

Supporting transitions to employment for young jobseekers

**A resource for program development in south-east
Melbourne by Chisholm and Holmesglen TAFEs**



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The Brotherhood of St Laurence undertook this literature scan on behalf of the Holmesglen and Chisholm TAFEs, who received funding from the Victorian Government’s TAFE Back to Work Fund to develop and pilot a new VET program focusing on unemployed young people who have a senior secondary qualification and/or some vocational qualifications but have not been successful in gaining employment.

Summary

This scan is designed to inform the design and delivery of vocational and workplace training for young unemployed people in areas of metropolitan Melbourne. It reviews literature concerned with labour market conditions for young people in Australia and comparable countries. It incorporates quantitative data and research findings, as well as insights from 'grey' literature that point to effective educational and support responses assisting unemployed young people to transition through vocational training and into employment.

The report shows that many young people are facing challenges in making successful transitions from school to work. They face a labour market that is markedly different from the one experienced by their parents, and continues to change at a rapid pace. Manufacturing is declining while services sectors are growing, with variations across regions. Young people are staying in education longer, yet finding it harder to secure employment. Employers increasingly emphasise the need for candidates to display core 'employability' skills and demonstrate experience in the relevant field, *as well as* to have acquired formal qualifications. The jobs gained by young people are frequently part-time and casual.

While the research provides insights into the sectors that are growing or in decline, it also highlights the challenge of finding an alignment between appropriate training and labour market opportunities. Well-designed programs can make a difference for young jobseekers. In the context of fragmented youth support and career development programs, youth employment programs are critical to enabling young people to understand and navigate the changing labour market and make short and long-term career plans. Through direct links with local employers and knowledge of local labour demand, programs can assist young people to develop an understanding of workplace cultures, enhance their non-vocational skills such as problem solving, teamwork and self-confidence, gain 'real work' experience and connect with training and education providers to develop vocational skills.

Best practice in assisting young jobseekers through programs offering vocational training and workplace training includes the following features, grouped below in two closely related and overlapping themes.

Relationship and capacity building. Here effectiveness is associated with:

- a focus on young people's strengths, goals and ambitions, while providing support to address issues which present barriers to employment
- the creation of trusting relationships between program staff and young participants
- the enhancement of young people's core skills and 'real work' experience
- assisting young people to develop the skills to manage future career transitions over the life course

- enabling young people to achieve sustainable employment outcomes, recognising that not all jobs and employers are created equal.

Program design and delivery. Here effectiveness is associated with:

- clear program goals with defined target groups and outcomes
- flexible delivery methods, and a learning environment conducive to differing learning styles
- strong relationships with employers to:
 - provide opportunities for young people to explore the world of work and future work opportunities linked to their aspirations
 - ensure that programs meet the needs of employers as well as young people
 - create stable and clear local pathways to employment.

1 Introduction

This report provides background research to support the development of a training and employment intervention for young unemployed Victorians¹. It draws upon literature and information from a range of sources to provide context for youth unemployment; an overview of present and future employment opportunities at the national and local levels; and evidence regarding the effectiveness of programs which seek to support young people's transitions from school to work.

The report commences by outlining the broad challenges faced by young jobseekers, and by those seeking to mitigate youth unemployment. Section 2 presents an overview of the changing nature of the labour market, and the expectations of employers. Section 3 draws lessons from research about the provision of vocational training to young people, identifying 'what works' in preparing young people to gain employment through the use of formal vocational training.

Section 4 focuses on factors that are most likely to enable or inhibit a young person's transition into sustainable employment. Of particular importance here are effective work experience programs and how to engage employers. It concludes with some lessons from the experiences of apprentices and trainees about how to improve retention of young people in employment.

Each section presents information from a range of settings –international, national and local (specifically the South Eastern region of Melbourne). Understanding this range of contexts is essential to addressing the opportunities and challenges in attempting to support young people into work.

¹ The context for this research is a Victorian Government funded initiative, TAFE Back to Work (2015–2017). The Brotherhood of St Laurence undertook this literature scan on behalf of the Holmesglen and Chisholm TAFEs, who received funding to develop and pilot a new VET program focusing on unemployed young people who have a senior secondary qualification and/or some vocational qualifications but have not been successful in gaining employment. The initiative includes:

- a new training program that delivers job-ready candidates matched to local jobs
- a new professional development program for TAFE teaching and other staff to increase capability and support the new training product
- building partnerships between TAFE, community organisations and employers to assist in engaging students in the new training program and channelling or transitioning students into work or further study.

Challenges to the transition to work for young people

There are a myriad challenges in facilitating the transition of young people into the workforce. Much literature has focused on these obstacles, with varying emphasis given to the individual young people or their family, community factors or broader systemic and structural factors.

Proximate barriers

Young people looking for work may encounter barriers at the individual level as well as others largely beyond their control. Often the two are interrelated. Young people who struggle with education and the transition to employment frequently experience negative self-image which manifests in low self-confidence, real or perceived isolation, low motivation and the belief that they are 'dumb' or 'stupid'. Physical and psychological issues may arise, often in the wake of bullying in schools or workplaces, and may exacerbate existing ailments. Young people may also be subject to negative aspects of family life such as violence, neglect, instability or low expectations around education or self-improvement. These experiences may delay personal development and/or the development of basic language, literacy and numeracy skills. Young people who experience these negative factors may also become involved in harmful social practices such as alcohol and other substance abuse and criminal activity. Also, some young people are forced to assume adult responsibilities and duties prematurely. These may include caring for siblings, other family members, or even parents; or financial responsibilities to pay rent, bills, or costs associated with child support for young parents. In isolation or in combination these factors can result in a limited understanding of career pathways and a wariness of institutions associated with transition support.

Systemic issues and the nature of employment

The personal or proximate barriers to employment described above should be located within broad structural imperatives that affect the lives of all people. These include cultural, technological, political and ideological factors which shape the ways we understand the acquisition of wealth, the individual and individualism, competitiveness, the inequitable distribution of resources, and the disorientation caused by dramatic technological change. The following section focuses on the systemic issues most directly related to employment and training.

The changing global and national economies have resulted in radically changed forms of employment, in particular the emergence of 'non-standard' jobs characterised by insecurity. The contours of the labour market have also changed, with far fewer entry-level positions that once provided young jobseekers with their first foothold in the labour market.

The entry-level jobs available to young people are increasingly casual, temporary or part-time. Workers in these roles are less likely to have training and development

opportunities, receive no paid leave entitlements and are more likely to have precarious employment conditions and irregular work times. They are also more vulnerable to job losses. While precarious jobs sometimes provide a stepping stone to more secure employment, this is much more likely to occur for those young people who are combining work and study.

In 1990, two-thirds of teenagers who had left full-time education held a full-time job. Now, fewer than half do (dandolopartners 2012). Since 1990 there has been a steep rise in the proportion of young people who are employed part-time but are not also engaged in education or training. Recent estimates are that 26.1% of young people aged 17–24 were not fully engaged in employment, education or training in 2011, up from 23.7% in 2006 (COAG 2013 p. 51). This lack of engagement is disproportionately experienced by young people from low socioeconomic backgrounds, 41.7% of whom are not fully engaged (COAG 2013, p. 9). The majority of job placements made through the previous employment services iteration (Job Services Australia) were for short-term, casual and seasonal jobs, which makes it challenging for young people to remain in steady employment or stay off income support (Job Services Australia 2013).

These young people are in a catch-22 situation. Those precariously employed need further training or education to improve their employment conditions—yet employers are increasingly reluctant to ‘train up’ young labour market entrants, who are more and more regarded as transient (ILO 2015a, p. 32). As a consequence, greater pressure has been placed on vocational training systems not only to meet the technical/skills needs of industry but also to prepare young people for employment—particularly those facing the greatest barriers: early school leavers, the unemployed and those drifting between precarious jobs.

The vocational education and training (VET) sector has also faced other significant challenges (Beddie 2015; Gardner 2014). These include the impacts of marketisation on the quality of education and training, the shift of costs onto students and the role of higher education and training in relation to employment. Beddie’s review of VET research concludes with some important observations, including that:

- the VET system needs to adapt more to the demands of a post-industrial society and changing demographic trends
- vocational training is, in itself, not a panacea to the problems faced by young people ‘in transition’
- the VET sector must evolve beyond competency-based learning, to incorporate more foundational knowledge and building the capacity to learn’ (Beddie 2015, pp. 31–32).

A key challenge is the mismatch between the skills or qualifications acquired in the VET context, and the available jobs. This mismatch can result in people undertaking roles for which they are overqualified and, hence, occupying entry-level jobs more suited to low-qualified jobseekers who find themselves unable to enter the labour market. While the increased participation in VET has resulted in more young people with post-school qualifications, it has also been accompanied by training ‘churn’—young people gaining

multiple, unsuitable low level qualifications in the belief that these will secure employment. Their hopes are often thwarted, with competition for entry-level jobs intensifying at the same time as the currency of much accredited learning is diminished (Quintini 2011; ILO 2015a). The Foundation for Young Australians (2013) has highlighted this paradox of increasing educational attainment and achievement alongside growing youth unemployment, labour underutilisation and casual employment.

Similarly, researchers on competency-based learning argue that ‘in spite of more than two decades of reform and investment by government, the links between qualifications (particularly in unregulated occupations) and jobs remain very weak’ (Wheelahan et al. 2015, p. 15). Indeed, they claim that only one-third of VET graduates gravitate to jobs associated with their qualification, and assert the need to build stronger links between education and work. Yet at the same time, others identify lifelong learning and the capacity to adapt to new types of employment as critical skills required by young people into the future (Cuervo & Wyn 2011).

Lastly Australia’s approach to career guidance is siloed and fragmented, failing to adequately support young people, who frequently experience doubt, anxiety and bewilderment as to how to negotiate a challenging labour market (AWPA 2014a; ILO 2015a). This fragmentation is also found in the relatively weak links between educational institutions generally—be they secondary schools or VET providers—and employers and the wider community.

2 Labour market trends and changing employer expectations

Key messages

- Labour markets across the world are rapidly changing. While the rise of new technologies presents opportunities for skilled workers, particularly in the services and financial industries, there is a significant decline in opportunities in traditional 'blue collar' or low-skilled industries.
- While local labour markets follow similar trends, it is important to examine changes specific to the local area.
- In the South East Melbourne region, manufacturing jobs are decreasing, while growth sectors include retail and care services.
- The jobs available to young people are changing: young people are increasingly locked into insecure and part-time employment.
- Employers' attitudes and needs are also changing, with growing emphasis on non-vocational skills and personal attributes—which may present challenges for young jobseekers unfamiliar with workplace cultures and expectations.

Global trends

The current global employment environment has been shaped by advances in information technology, communication and transport systems. These changes have freed production systems from geographical constraints, and enabled more integrated and flexible mass production utilising systems of distribution through a diminishing number of transnational companies. The 'post-industrial' era has been characterised by decreasing heavy industry (particularly in the West) and the corresponding expansion of financial and service industries. In this context computerised fabrication, production and distribution has required higher skilled labour, at the expense of traditional blue collar workers. In the broadest sense, recent decades have witnessed the shedding of jobs at a faster rate than the market's capacity to replace them (CEDA 2015).

In combination these trends continue to hasten the decline of heavy industry and traditional forms of labour and distribution. Activity in these fields is also subject to less regulation by governments (CSIRO 2012) while at the same time the market struggles to determine pricing and control information in the context of high levels of digitisation and instantaneous exchange (Mason 2015).

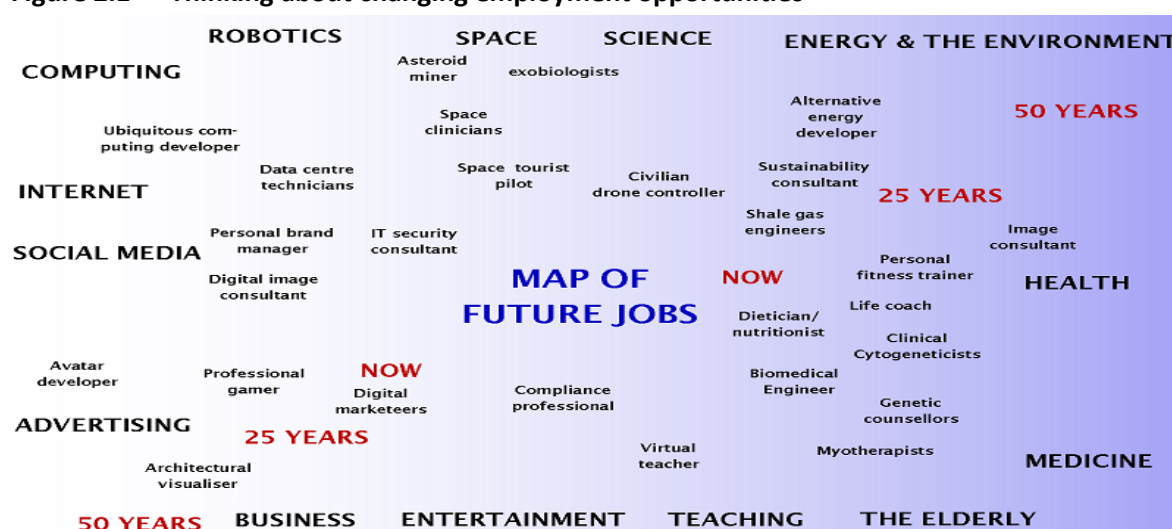
The ILO reports a deteriorating employment outlook—notwithstanding the uneven results across regions. Youth unemployment continues to worsen while overall labour force participation rates are stagnating or falling (ILO 2015a, p. 19).

A number of international studies have sought to outline trends in the global economy, including projections of emerging industries, the state of the labour market for young people and the associated skills that will likely be in high demand. Developments likely to fundamentally reshape the global employment landscape include changes in:

- digitisation and connectivity
- robotics and automation
- vast increases in the capacity to collect and store data
- nano- and biotechnology (in multiple fields: medicine/pharmaceuticals, agriculture)
- industrial processing, waste management, engineering, food production etc.
- renewable energy and other environmental technologies
- personal and health care services (Allianz 2010)

The University of Kent Careers and Employability Service provides an interesting visual depiction of these trends across industries, and what this might mean for the associated occupations (see Figure 2.1). Although it is skewed towards ‘professional’ roles and omits numerous occupations associated with health care and environmental sustainability, it provides a vivid image of projected changes.

Figure 2.1 Thinking about changing employment opportunities



Source: University of Kent Careers and Employability Service 2016

The text accompanying this depiction of change effectively captures the significance and uncertainty of the change underway:

Some jobs are currently under threat as ‘progress’ sidelines their expertise: milkmen, paperboys, printers. Other jobs were unknown years ago: web designers, professional athletes, media consultants, biotechnologists. The future holds as yet unheard of job roles within IT, alternative energy and global commerce (University of Kent Careers and Employability Service 2016).

The increase in automated production has compounded a steady reduction in the demand for labour to complete routine tasks (CEDA 2015). These forces have also decreased the proportion of revenue going to labour, and increased the proportion of revenue going to capital. In Australia, these macro trends have resulted in an economic shift from the manufacture of goods to the provision of services, which are less affected by off-shoring and automation.

The impact of automation on the Australian labour market is forecast to continue, and even accelerate. The Committee for Economic Development of Australia has stated that there is 'a high probability that as much as 40 percent of the jobs in Australia could be replaced by computers within a decade or two'. In particular, 'jobs that involve low levels of social interaction, low levels of creativity, or low levels of mobility and dexterity are more likely to be replaced with automation' (CEDA 2015, p. 8).

Pricewaterhouse Coopers research (2015) suggests that automation will have a significant impact on specific professions, potentially affecting 44% of Australian jobs with over five million positions at risk. The roles most at risk will include:

- accounting clerks and bookkeepers (97.5% probability of being automated)
- checkout operators (96.9%)
- general office support e.g. data entry and mail (96.1%)
- personal assistants and secretaries (92.4%)
- farm and forestry workers (92.5%) (PwC 2015, pp. 10–11).

Importantly, this research also identifies the professions *least* at risk of automation, including:

- doctors, nurses and midwives (combined 1–2% probability of being automated)
- education, health and welfare managers (1%)
- ICT managers (3.5%)
- school teachers (4%)
- engineers (4%) (PwC 2015, p. 12).

More generally, the literature predicts a 'move away from a more traditional understanding of skills as narrow, specific set of competencies' (Wallis 2015, p. 9) and a requirement of greater technological expertise so that 'digital skills will become a new basic skillset in the way that reading and writing are today' (CEDA 2015, p. 12). Finally, interpersonal and affective skills will increasingly be an essential component of any job (CEDA 2015; Wallis 2015). There is evidence—revealed in the sections below—that these employee attributes are already more important than 'hard skills' for many employers when recruiting.

National trends

In Australia, a number of structural changes are shaping the ways in which young people transition from school to work:

- Secondary school attainment and participation in higher education are increasing
- Participation in VET and apprenticeships is decreasing
- Full-time jobs have declined while part-time and casual employment is increasing
- Graduates are finding it more difficult to find employment
- Transition to full-time work for young people is occurring at an older age (Skattebol et al. 2015).

There have been related changes in employers' requirements for entry-level candidates to have completed high school or have post-school qualifications. This is a pressing concern, given that for those who did not study beyond year 10 the workforce participation rate is just 56.3% (DoE 2015). Historically, increased participation in education has also been related to a soft labour market. At February 2015, the proportion of Australian 15–24 year olds in full-time education was 51.8%, the highest on record (DoE 2015). The unemployment rate for the 15–24 age group was 13.9%, and this age group accounted for 29.8% of the total pool of long-term unemployed (DoE 2015).

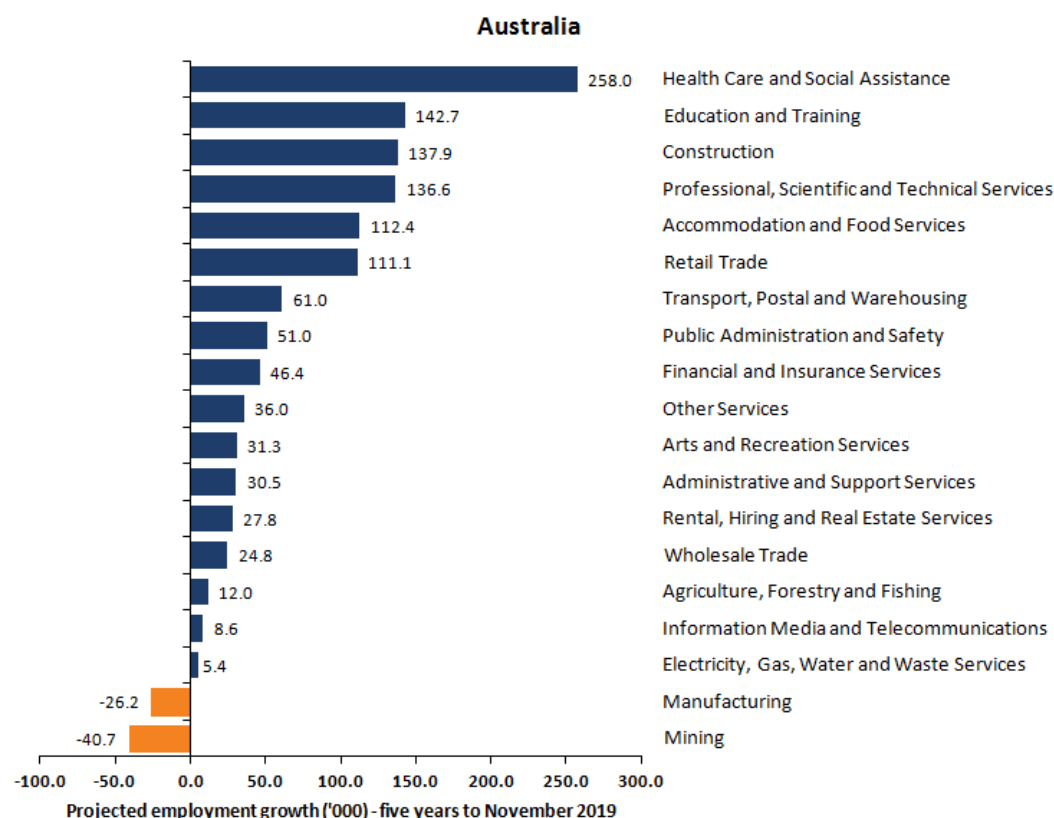
In line with the global trends, Australia's greatest growth industries for the five years to 2014 were:

- health care and social assistance
- professional, scientific and technical services
- education and training
- construction
- retail trade (DoE 2015).

Of these industries, construction, which accounts for 9% of jobs nationally (DoE 2015), is the most strongly related to the VET sector. Continued growth in this sector is forecast, although a projected increase in the proportion of building construction occurring off-site is likely to significantly alter the labour requirements (DoEDev2015).

The Department of Employment has projected the national employment growth by industry for the five years to 2019:

Figure 2.2 Projected national employment growth by industry to 2019



Source: DoE 2015

The stand-out growth industry in Australia—and internationally (ILO 2015b, p. 23)—is health care and social assistance, which is forecast to generate one in every five new jobs. The top five occupations in this field are registered nurses, carers, aged and disabled carers, child, nursing support and personal care workers and receptionists (DoE 2015). The sector has a high rate of educational attainment: more than four in five workers have completed post-school study and 45% have a bachelor degree or higher².

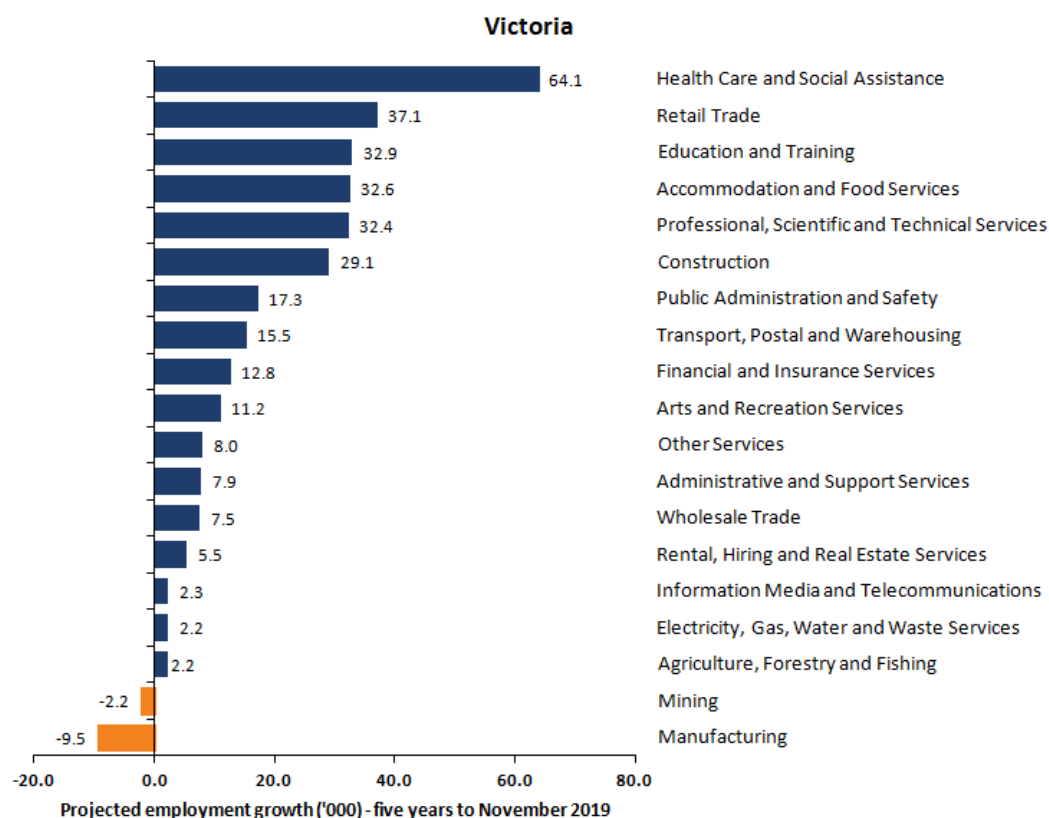
Victorian trends

In Victoria, the strongest employment growth in the five years to 2014 was in rental hiring and real estate services (up by 38.6%), public administration and safety (up by 28.7%) and arts and recreation services (up by 18.4%), while manufacturing employment fell by 2.3% (DoE 2015).

Projected employment changes in Victoria by industry over the next five years are shown in Figure 2.3.

² Because of the significant future opportunities for care roles, the sector's roles and skill requirements are outlined in Appendix B Specific considerations for the care industry.

Figure 2.3 Projected Victorian employment growth by industry to 2019



Source: DoE 2015

Victoria mirrors the national and global trend towards increasing jobs in health care and social assistance. Employer surveys commissioned by the Victorian Government indicate that professional health roles are also among the most difficult to fill. Other difficult to fill positions include the relatively skilled occupations of:

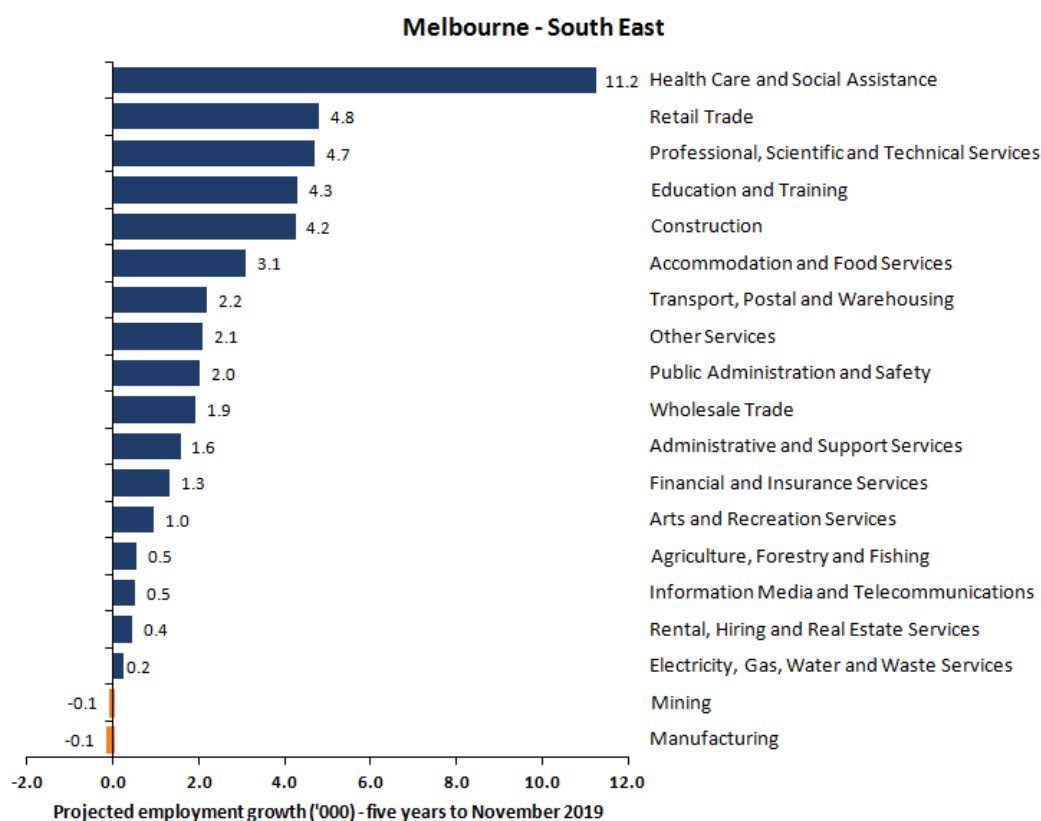
- auto and engineering trade workers
- education professionals
- technical and trades workers (Wallis 2015).

Local trends

According to the Department of Employment, the projected regional employment growth by industry for the South East Melbourne region in the five years to November 2019 will be as shown in Figure 2.4.

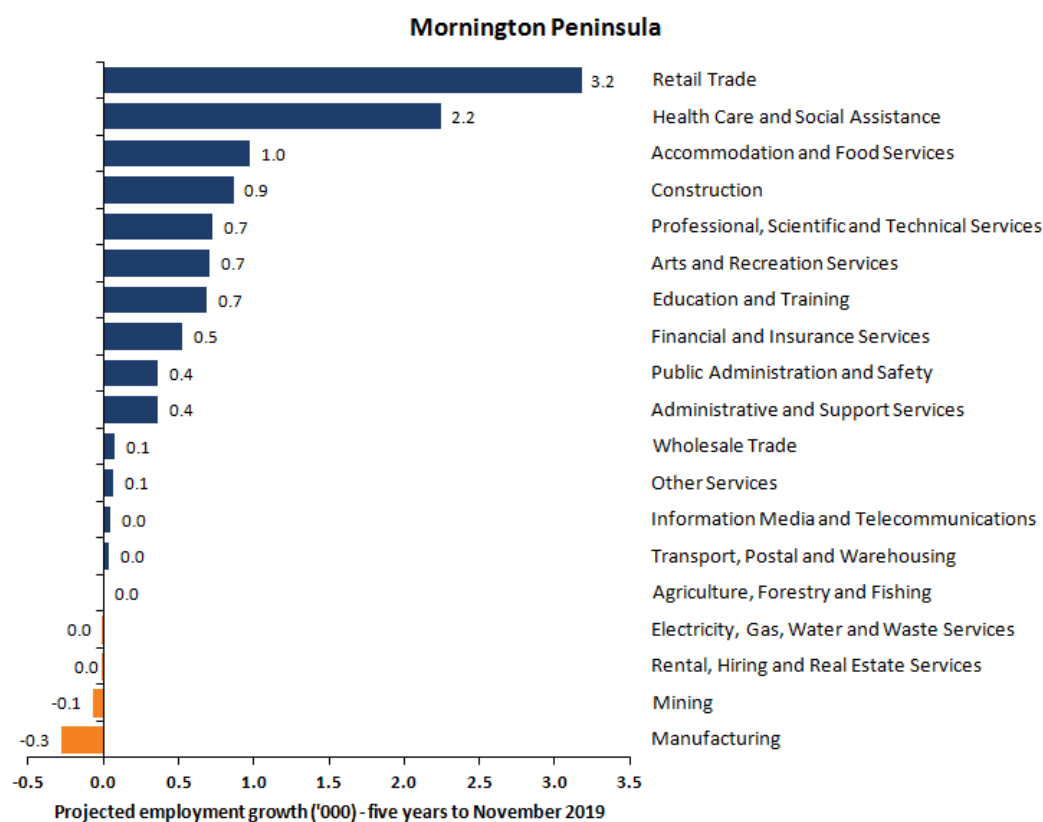
In South East Melbourne, health care and social assistance will grow by 11,200 positions, which represents a greater proportion of all new jobs than in the projections for Australia and Victoria.

Figure 2.4 Projected employment growth by industry in South East Melbourne to 2019



Source: DoE 2015

By contrast, the distribution of projected jobs for the Mornington Peninsula is different (see Figure 2.5), highlighting the importance of examining local labour markets.

Figure 2.5 Projected employment growth by industry in the Mornington Peninsula region to 2019

Source: DoE 2015

Even though there will be growth in health care and social assistance jobs in the Mornington Peninsula, the retail job growth will be larger. Indeed this area accounts for 3200 of the 4800 positions projected to emerge in the entire Melbourne South East region.

Overall, it is clear that the majority of new jobs in the South East will be in various service industries, particularly the health care and social assistance sector (see Appendix B Specific considerations for the care industry for further information), and in construction.

These job growth trends provide insights valuable for the design of programs that seek to assist young people to find employment in the short term and also to develop longer term work and learning pathways. However, there can be a mismatch or tension between future projected jobs and the existing industries which provide significant employment opportunities in particular regions.

Employment trends for young people

Australia wide

The broader trends in the education and employment experiences of young Australians include:

- increasing rates of unemployment and underemployment (particularly those aged 15–19 years) since the 2008 global financial crisis
- growing periods of transition between education and employment and diminishing prospects of finding full-time jobs
- increasing and disproportionate rates of casualisation
- sizeable rates of young people not engaged full-time in education or employment (approximately 1 in 5), and not participating in any education, training and employment at all (1 in 10)
- young people with post-school degrees experiencing more difficulty finding their preferred employment, and so filling lower skilled jobs
- a significant drop in those undertaking apprenticeships and traineeships (AWPA 2014a, pp. 6–7; AWPA 2014b, p. 5; NCVET 2016)

South East Melbourne region

Recent Department of Education research provides an overview of the overall labour market conditions for the South East Melbourne region (DoE 2014a, p. 30). Insights which may be relevant for local young jobseekers include the following:

- high levels of disengaged groups (e.g. jobless families, less educated, recently arrived migrants, and people with low levels of English proficiency)
- a need for jobseekers to be job ready, with better English and employability skills, with work experience, training and good written/personal presentation seen as valuable assets
- opportunities in growth industries (notably health care and social assistance)
- anticipated demand for occupations such as cooks and waiters, sales assistants, general clerks, sales representatives, child carers and registered nurses.

Local demographic data relevant to youth employment

Data from the 2011 Census sheds more light on employment, education, participation, and the social context for young people in the six Victorian local government areas within the catchment area for the proposed intervention: the City of Kingston, Frankston City, Mornington Peninsula Shire, City of Greater Dandenong, City of Casey, and Cardinia Shire³. Key findings from this data are as follows:

³ See Appendix A Key indicators for South East Melbourne region for details

- The municipalities have mixed levels of advantage and disadvantage. In particular, the City of Greater Dandenong ranks the lowest in Victoria on the SEIFA measure, indicating very high levels of disadvantage, while areas within Frankston (Southern) and Kingston (North West) are relatively affluent.
- The City of Greater Dandenong, City of Casey and Cardinia Shire have relatively young populations with 13.7%, 14.5% and 13.7% respectively of their populations aged 15–24 (the national average being 13.3%).
- Greater Dandenong and Casey have a high percentage of residents born in non-English speaking countries (52%, 27%), and a high percentage who speak a language other than English at home (61.2%, 29.9%).
- Of these five LGAs, only the City of Kingston has lower youth disengagement (4.5%) than the Victorian (5.8%) or Melbourne (5.2%) averages.
- Youth unemployment rates are higher in the South East region of Melbourne as a whole (15.1%) and in the Frankston plus Mornington Peninsula region (combined) (16.2%), than the state average (14.8%).
- Manufacturing is by far the main sector of current employment across the six LGAs, with construction also figuring in the Mornington Peninsula Shire.

The Department of Education (2014a) identified a key challenge for the region in the facilitation of a transition from the manufacturing sector to the growing services sector. Other challenges for services assisting young people into employment include English language proficiency.

Employers' experience of recruitment

Much data focuses on the changing expectations and experiences of employers, and particularly in relation to young people. Nation-wide surveys by the Australian Department of Employment reveal that employers consider the following to be the most important factors in employing new staff:

- attitude to work (36% of employers)
- work experience (13%)
- responsibility and reliability (12%)
- presentation (11%)
- further education and training (10%)
- job search and application skills (8%)
- realistic work expectations (5%)
- negative and counterproductive employer attitudes (3%) (DoE 2014).

The Victorian Skills and Training Employer Survey (Wallis 2015) also reveals some key factors influencing recruitment. Just over half of the 5,700 Victorian employers surveyed had recruited in the preceding 12 months; and most of that recruitment (61%) was driven by the need to cover retirements and staff turnover rather than the creation of new jobs (p. 11). Regional employers were found to be more likely to recruit for attrition, whereas metropolitan employers were more likely to recruit to address skill needs; however this result could be due to differences in the size and types of businesses. Around 19% of those consulted had recruited in order to address a particular skills shortage in their business.

Almost two-thirds of workplaces reported difficulties in recruiting staff, with the most difficult occupations to fill being health professionals (because of a reluctance to relocate), auto and engineering trades, education professionals, and other technical trades workers, all mainly because of the lack of suitable applicants. The survey revealed also that the greatest difficulty in recruitment was experienced in industries with many smaller businesses, notably accommodation and food services (54%), and rental, hiring and real estate services (46%) (Wallis 2015, p. 12). Notwithstanding some variation between metropolitan and regional employers, the main drivers of recruitment difficulties as identified by employers were:

- applicants' lack of relevant job-specific skills (metropolitan 67%; regional 61%)
- applicants' lack of relevant experience (66%; 58%)
- lack of available applicants/no applicants (46%; 53%)
- applicants' lack of basic language, literacy or numeracy skills (23%; 14%)
- undesirable geographic location (14%; 19%)
- applicants' reluctance to relocate (6%; 18%).

It is interesting that three of these factors may relate to barriers at the employer end, such as the location of the job offered and perhaps undesirable conditions resulting in limited applicants.

These findings were echoed in surveys of employers in the South Eastern Melbourne Priority Employment Area by the Department of Employment (DoE 2014a). In that area, the majority of applicants (78%) failed to progress to interviews. Among the main reasons why applicants were deemed unsuitable were:

- lack of relevant experience (61%)
- insufficient qualifications or training (24%)
- poorly written/presented application (19%)
- lack of 'soft skills' (18%) (DoE 2013, p. 24).

Another result from this survey was that a sizeable percentage of employers (39%) opted for informal recruitment methods such as word of mouth (DoE 2013, p. 25). This

style of recruitment may create barriers for jobseekers with limited social or employment networks such as young people, particularly those facing other forms of disadvantage.

Other potential barriers to young people's employment at the 'employer end' include:

- employers' perceptions about the cost of training young people, lack of staff to supervise and fluctuating workloads (Marsh & Perkins 2006, pp. v–vi)
- perceptions that young applicants are unsuitable due to inadequate job-readiness, lack of work ethic and commitment and lack of relevant skills (Marsh & Perkins 2006, pp. 13–14; VECCI & BSL 2009, p. 3)
- employers' feeling that there is a lack of support (financial and practical) for them to employ disadvantaged youth (VECCI & BSL 2009, p. 4).

Much of the foregoing has focused in general terms about factors influencing recruitment. In the next section we focus more directly on the skills required to gain and retain employment.

The importance of non-vocational skills

A report on youth employment prepared for the International Labour Organization (Brewer 2013, pp. 6–14) identified the following skill sets as important:

- **basic/foundational skills:** the minimum literacy and numeracy skills that enable employment and are prerequisites for continuing to learn and acquire transferable skills that improve the chances of securing better employment
- **vocational or technical skills:** specialised skills aligned to a specific vocation or task
- **professional/personal skills:** individual attributes that impact on work habits, including honesty, work ethic and integrity.

Brewer (2013) introduces a fourth set of skills, **core work skills**. These skills are understood by employers and policy makers to be increasingly important, particularly for young jobseekers in the current labour market.

Core work skills represent a synthesis of approaches from numerous (mainly developed) countries. These are known, variously, as 'essential skills' (New Zealand), 'key competencies/employability skills' (Australia), 'basic skills' (United States), 'critical enabling skills' (Singapore), 'trans-disciplinary goals' (Switzerland), and 'transferable skills' (France), among others (Brewer 2013, p. 7). Core work skills comprise four main subthemes:

- '*Learning to learn*' refers to an inquisitive outlook that enables the acquisition of knowledge, skills, aptitudes, and attitudes. This open disposition manifests in the ability to think abstractly, analyse information, work independently and better plan, manage and adapt.

- *'Communication'* refers to the capacity through personal interaction and a host of media to share, listen, observe, exchange, articulate and influence. This, ultimately, is a measure of how an individual is able to maintain an understanding of their changing surrounds.
- *'Teamwork'* skills are those that result in respectful, mutually beneficial and fruitful collaboration where goals, responsibilities, resource and time allocation are negotiable.
- *'Problem solving'* refers to the capacity to calmly assess and evaluate information or situations, to consider consequences and the range of options, before devising, planning and implementing responses (Brewer 2013, pp. 7–13).

The proposition is that if young people can foster these core work skills, then they are well placed to realise the combined potential of all previous formal and informal learning and skills development.

Similarly, in an international review, 'employability skills' are defined as an individual's qualities, abilities and capacity to maintain employment and make progress in the workforce (Lauder 2013). More specifically, the Bliip Global Employability Skills Model (Lauder 2013, p. 15) identified five clusters of employability skills (see Table 2.1).

Table 2.1 Five clusters of employability skills and their characteristics

Cluster	Characterised by:
Personal attributes	Honesty/integrity, social responsibility, motivation/enthusiasm, self-awareness/self-management, reliability/responsibility, positive attitude, resilience, autonomy/independence, and personal presentation
Working with others	Communicating with others, leading and influencing, respect for diversity, team/group outcomes, engaging networks, connectivity/social intelligence and conflict resolution
Achieving at work	Professionalism/work ethic, customer service, written communication, numeracy, using tools and technology, critical thinking/problem solving, understanding context of work, working safely, finding and managing information, planning, organising, implementing and delivering results
Future skills	Tech savvy, using new media communication, making sense of information, navigating trends and choices, connection and collaboration, being a global citizen, personal mastery, career architecture
Learning skills	Learning at work, adaptability, flexibility and lifelong learning

Source: Lauder 2013

The importance of developing these 'core' or 'employability' skills for young jobseekers is underscored by research with employers. Department of Employment sponsored

research lists attributes that are attractive to employers, regardless of the industry or role. They want employees who:

- can communicate effectively
- have teamwork or problem solving skills
- show initiative or enterprise
- can plan and organise work
- have good capabilities in working with technology (DoE 2015a, p. 12)

In Victoria, Wallis (2015) found employers identify a similar mix of skill shortfalls in many potential candidates:

- job specific technical skills (68%)
- soft skills (47%)
- management skills (43%)
- basic IT skills (21%)
- science, technology, engineering and math (STEM) (20%)
- language, literacy and numeracy skills (19%) (Wallis 2015, p. 5)

Similar findings were reached locally through the Department of Education Survey of Employers' Recruitment Experiences, South Eastern Melbourne Priority Employment Area (2013) which ranked the attributes deemed essential in an employee.

Employability skills were considered the most important (56%), with experience ranked second (41%), above 'hard' skills such as qualifications, tickets, licences (23%), technical or job specific skills (13%) and customer service skills (9%). A challenge for interventions to assist young jobseekers to enter the labour market will be how to help young people to develop these attributes.

Holmesglen TAFE conducted industry consultations in 2015 with 48 local employers across the retail sector (20), hospitality (12), horticulture (5), and building and maintenance, administration, automotive, packaging, warehousing, child care and animal care. Though the data gathering methods were informal, the themes echoed the findings from other research. These included an emphasis on candidates' non-vocational skills such as 'motivation and initiative', enthusiasm and a desire to learn', 'positive attitude', 'friendliness and trustworthiness'.

These responses resonate strongly with the core work skills framework outlined, emphasising the value placed on a young person's capacity to 'learn to learn', communicate, collaborate, and solve problems.

3 Engaging young jobseekers: lessons from VET

Key messages

- A flexible approach to training—across pedagogy, curricula and assessment—is important, taking into account young people’s strengths, goals and interests.
- Recruiting and engaging young people may require ‘soft’ entry pathways, which include workplace ‘tasters’, work experience, accredited or pre-accredited training and mentoring.
- The previous negative experiences of some young people with formal learning or employment support should be recognised.
- Programs need to provide links to ‘real’ work contexts and focus on developing employability skills and language, literacy and numeracy.
- Young people may respond better to a ‘hands-on’ approach in an informal setting with clear goals and follow-up.
- Trust and good relationships between staff and young people are essential.
- Programs need to be tailored to the social needs and cultural contexts of the young participants.

Principles and strategies for assisting young learners

The VET sector has long been involved with interventions assisting disenfranchised young people provided either through the VET institution or through links or partnerships with external support services and programs. Reviews of effective ‘re-engagement’ programs that feature vocational training have identified key attributes, and these are summarized below.

Reaching and engaging young people

Many young people have an aversion to structured learning: one provider noted that a considerable number require ‘something that is completely not to do with a course’ as an initial form of engagement (McCrone et al. 2013, p. 23). This affirms support in some contexts for ‘soft entry’/preparatory courses (Davies, Lamb & Doecke 2011, pp. 20–21). Accessibility is also noted, with effective outreach including:

- referral by word of mouth and through peers, including through social media such as Facebook and Twitter (McCrone et al. 2013)
- use of community settings (Bowman & Callan 2012), including engaging with young people at the support service they are presently using (Nelson & O’Donnell 2012).

- flexible enrolment, through sensitivity to a young person's context, resulting, for example, in frequent 'rolling' course commencement dates (Nelson & O'Donnell 2012).

It is important to minimise withdrawal in the period between referral and course commencement by active support for the young person at this time, often through collaboration with support services / community stakeholders (McCrone et al. 2014). Volkoff et al. (2008) discuss the problem of engaging certain groups who display 'TAFE isn't for me' attitudes and highlight the need for contextualisation. They note that some TAFEs have contextualised vocational programs within a 'life skills' area relevant to the potential learner group—for example by incorporating a childcare training module for young refugee mothers.

Volkoff et al. (2008) identify strategies adopted by TAFEs to facilitate access for disadvantaged groups, including customisation of the curriculum, assessment and length of courses. In addition, blended delivery of courses was also considered important — such as incorporating literacy, numeracy and personal development components into vocational courses, tailored for particular learners. A 'scaffolding' of non-educational support components was also necessary. Other strategies included off-campus delivery or facilitating transport to campus.

Course duration

In 2011 and 2012, the UK Department of Business, Innovation and Skills provided funding to training providers, colleges and third sector organisations for programs aimed at young adults aged 19–24 not in education employment or training (NEET). They were to offer 'flexible, vocationally-oriented programs, personalised learning and individual intensive support with an emphasis on developing employability skills'. The aim was to assist participants to reach a point at which they could undertake further training and progress into an apprenticeship or other employment (McCrone et al. 2013). In their review of the funded programs, McCrone et al. found that most were short and part-time, ranging from one day to five months depending on the provider. However they were commonly flexible and the length depended on learners' ability and needs. Weekly hours of attendance were capped at 16 hours to enable participants to comply with income support requirements. Some providers reported concerns that the funding requirements were too restrictive as they did not allow participants sufficient time for work experience or development of trusting relationships that enable holistic and individualised engagement (McCrone et al. 2013).

Other research indicates that longer time frames may be needed to accommodate some learners' needs. Allowing young people varying amounts of time to complete a qualification has also been found to be important for inclusiveness (Nelson & O'Donnell 2012).

Relevant and engaging course content

As Davies et al. (2011) note, young people's past negative experiences of learning, particularly formal learning, should be taken into consideration when designing courses content. For many, those experiences were characterised by difficult and often strained relations with teachers, disinterest and a lack of stimulation (Davies, Lamb & Doecke 2011). Others emphasise responding to the goals and interests that are valued and meaningful to the student (Thomas, Gray & McGinty 2012). A range of pro-engagement factors emerge, including flexibility, a high degree of choice, personalised attention and hands-on, practical, interactive and varied content that is directly related to the world of work. Such content would help develop employability skills, and incorporate meaningful contact with potential employers. Importantly, the curriculum must have industry value, prepare learners for the world of work and also enable young people to see the relevance of their learning (Bielby et al. 2012).

Varied and informal settings and modes of delivery

Research also shows that young people who have previously experienced difficulties in education respond better to physical settings that are less institutional and school-like (McCrone et al. 2013). Indeed, many young people feel alienated within large institutions and much prefer smaller, more intimate educational environments (Myconos 2014b; Nelson & O'Donnell 2012). An effective means of engaging young people while developing employability skills is to combine modes of delivery. Such variation may include online technologies and distance learning, though caution should be exercised in selecting devices and hardware, designing online platforms, and ensuring accessibility and readiness of trainers to facilitate learning online. While new communications media can enhance the educational experience, such technologies work best when playing a complementary role to guided face-to-face engagement (Myconos 2014a). Other modes are regarded favourably, including classroom learning, hands-on workplace-based training, and group work. The last, according to Bowman and Callan (2012), appeals to those in Indigenous communities where mutual support is highly valued. Fundamentally, courses should as much as possible be related to real work contexts (McCrone et al. 2013; Davies, Lambe & Doecke 2011; Bowman & Callan 2012).

Incremental assessment

Others emphasise assessment that is practical, continuous, with clear relevance to real situations, and without unnecessary formality (Bielby et al. 2012; Bowman & Callan 2012). This assessment should be incremental and designed to map all progress; necessarily broken down into short units/modules with achievement formally recognised at each stage (McCrone et al. 2013). Self-paced learning has also been identified as a valuable ingredient (Bowman & Callan 2012), and can work in a context of incremental progression towards a qualification where the young person experiences a sense of success and direction (Bielby et al. 2012). Where possible, progressive outcomes should identify the gains students make over time in both 'soft skills' and

tangible formal outcomes (Myconos 2014b). This should involve the setting of ‘realistic, measurable and motivating targets properly tracked’ (Nelson & O’Donnell 2012).

Clear goals and expectations for learning with effective follow-up processes

Closely associated with incremental assessment is the use of ‘scaffolded learning’ or ‘building on small steps and constantly revising in order to consolidate initial gains’ and confidence (Bowman & Callan 2012, p. 23). This also entails clear goal setting, monitoring, reviewing learning plans and follow-up, explicit use of learner analysis tools, and agreement among collaborating support services on the resources and people require to carry out the approach (Bowman & Callan 2012).

Ideally, the program assists the learners to develop clear and realistic goals (specific expertise may be required) (Bowman & Callan 2012). Lastly, the programs most likely to attract enrolments and achieve high retention are those that accommodate the ‘freedom’ to (re)mold around clients’ goals (McCurdy & Daro 2011) while maintaining clear structures and expectations. Bednarz (2014) observed that formally structured organisation and monitoring of apprentices was associated with higher retention.

Systematic attention to foundation skills, including literacy and numeracy

It is imperative that training addresses not only the technical skills needed to attain competency for a specific qualification or vocation, but also ‘foundation skills’. These comprise basic language, literacy and numeracy skills, as well as the employability skills so sought by employers (e.g. teamwork, planning, problem solving, communication). Moreover, these need to be addressed in a sustained and systematic manner, in recognition that they are at least as important as the technical competencies for which the training materials are often designed. Indeed, it is important to acknowledge the symbiotic relationship between foundation and technical skills, where the former may be a necessary precondition for the latter (Roberts & Wignall 2010 cited in Bowman & Callan 2012).

A holistic approach that addresses educational and non-educational needs

Much research emphasises the need for comprehensive interventions that address multiple issues of disengagement and disadvantage simultaneously, including structural barriers and personal needs as well as learning needs. A range of interventions and responses are needed depending on cohorts, locations and other local factors—there is no single solution for every young person who struggles or refuses to engage in VET opportunities.

Vocational training alone is not a panacea for a young person experiencing difficulties. It is important that educators are also equipped with the skills needed to at least identify, if not address, barriers to learning. Research in secondary and alternative education settings is instructive, showing that ‘when teachers lack genuine understanding of their homeless learners’ experiences with domestic violence, this can contribute to the

learners' disengagement in the classroom' (Dhillon 2011; Symons & Smith 1995; Hanson-Peterson 2012). Indeed, stability, physical and emotional wellbeing, housing, and financial security are important precursors to learning (McCrone et al. 2013; Barrett 2012).

The message here is that VET providers (including employers hosting apprenticeships) need to be proficient in responding to non-educational support needs, whether in-house or by engaging effectively with external networks. There is a need to ensure that the learners who require support are targeted effectively and appropriately, and that individual multidimensional assessments are carried out (Hargreaves 2011). In other words, VET providers need to be involved, even if they do not directly provide non-educational support. It follows that their educators need to be competent in multidisciplinary working, and to be able and willing to team-teach, and to call upon specialist support workers to assess and respond to specific needs (Bowman & Callan 2012; Volkoff et al. 2008b).

Volkoff et al. speak of 'inclusivity': VET providers are more inclusive when they proactively build networks for gathering and sharing of information about the needs of their industry, community and individual clients, and establish formal or informal partnerships with local service providers that are able to address non-educational needs of learners (Volkoff et al. 2008a, 2008b; Hargreaves 2011). One example of such integrated support for disadvantaged young people in the VET sector are Education First Youth Foyers (situated on Holmesglen and Kangan TAFE campuses), which provide homeless or potentially homeless people with housing together with supports for education, training, wellbeing and health in the same location

Career guidance and pathways support

Transition to employment is a process that begins well before and ends well after the learner's engagement with VET, and assistance negotiating that phase is considered a vital component for programs re-engaging young people who experience difficulties (Nelson & O'Donnell 2012). For Davies et al. (2011) such support needs to be embedded in course delivery, and progress can be made by frequently drawing connections between course content and real work opportunities/pathways. As Blenkinsop et al. (2006) have noted, pathways support must extend beyond simply providing information, and requires individual support from teachers or career guidance professionals to develop sound, rational decision-making skills, including skills in weighing up career information. Further, if programs are to succeed, they must include meaningful contact with potential employers, beyond the formal learning environment (McCrone et al. 2013). One example is the Brotherhood of St Laurence's Youth Transitions Program (in Laverton, Taylors Hill and Craigieburn), which combined a training program with a work experience component; individual career planning support; exposure to work 'tasters'; links to partnerships and the local community; and connections to other youth services (Bodsworth 2012).

Life skills and personal development

For many young people, barriers to learning include very low self-confidence and self-esteem, underdeveloped social skills (e.g. an aversion to eye contact and poor verbal communication) and a limited attention span (McCrone et al. 2013). Personal development and life skills featured as important attributes in the earlier surveys of employers' needs, and thus ought to be a focus in any program of pathways and transition support (Nelson & O'Donnell 2012; Hargreaves 2011). Measures are frequently needed to build self-confidence, self-efficacy and self-awareness, or simply to assist a young person to take a positive step in their life, however modest. These measures have been shown in research to be important in increasing motivation and personal investment among those whose education seemed to have ended prematurely (McCrone et al. 2013; Myconos 2014b).

Supportive relationships and a strengths-based approach

A message that echoes through the literature is that programs designed to connect with young people must adopt a strengths-based approach that acknowledges the young person's assets and goals (Foster & Spencer 2011; Ratcliff & Shillito 1996; Thomas, Gray & McGinty 2012). For Davies et al. (2011) this means services that are 'stage appropriate' and client-centred. Crick and Goldspink (2014) contend that the approach taken needs to 'account for students' learning identity and dispositions in order to stimulate ownership and agency—and thus engagement in learning'. The challenge for the educator is to assess a learner's learning disposition and level of engagement, and to do this they must address the emotional and experiential resources the learner brings and the learner's relationships to themselves and to their learning environment (Crick & Goldspink 2014).

The importance of small group interaction also bears on learning dispositions. Foster and Shulze (2013) describe one program whose small groups enabled attention to the students individual needs, strengths and potential. Delivery was one-on-one or in very small groups, and often involved a trainer working with a counsellor or youth worker, utilising formal or informal individual learning plans developed collaboratively with the learner. There is growing evidence that positive learning dispositions are fostered in such settings, where participants experience 'trust as a social resource' and where ownership, connectedness and responsibility are highly valued (Bowman & Callan 2012; Nelson & O'Donnell 2012).

These learning dispositions are fostered, according to Crick and Goldspink, in programs that are attuned to the importance of relatively relaxed interactions—and acknowledge that 'what teachers and significant others say and do ... shape engagement and predict learning outcomes' (Crick & Goldspink 2014, p. 29). The message here is that when the students' needs are prioritised—and when the program or service adapts to those needs—then students are likely to respond in ways that realise their own and the program's potential.

Mentors and buddies are noted in some research as facilitating transformed learning dispositions. Volkoff et al. (2008a) write of the importance of the learner having a positive relationship with at least one of their teachers. Others note the importance of adult or peer role models (Bowman & Callan 2012), career mentoring (Nelson & O'Donnell 2012), and support mechanisms such as counselling and other support staff. These, according to Bednarz's study of apprenticeships (2014), contribute to higher retention rates.

Social and cultural responsiveness

Lastly, findings from non-VET services point to a range of factors that might deter a 'client' from enrolling in the first instance. We learn of the importance of 'cultural competence'—that is, awareness and sensitivity regarding the backgrounds of potential participants. Thus, there is a need to ensure that content is culturally appropriate, and that the pedagogy and delivery recognise the positive aspects of difference and diversity (Bowman & Callan 2012). This, according to Volkoff, might also be accompanied by socially and culturally appropriate support, possibly through a dedicated response unit or staff position (Volkoff et al. 2008a).

This is clearly relevant to programs catering for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander learners. There may be a need to adapt training materials to ensure they are culturally sensitive and affirming, and to seek local community endorsement of some training materials (Abbot-Chapman 2011, in Bowman & Callan 2012). According to Bowman and Callan (2012), there are contexts where these learners prefer to be in an all-Indigenous class, and others where participation in the mainstream is preferred. Both options should be available, along with the option to access culturally aligned supports. Encouraging 'two-way' learning fosters cultural pride and identity, good will and connectedness. This approach would uphold the principles espoused in the national strategy for Indigenous Australians in VET 2000–2008 Partners in Learning Culture (ANTA 2000).

4 Designing programs to support transitions to employment

Key messages

- Programs supporting young people's transition to employment should have clearly defined goals and target groups
- Programs should intervene early in the period of unemployment
- Young people's preferences and ambitions, employability skills and any problems which may create barriers to employment should be identified
- Wrap-around support may be necessary to address issues faced by young people that make it difficult for them to gain or retain employment
- Young people need to be assisted to develop skills to manage their future career transitions over the life course
- Efforts should be made to link immediate job placements with future work opportunities
- Engagement with employers is important—with careful matching of young people to employment or work experience opportunities

In this section we consider the interventions and factors that are most likely to result in the transition of young people into employment. As emphasised by Bowman et al (2015) in their analysis of youth transition, while the term 'transition' implies a linear path, the pathways of many young people are often much more complex. They point to a framework developed by the ILO that is useful for differentiating between circumstances in young people's transitions from school to work (ILO 2009, pp. 9–10):

- transition not started, i.e. young people who are still at school, or who are not in school but have no intention of looking for work
- in transition, i.e. those who are not in school, currently unemployed, or employed in temporary, informal, unsatisfactory work, and though possibly inactive, are nonetheless aiming to look for work
- transited, i.e. those with regular work, or with work that is satisfactory but temporary.

What follows focuses mainly on interventions aimed at young people *in transition*, where these are facilitated by training organisations, support services and employers working in partnership.

Employment support for young people

Australian research has identified the following program factors that can assist young unemployed people into employment:

- a ‘strengths-based approach’—a unifying philosophy characterised by a positive, asset-building orientation that builds on youth strengths rather than categorising them by their deficits (such as lack of a job) (Collura 2010)
- opportunities to ‘try out’ different employment and training options in real workplaces and adult educational environments (Bodsworth 2012, p. v).
- an understanding of the local area and effective engagement and coordination with local schools, specialist services and employers (Bodsworth 2012, p. v).
- flexible, individualised and integrated forms of assistance (Bodsworth 2012, p. viii).

Complementary international research examining the effectiveness of employment programs for young people in general (Betcherman et al. 2007; Quintini & Martin, 2006) arrives at the following conclusions:

- Programs should intervene early—after no more than six months unemployment (Finland and the Netherlands begin ‘activating’ unemployed young people immediately).
- Job search assistance programs are the most cost-effective form of intervention for young people. By comparison, wage and employment subsidy programs have a positive short-term impact but a less positive net impact on participants’ long-term employment prospects.
- Private sector employers and local communities should be mobilised and involved in the design of programs in order to match training programs to local or national labour market needs.
- Targeting of programs is crucial: they should differentiate between teenagers (who should be helped to remain in school and acquire qualifications) and young adults (who need help to acquire work experience).
- Working Links in the UK identifies the need for strongly structured programs, incorporating diagnostic tools to identify barriers and preferences, employability skills development, work placements, rewards for progress and regular feedback from young people to continuously improve program design.

In the following section we consider approaches to career development, before focusing on two specific types of interventions (or components of interventions): work experience placements or programs and employer engagement or ‘demand-led’ programs.

Career development

There is increasing recognition of the importance of career development and guidance in a changing and insecure labour market. Sustained and incremental career development has been recognised as vital for young people facing disadvantage, and the careers advice traditionally available in schools needs to be expanded to include knowledge of the changing labour market, long-term decision-making and career

management skills (Skattebol et al. 2015). The lack of quality (or any) careers education, careers counselling and job search support has made the transition to work difficult for many young people (Marsh & Perkins 2006). Urbis (2012) in particular identifies a pressing need for services for young people no longer in education, most of whom 'did not know where to go for career development advice, and where advice was received [found it] not satisfactory' (cited in Polvere et al. 2015, p. 42).

Focusing on Australia, a review of literature on career development support for young people conducted by Polvere et al. (2015) considered services available in a variety of situations (i.e. in or out of school). The table below draws from their typology of career development services, focusing on the young people who have left school and who are unemployed.

Table 4.1 Features of career development services for young people not in school

General approach and examples	Key supports/agents	Insights from the literature
Face-to-face counselling from public, private, or community providers	Parents and caregivers Apprenticeship Support Officers (Vic.) Non-government organisations Faith-based organisations Community mentors	Disadvantaged young people may not have access to structured mentoring networks through school or another employment service or the social capital network to be able to connect with a mentor. Formal counselling and mentoring can create bridges with employment and support success in the workplace.
Pathways and employment services Youth Connect (funding ceased 2014) Disability Employment Services Job Services Australia (JSA)	Case managers, support workers and employment services staff Parents	Demand may outstrip available resources. Strong liaison between multiple agencies supports effective outcomes. Trusted, long-term relationships can be developed.
Career development services in further education institutions	TAFE, University career services	Young people disengaged from school will miss out on in-school opportunities.
Liaison with employers e.g. through apprenticeship brokers and transition services	Local Learning and Employment Networks (Vic.)	Employers provide knowledge of local labour markets. There can be opportunity to develop trusted, long-term relationships between the young person, the broker and the employer.

General approach and examples	Key supports/agents	Insights from the literature
One-stop-shop facilities	Job Services Australia	Provider may offer a single entry point to various services. Provider ideally works with local employers; community and health organisations; registered training organisations; federal, state, territory and local government departments; and other organisations to provide an integrated mix of support according to need.
Online information	myfuture (Australia's national career information service)	
Internships, traineeships, apprenticeships	Employers	Trusted, long-term relationships can be developed.
CareerTrackers Indigenous Internship Program	Educational institutions	Mentors can provide influential occupational role models.
ANZ Indigenous Traineeship Program	Parents	Young people can combine on the job experience and training with further study with ongoing employment as an outcome.
	Mentors	Young people who are disengaged may not have access to these opportunities.
Labour market information	Labour Market Information Portal (Australia)	Young people may need help to interpret and personalise information.

Ultimately, this review identified the following features of effective career development services (Polvere et al. 2015, p. 42):

- providing relevant and appropriate activities and content for the developmental age of the audience
- involving many opportunities to experience the world of work
- fostering self-knowledge in relation to suitable careers
- beginning early on in the years of schooling
- delivery by qualified staff with current knowledge of the labour market
- focusing on the development of skills to manage a career over the lifespan
- providing access to appropriate help when it is needed, regardless of stage of life.

Work experience programs

Research on the effectiveness of work experience programs identifies a number of key factors. Many of these factors echo the findings identified earlier regarding effective training programs for young people.

Program design and planning

McCrone (2015) looked at innovative approaches to incorporating work experience into curriculum for 16–19 year olds at a number of British colleges. Drawing from case studies, the report identifies factors enhancing the effectiveness of integrated work experience. These include:

- a proactive response by colleges to the needs of local employers and development of partnerships with key firms
- structured programs of work placement activities and work experience
- creative design of work experience programs taking into account mutual benefits for young people, employers and providers
- actively involving employers in preparation for placements
- ensuring work experience programs are well monitored and regulated
- ensuring young people have opportunities to do ‘real work’ valued and used by employers and in line with workplace demands
- creation of a dedicated work experience team within colleges to ensure an institution-wide approach, with buy-in from senior leadership (McCrone 2015).

Other research identifies that a clear articulation of a work experience program’s mission and goals is imperative, including a clear definition of which young people the program serves, the outcomes it wants young people to achieve and the strategies it will use to attain these outcomes (Collura 2010). Participants should be targeted by age, education, time out of work and other demographics. The program should also target young people who are expected to find it difficult to find a job without the program.

The ideal program, according to Wilson (2013), is small-scale and designed and commissioned locally in order to be relevant to employers and young people in the given region (Wilson 2013). The program should also incorporate post-placement follow-up (CEDEFOP 2010). One study suggested that the optimum follow-up period would extend to 12 months after completion of the program (Collura 2010).

Lastly, evaluation processes should be defined and mechanisms for the evaluation agreed and in place. There should be learning outcomes identified that the employer and participant understand, as well as the methods of recording and assessing these (CEDEFOP 2010). This would entail the careful documenting of competencies gained (Collura 2010). Where possible, all outcomes should be measured, though it is acknowledged in the literature that longer-term impacts and outcomes of the programs are generally very difficult to assess.

Relevance

It is not only essential that programs equip young people with *relevant* skills that prepare them for the workforce, but that the skills developed are relevant to *local* job market and that work experience is linked to future work opportunities. In line with

findings regarding the needs of employers, the literature suggests that employability skills development should be prioritised, focusing on building young people's confidence, teamwork, time management and personal organisation skills (Wilson 2013). For work experience programs, it is important that expectations are clear: while the work experience is unlikely to develop young people's vocational skills (CEDEFOP 2010; Collura 2010), it is important in developing employability skills and also enables young people to form links with employers and explore future career options. To this end, employers should be aware and supportive of the purpose of the work placement and the expectations in terms of learning outcomes (CEDEFOP 2010; Wilson 2013).

Work experience opportunities should align with young people's interests and ambitions. One study found 35% of participants reporting that they did not feel challenged during their placements (Riley et al. 2010). Many of the young people undertook placements in sectors in which they were not particularly interested. While they reported gaining general skills and confidence, the placement did not necessarily help them gain specific skills to get work in their chosen sector (Riley et al. 2010). However, as noted above, this may be an issue in managing expectations of work experience programs; and it underscores the need to ensure young participants are given guidance in other ways to gain specific vocational skills such as through further education.

Vocational and non-vocational support

Young people facing barriers to labour market entry may need additional supports in relation to financial or legal issues, personal motivation, poor physical or mental health or other issues. This may require close collaboration and regular communication with other organisations (CEDEFOP 2010). Participant satisfaction with work placement and employment programs has been found to be increased where support and guidance are provided by employers, including assistance in thinking about future careers, mentoring, encouragement and rewards for good work (Riley et al. 2010). Research regarding job training and education programs in the United States identified the importance of integrated case management to enable jobseekers to navigate systems and access relevant services. The researchers also identify benefits of a 'bundled or integrated service delivery approach' in enabling jobseekers facing disadvantage to successfully complete their training and gain and retain employment (Hess et al. 2016).

Job-readiness programs often include mentoring to assist jobseekers prior to their application for available roles (van Kooy et al. 2014). Mentoring by supervisors or colleagues during work placement can provide additional support for jobseekers and assist their inclusion in the workforce (and provide skills development for mentors).

Working with employers

Research examining Work Integrated Learning programs (WIL) for young university students provides insights that might equally apply to the VET context. That research indicates that the organisations most likely to provide students with WIL experience are

established, medium to large employers—those that have been operating for around 20 years and/or have more than 15 employees (PhilipsKPA 2014, p. 6). The key barriers for organisations providing WIL opportunities were lack of resources and time for supervision of students, but these can be eased if the educational institution provides good support to the employer, effective coordination of students and a personalised link. The industries most likely to participate in WIL activities were those most likely to involve formal work placements within professional course work, such as the health care and education and training industries, whereas those least involved were areas of rental hiring and real estate services and transport, postal and warehousing industries, industries which generally do not require specific tertiary qualifications. The authors identify the need to articulate a clear rationale for WIL and to promote the benefits for industry.

Van Kooy et al. (2014) examined the nature of collaborations between employers and employment assistance programs and other 'labour market intermediaries' designed to assist jobseekers facing disadvantage through more formal relationships with specific employers. These programs typically offered jobseekers vocational and non-vocational training oriented to the needs of specific employers or industry, combined with work experience or job placements (often time-limited). It is increasingly recognised that all programs seeking to assist jobseekers must engage with employers to achieve successful outcomes for participants, rather than simply focusing on improving the skills or 'job-readiness' of jobseekers.

Investing in relationships is essential

Van Kooy et al. (2014) reported that the intermediaries and employers consulted in their research generally agreed that engagement required an 'up-front' investment of time dedicated to relationship building. This could vary from two or three weeks in the case of small employers and a limited number of jobseekers to several years in the case of a program involving a large employer. Intermediaries reported that this up-front investment was important in order to clarify employers' needs and understand their viewpoints and business operations.

The employers interviewed for the study reported that the number and variety of intermediaries working with jobseekers was sometimes confusing and difficult to navigate: they were often approached by multiple organisations. They suggested that intermediaries needed to carefully engage the business at the relevant level, and tailor their approach to meet both business and jobseeker needs.

The key roles of the labour market intermediaries (for our purposes, the agency running an employment assistance program) were identified as providing or coordinating support and non-vocational services for jobseekers; training and support for employers, particularly in relation to cultural awareness or the specific needs of jobseekers; navigating government programs and policies, including identifying sources of funding that might support candidates or the employer engagement program; screening and

selecting jobseeker candidates for placements; and managing candidates' expectations, particularly when job placements were time-limited and did not offer or guarantee ongoing employment with the same employer.

Keeping young people in work

Ideally programs to assist young jobseekers should focus not only on ensuring young people gain short-term employment but also on helping them retain employment and access opportunities for advancement or ongoing development. This section mainly draws on the research literature looking at job retention experiences of (mostly young) apprentices and trainees and their employers, which may provide insight into why some young people drop out of work placements or employment. NCVER sponsored research (Karmel & Mlotkowski 2010) found that non-completion of an apprenticeship or traineeship was related to factors that varied with the stage of the apprenticeship or traineeship. They found that young apprentices placed high importance on working conditions and relationships with supervisors and co-workers. The most important factor impacting withdrawal, particularly for early stage apprentices, was poor work conditions and unsympathetic employers and workmates. Later stage apprentices were more likely to withdraw as a result of unhappiness with the vocational training component of their apprenticeship. Karmel and Mlotkowski concluded that efforts to reduce early attrition would be best directed to matching young apprentices or trainees with accommodating workplaces. Ensuring retention of later stage apprentices would require improved quality of training and study.

More recent NCVER research into non-completion of apprentices (Bednarz 2014) produced similar findings; however it emphasised interpersonal difficulties with employers and workmates as a determining factor, while downplaying the significance of off-the-job training. It also showed that the most vulnerable time for apprentices, with the highest likelihood of attrition, is in the early stages of an apprenticeship or traineeship: 60% leave in the first year (Bednarz 2014, p. 17). In its summary the report states that 'the influence of the employer [throughout] cannot be overstated'. Bednarz also found that:

- Employers with the highest completion rates are generally larger businesses, and had in place tested well-organised systems for managing apprentices. Employers with lower completion rates tend to be smaller, less experienced with apprentices, and with few of these systems in place.
- The best completion outcomes are achieved by employers with high training capacity, who can offer variety, mentoring support, formal and structured programs, good working conditions and generous wages. These tend to be larger employers, although there is evidence that smaller experienced companies also achieve good outcomes.

These findings resonate strongly with those discussed earlier on work experience, and specifically with the importance of working with employers to establish clear

expectations, suitability and support. These findings are likely to be relevant when aiming for *sustainable* employment outcomes for young jobseekers and when considering the types of job vacancies or opportunities that young people should be encouraged to pursue.

To this end, Bednarz's (2014) recommendations for improving retention of apprentices are helpful. These include spending more time on the assessment of would-be apprentices and careful matching with employers; providing more information to ensure potential apprentices have realistic expectations about the employment context; greater assessment of employers' capacity to provide ongoing training (acknowledging larger employers' capacity to provide the necessary support and training and assisting smaller employers to better support apprentices and understand the factors which might lead to attrition); and considering external mentoring services to support apprentices during their work-based training, particularly for those who may not receive informal support through their workplace (Bednarz 2014, pp. 35–36).

5 Conclusion

From a range of resources this document provides context and practical information to support the design of a program assisting young unemployed people to find employment. The research has pointed to a profound transformation of the global economy, as well as its inevitable impact on Australian, Victorian and local labour market conditions. Highlighted also is the importance of identifying the skills most in demand in this emerging employment landscape, and of adapting existing training and recruitment practices so that young people are well placed to benefit from new opportunities.

Predictions of national and local future skills needs and jobs growth provide indicators regarding employers and industries to target to create partnerships. Challenges lie in matching young people's career ambitions with the changing labour market. Further, labour markets themselves will continue to change—and current job opportunities may not match those that emerge in the future. Given this context youth employment programs should be designed to assist young people both to find immediate employment and to develop longer term career plans (which may include further training or education), as well as core skills to navigate existing workplaces and future career transitions. This requires provision of information about existing and future opportunities relevant to young people's own specific interests, ambitions and aptitudes.

At the program level, evidence regarding good practice in VET, education and employment programs suggests the need to clearly define the program goals and target group. Flexible approaches to learning tied to 'real work' experience must be accompanied by the opportunity to develop trusting relationships between young people and staff, and by support to address non-vocational barriers. Links with local employers are also critical to create work experience opportunities for young people, and to provide feedback regarding program design and potentially create more local sustainable employment pathways.

Appendix A Key indicators for South East Melbourne region (sources on next page)

Indicator	City of Kingston ¹	Frankston City ²	Mornington Peninsula Shire ³	City of Greater Dandenong ⁴	City of Casey ⁵	Cardinia Shire ⁶	Victoria
SEIFA ranking out of 80 areas	65	44	59	1	51	60	
Population (2013)	151,686	133,560	152,260	146,727	275,116	84,065	
Population aged 15–24 (2013) (%)	11.9	13.2	11.4	13.7	14.5	13.7	
Non English speaking background (%) ⁷	22	10	6	52	27	8	
Other than Eng spoken at home (%)	24.7	10.2	5	61.2	29.9	7	
Highest qual level (15+, 2011) (%)							
Bachelor's degree or higher	20.9	11.9	14.7	13.1	12.9	11.3	20.8
Advanced diploma or diploma	9.8	8.5	9.2	7.9	8.5	8.1	8.4
Vocational certificate	16.6	21.7	21.0	13.3	19.8	23.9	16.4
No post-school qualification	42.6	46.7	43.3	53.3	49.1	47.3	43.9
Highest sch level (15+, 2011) (%) ⁸							
Y 12 or equivalent	53.2	41.8	42	48.1	46.5	39.5	49.8
Y 11 or equivalent	12.5	15.9	15.9	9.0	14.1	16.9	12.9
Y 10 or equivalent	13.8	20	19.3	12.8	17.8	21.5	14.8
Unemployment (15–24, Feb. 2016) (%) ⁹	Greater Melbourne Outer East 13.4			Greater Melbourne South East 15.3			14.6
Participation (15+, Feb. 2016) (%) ¹⁰	Greater Melbourne Outer East 65.6			Greater Melbourne South East 64.6			64.5
Youth not in full-time work or education (15–19) (%) ¹¹	4.5	8.1	5.8	7.1	6.8	5.9	5.8
Main occupations (2011) (%)							
Managers	12.9	10.3	13.3	7.4	9.9	12.5	
Professionals	22.3	15.5	18.2	12.5	13.8	13.9	
Technicians/trades	14.4	18	18.7	12.3	17.2	19.0	
Community/personal services	8.9	9.9	10.4	8.0	8.7	9.0	
Clerical/administration	16.5	15.4	12.6	14.6	16.1	14.5	
Sales	10.4	11.2	10.9	7.7	10.3	9.8	
Machine operators/drivers	5.2	7.4	4.6	9.2	10.2	8.6	
Labourers	7.2	10.1	9.2	21.5	11.2	10.8	
Main employing industry (2011) (%)	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Construction	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	Manufacturing	
	12.6	14	13.1	22	17.5	13.7	

Data sources

1. ABS Regional data summary, City of Kingston, (region 23430) viewed 11 December 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=23430&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&geoconcept=REGION&maplayerid=LGA2013&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA®ionLGA=REGION®ionASGS=REGION ()
2. ABS Regional data summary, Frankston City, (region 22170) viewed 11 December 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=22170&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&geoconcept=REGION&maplayerid=LGA2013&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA®ionLGA=REGION®ionASGS=REGION
3. ABS Regional data summary, Mornington Peninsula Shire, (region 25340) viewed 11 December 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=25340&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&geoconcept=REGION&maplayerid=LGA2013&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA®ionLGA=REGION®ionASGS=REGION
4. ABS Regional data summary, City of Greater Dandenong, (region 22670) viewed 11 December 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=22670&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&geoconcept=REGION&maplayerid=LGA2013&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA®ionLGA=REGION®ionASGS=REGION
5. ABS Regional data summary, City of Casey, (region 21610) viewed 11 December 2015, http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=21610&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&geoconcept=REGION&maplayerid=LGA2013&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA®ionLGA=REGION®ionASGS=REGION (accessed 11 Dec 2015)
6. ABS Regional data summary, Cardinia Shire, http://stat.abs.gov.au/itt/r.jsp?RegionSummary®ion=21450&dataset=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA&geoconcept=REGION&maplayerid=LGA2013&measure=MEASURE&datasetASGS=ABS_REGIONAL_ASGS&datasetLGA=ABS_REGIONAL_LGA®ionLGA=REGION®ionASGS=REGION (accessed 11 Dec 2015)
7. Except for the City of Greater Dandenong, 'Birthplace' data has been compiled and re-cast by Profile ID from the ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2011: City of Kingston, <http://profile.id.com.au/kingston/> Frankston City, <<http://profile.id.com.au/frankston/>> Mornington Peninsula Shire, < <http://profile.id.com.au/mornington-peninsula/>> City of Casey, <<http://profile.id.com.au/casey/>> Cardinia Shire, <<http://profile.id.com.au/cardinia/>> For City of Greater Dandenong, data accessed as a benchmark comparison with the City of Casey, viewed 17 May 2016.
8. Except for the City of Greater Dandenong, 'Highest level of schooling' data has been compiled and re-cast by Profile ID from the ABS Census of Population and Housing 2006 and 2011. See note 7. For City of Greater Dandenong, data accessed as a benchmark comparison with the City of Casey, viewed 17 May 2016.
9. Australian Department of Employment and Industry, viewed 18 April 2016, <http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/LFR_SAFOUR/VIC/GreaterMelbourne/MelbourneOuterEast, and http://lmip.gov.au/default.aspx?LMIP/LFR_SAFOUR/VIC/GreaterMelbourne/MelbourneSouthEast>. Youth unemployment rates are 12-month average original data.
10. As note 9. Participation rates are 3-month average original data.
11. Statistical Data for Victorian Communities, 2011 Young people not in work or education, viewed 18 April 2015, <http://www.greaterdandenong.com/document/18464/statistical-data-for-victorian-communities>

Appendix B Specific considerations for the care industry

As production of consumer goods, construction materials and other physical products becomes more automated and globalised, a larger share of workers nationally, in Victoria and in south-east Melbourne will be involved in providing 'care' to others. Care work is less prone to disruption from off-shoring and automation since the human dimension of care is intrinsic to the value it provides to care recipients. Care work can involve children, the disabled, the elderly or the socially marginalised. The VET sector has had a significant involvement in the training of workers in care practices across these groups, with the possible exception of the last group.

Work conditions have posed a significant challenge to those attempting to attract workers into the care industry. Part-time work and low hourly pay, both of which are endemic to care work, are associated with an increased chance of living in poverty (CEDA 2015). According to the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (2014), 'the low wages and poorer employment conditions for some roles are known to create real barriers to recruitment and retention' (p. 104).

Despite its relative protection from off-shoring and automation, care work is likely to undergo some significant changes in the foreseeable future. A report by the Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council (2014) notes an emerging trend towards marketisation of the sector, a change presaged by the design of the National Disability Insurance Scheme, but likely to be a motif of reform across the human services. In this model, clients with a wide range of service needs, which may include disability, homelessness, drug and alcohol problems, or other complex issues, will be assigned a certain quantum of funding based on their assessed level of need. The client will then, in association with a professional advocate, case manager or family member, decide to 'purchase' services meeting the perceived highest priority needs. This means that care workers will most likely need broader competencies. For example, with many clients with disability also having housing needs, disability care workers and their host services will more often be involved in multidisciplinary case management (Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council 2014, p. 104). Further, because the care 'consumer' will have increased discretion over who provides the care they receive, the council suggests that 'Consumer directed funding models will require workers to have increased personal accountability and decision-making responsibilities' (p. 18). This means that care practices will become less prescriptive and bound to specific institutional guidelines and more creative and responsive to individual care recipients' needs. For this reason, there is a 'need to define the social and emotional skills associated with direct care work' (Community Services & Health Industry Skills Council 2014).

The field of medical anthropology has played a pioneering role in theorising and documenting care practices. According one study by leading medical anthropologists (Mol et al 2010), in care practices:

local solutions to specific problems need to be worked out. They may involve 'justice', but other norms (fairness, kindness, compassion, generosity) may be equally important ... [Care practices are] a special modality of handling questions to do with the good ... Care implies a negotiation about how different goods might coexist in a given, specific, local practice (p. 13).

In light of these insights, VET training for carers in the future will be required to impart not only the specific technical competencies of care practice, and the emotional and interpersonal skills required to ensure the satisfaction of care recipients, and consideration of the contingent nature of what constitutes care. Developing of novel pedagogies to address these learning needs should be a priority for VET providers.

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