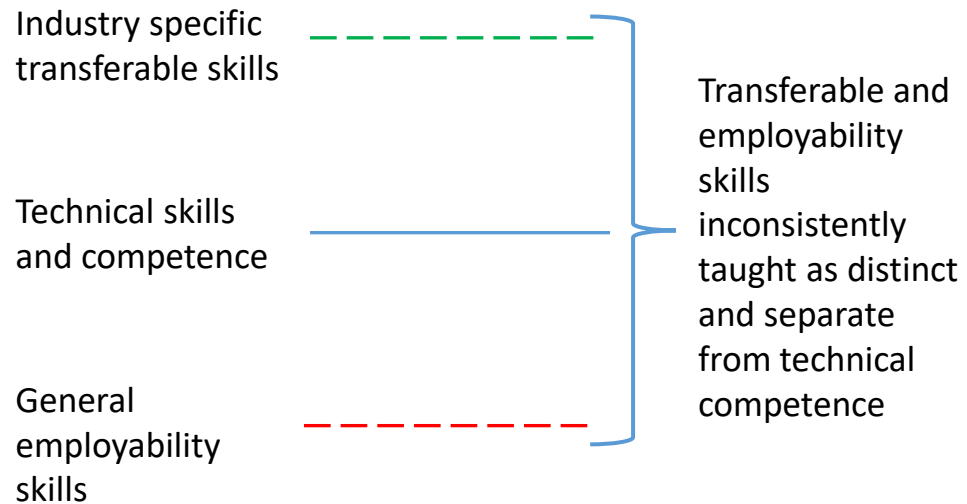
$$\begin{array}{c}
 + \\
 \text{Technical skills} \\
 + \\
 \text{General employability skills} \\
 = \text{Transversal capability}
 \end{array}$$

Capital underpins the conversion of these skills into a transversal capability

CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF EMPLOYABILITY

Applying the concept of transversal capability to the current system

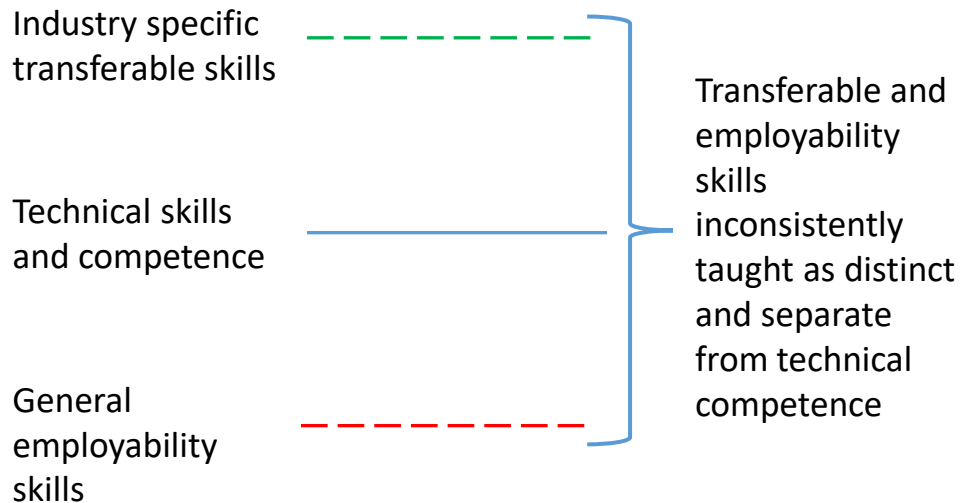
A lack of shared understanding across the system has meant that these have been taught as a distinct set of skills abstracted from the world of work



CURRENT UNDERSTANDING OF EMPLOYABILITY

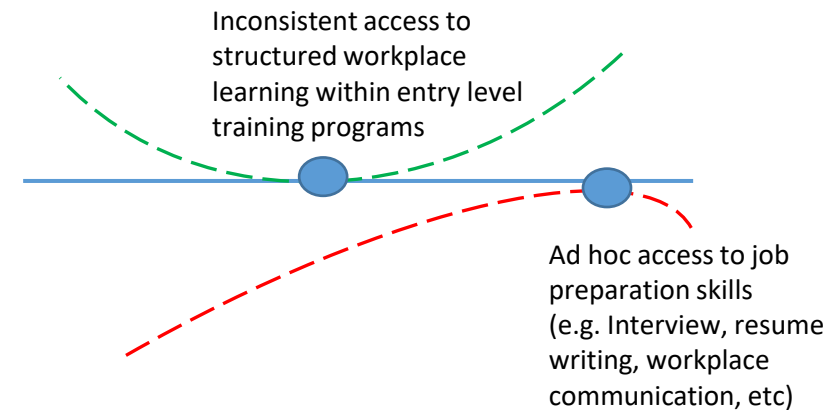
Ad hoc localised programs have been developed in attempt to develop these skills but do not address the systemic issues in the training system

A lack of shared understanding across the system has meant that these have been taught as a distinct set of skills abstracted from the world of work



Programmatic innovation within some providers is not being sustained or converted to routine practice at scale, which is leading to:

- **Inconsistent and inequitable experiences** for young people across the training system
- A lack of **integrated and sustainable** training outcomes for young people across the training system as a whole



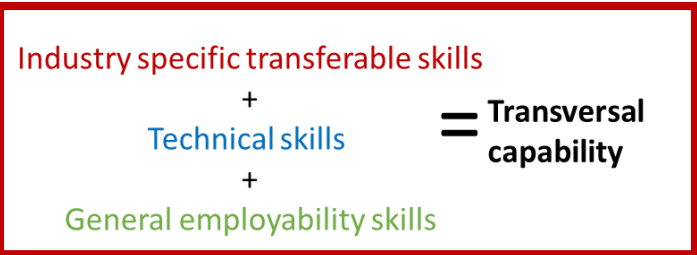
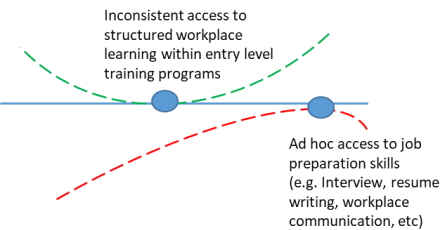
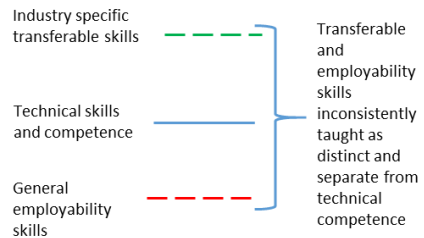
A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY

Framing employability as transversal capability provides clarity for how we discuss where and how these skills are developed

A lack of shared understanding of employability is leading to **inconsistent and inequitable employability development opportunities** and low levels of employability for young people



Transversal capability gives the 'glue' a name providing clarity for how we understand employability and **where and how** these skills are developed



A NEW WAY OF THINKING ABOUT EMPLOYABILITY

Transversal capability allows us to begin thinking about how we can improve the VET system to ensure all young people develop transversal capabilities

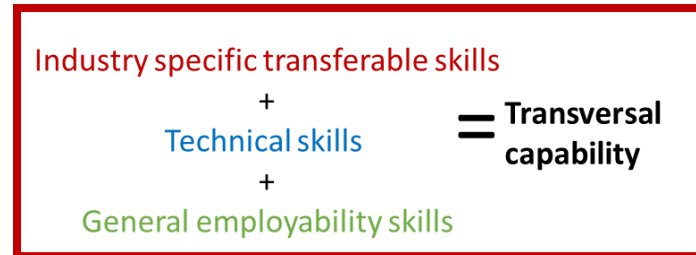
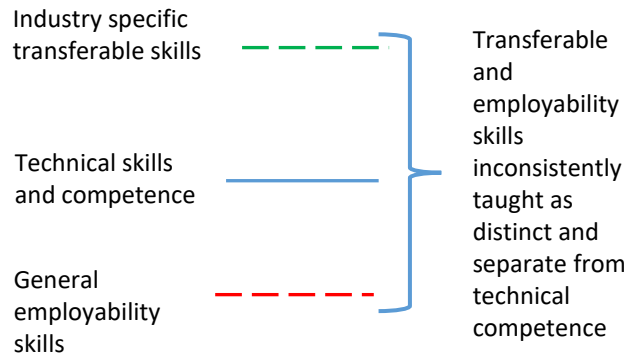
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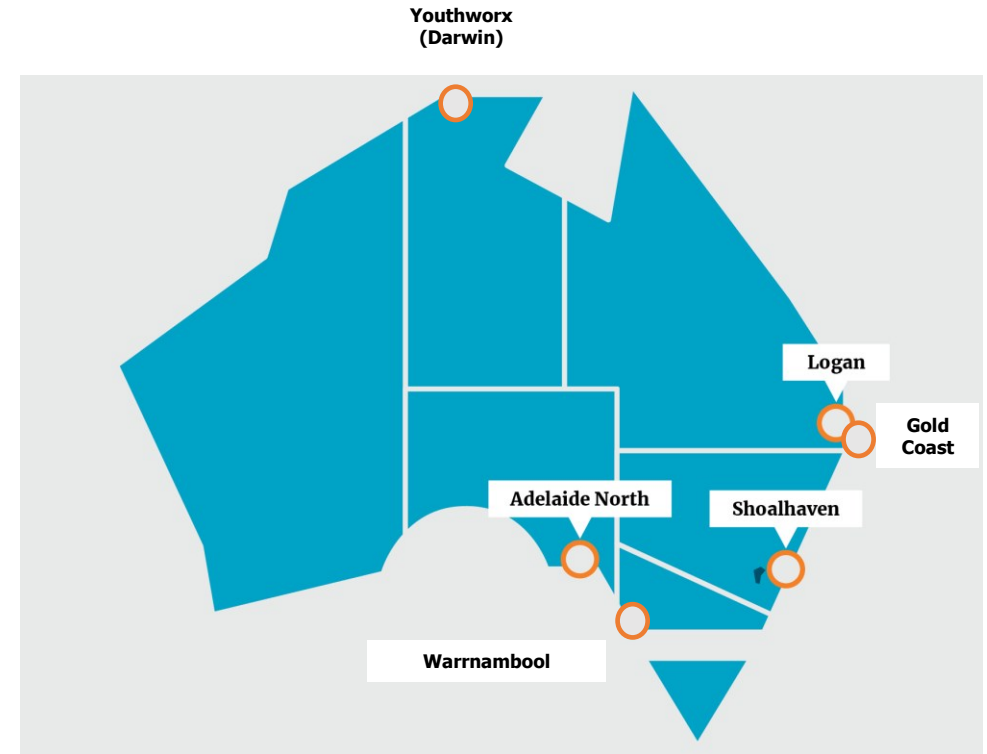
For young people to develop the breadth of complementary technical, general employability and industry specific transferable skills need to be secure and mobile in their careers, **transformation of the training system is needed**



LOOKING AHEAD

Build multi-skilled partnerships for leading the change that tests this new way of framing employability

- Currently working with CICs to co-design pilots to test the framework
- Analysis of reforms taking place to see what opportunities can be leveraged
- Whole scale consideration of the VET system to assess what and where needs to change to have a system that enables the development of transversal capabilities



madeleine.morey@bsl.org.au

National Youth Employment Body

*Strengthening pathways to skilled entry
level work for young people*

System design workshop discussion paper – Transversal Capabilities

April 7th 2022

We acknowledge the Wurrundjeri people of the Kulin nation, the traditional owners of the land on which this document was produced. We respect and honour Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Elders past, present and future. We acknowledge the stories, traditions and living cultures of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples on this land and commit to building a brighter future together.

