

Consultation with schools

DEECD School-industry engagement project

22 December 2014

*From 1 January 2015, the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) will be known as the Department of Education and Training (DET).



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1 Introduction

In October 2014 the Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD) engaged Nous Group (Nous) to provide advice on the best model for school-industry engagement in the future. Specifically Nous was asked to address the following question:



“ *What model of school-industry engagement can most effectively complement existing arrangements to support school-age young people successfully navigate the education and training system and transition effectively to sustainable and rewarding employment?* ”

This project was driven by recognition that there have been many changes affecting the purpose, nature and focus of school-industry engagement, suggesting the need for a reappraisal of current models. More information on the project can be found at

<http://www.education.vic.gov.au/about/programs/pathways/Pages/llens.aspx>

There are two parts to the project:

1. consultation to identify the needs of school-aged young people seeking to transition to further education or employment, and understand how school-industry engagement is acting to address these needs
2. development of advice regarding future approaches to school-industry engagement, with a recommended, costed option and implementation plan.

This consultation report presents the key outputs from the stage 1 consultations with school stakeholders, which occurred between 23 October and 24 November 2014. These consultations took place in the context of a wider set of engagements which together included:

- seven regional workshops with 77 participants¹
- a forum each with the Local Learning Employment Networks (LLEN) and Workplace Learning Coordinators (WLC)
- a meeting of the Victorian Association of Secondary School Principals (VASSP) State Committee, involving 30 schools principals from across Victoria
- interviews with 12 key stakeholders from peak associations for industry, schools and Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), selected youth and community organisations and career advice services
- a formal online submission process that elicited 10 submissions (including 1 from schools)
- an online discussion group (which only attracted a few participants).
- surveys tailored to different stakeholder groups with 153 complete and 113 partial responses. The targeted groups were:
 - *Business or industry group – 43 responses*

¹ An eighth workshop was initially proposed in Footscray. Due to low registrations, the workshop was cancelled and participants invited to attend the Geelong or Dandenong workshops instead.

- *LLEN or WLC – 45 responses*
- *Schools – 99 responses*
- *Training providers – 23 responses*
- *Young people who have transitioned from school – 5 responses*
- *Youth or community group – 51 responses.*

1.1 School representation in consultations

Over 100 schools contributed to the consultations, chiefly through the online survey.

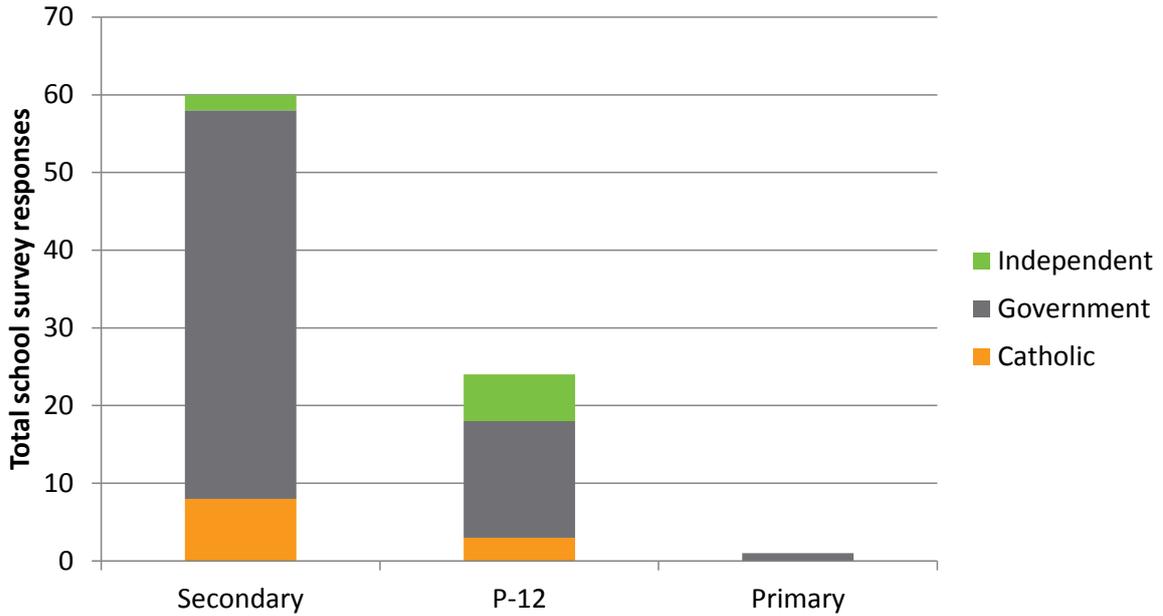
Figure 1: School representation in consultations



A series of graphs follows with further details on the demographic of survey respondents and workshop representation.

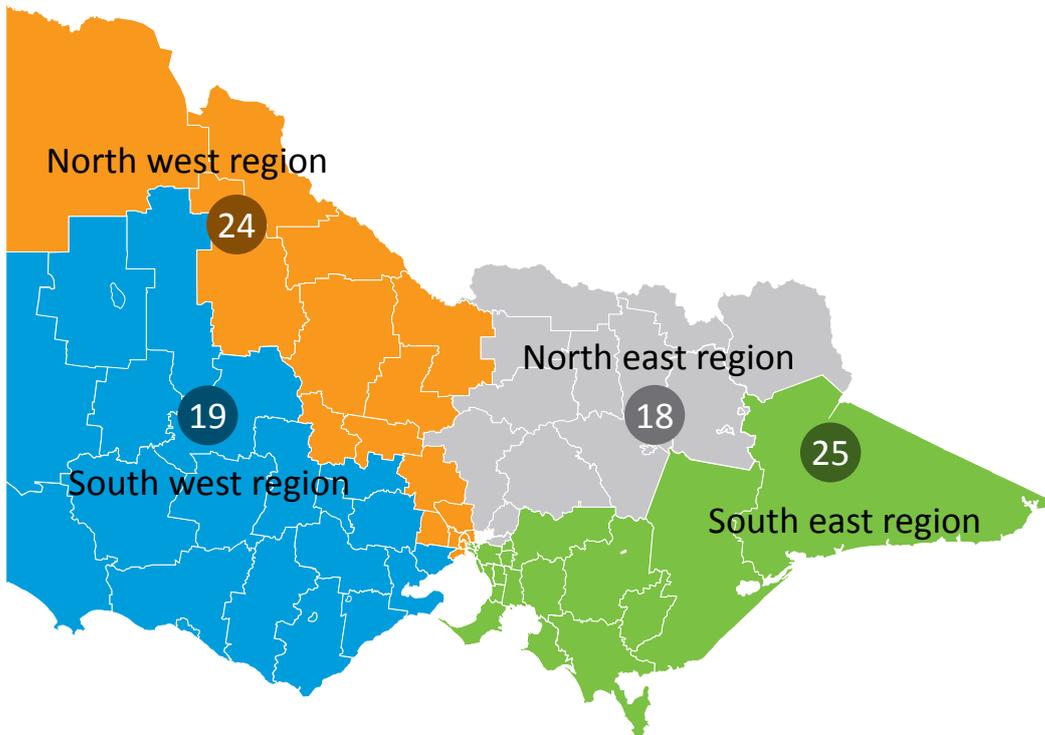
A clear majority of survey respondents represented government secondary schools. Figure 2 shows the distribution.

Figure 2: Composition of school survey respondents



There was strong geographic representation throughout the state as depicted in Figure 3 and listed in Table 1. The Melbourne metropolitan area was under-represented.

Figure 3: Regions of surveyed schools



*note – 13 Schools did not nominate their location

Table 1: Breakdown of survey responses

region	Total responses
North west region	
Banyule City, Nillumbik Shire	3
Darebin City, Moreland City, Yarra City	4
Mildura Rural City, Swan Hill Rural City (Robinvale area)	2
Swan Hill Rural City, Buloke City (Sea Lake only)	1
Hume City, Whittlesea City	9
Buloke Shire, Loddon Shire	2
Campaspe Shire, Gannawarra Shire	3
North east region	
Maroondah City, Knox City, Yarra Ranges Shire	2
Alpine Shire, Indigo Shire, Towong Shire, Wodonga City	10
Manningham City, Monash City, Whitehorse City	1
Benalla Rural City, Mansfield Shire, Wangaratta Rural City	3
Boroondara City	2
South west region	
Ballarat City, Hepburn Shire, Moorabool Shire, Pyrenees Shire, Golden Plains Shire	9
Northern Grampians Shire (northern half)	1
Ararat Rural City, Northern Grampians Shire	1
Glenelg Shire, Southern Grampians	2
Greater Geelong City, Surf Coast Shire, Golden Plains Shire (part), Queenscliff	2
Hindmarsh Shire, Horsham Shire, West Wimmera Shire, Yarriambiack Shire	2
Melbourne City	2
South east region	
Stonnington City, Port Phillip City	4
Bayside City , Glen Eira City , Kingston City	6
Gippsland – Latrobe	1
Casey City, Cardinia Shire, Greater Dandenong City	4
Bass Coast Shire, South Gippsland Shire	3
East Gippsland Shire, Wellington Shire	5
Frankston City, Mornington Peninsula Shire	2

A diverse range of school sizes were represented, with a slight bias towards larger schools. See Figure 4.

Figure 4: Size of schools who participated in the survey

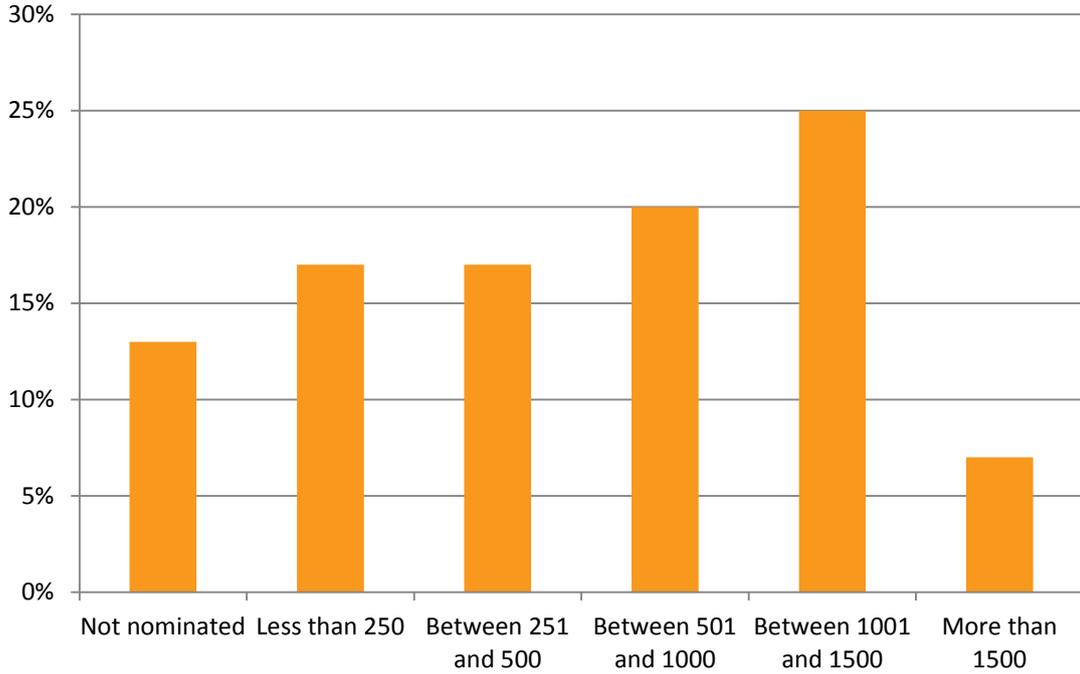
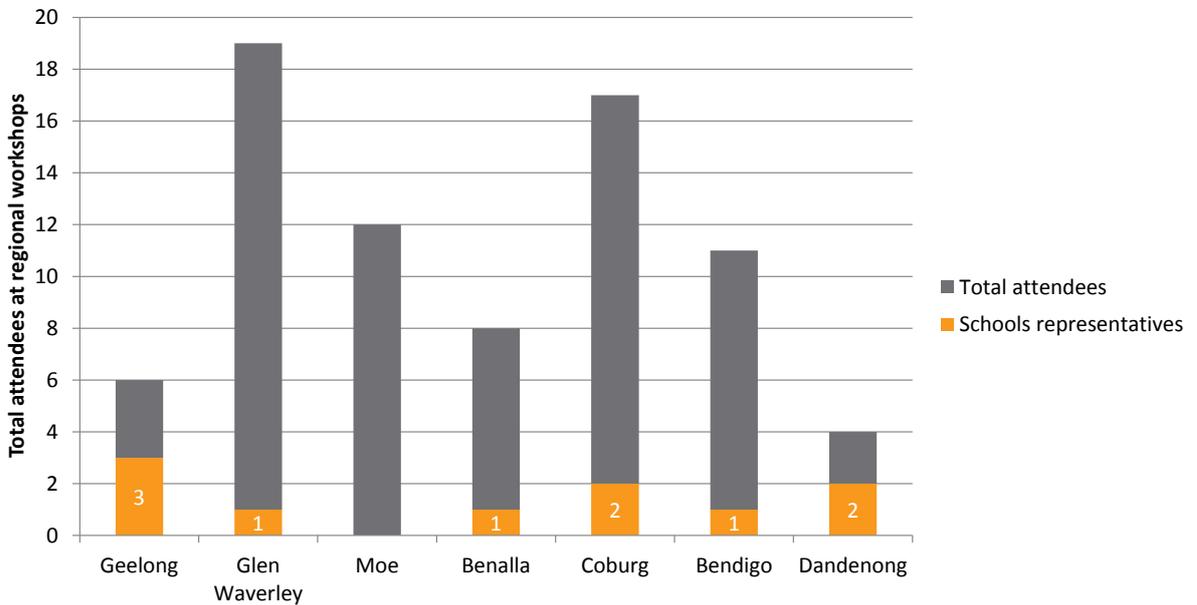


Figure 5 shows that schools were represented at all but one regional workshop.

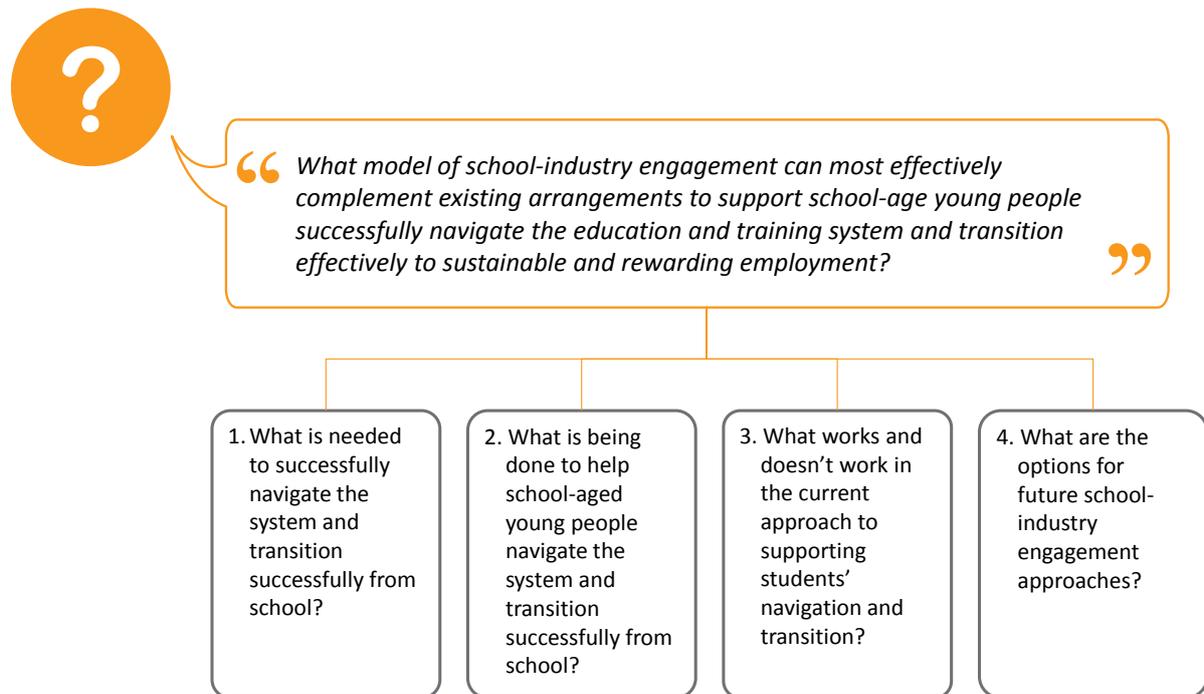
Figure 5: Total school representatives in regional workshops



1.2 Focus of the consultations

The consultations took a first-principles approach to the role of school-industry engagement in improving transitions of young people from secondary school. In order to understand the purpose and benefits of school-industry engagement it was necessary to begin by contextualising the challenges young people face in making successful transitions. The key lines of enquiry for the consultations are listed in Figure 6 below.

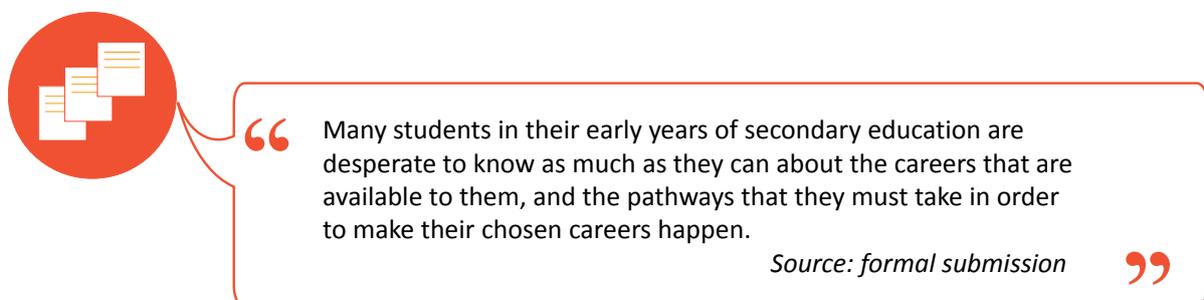
Figure 6: Key lines of Enquiry



This document summarises the responses from schools regarding:

- the challenges young people face in transitioning from school
- what schools are currently doing
- suggested options to inform future policy.

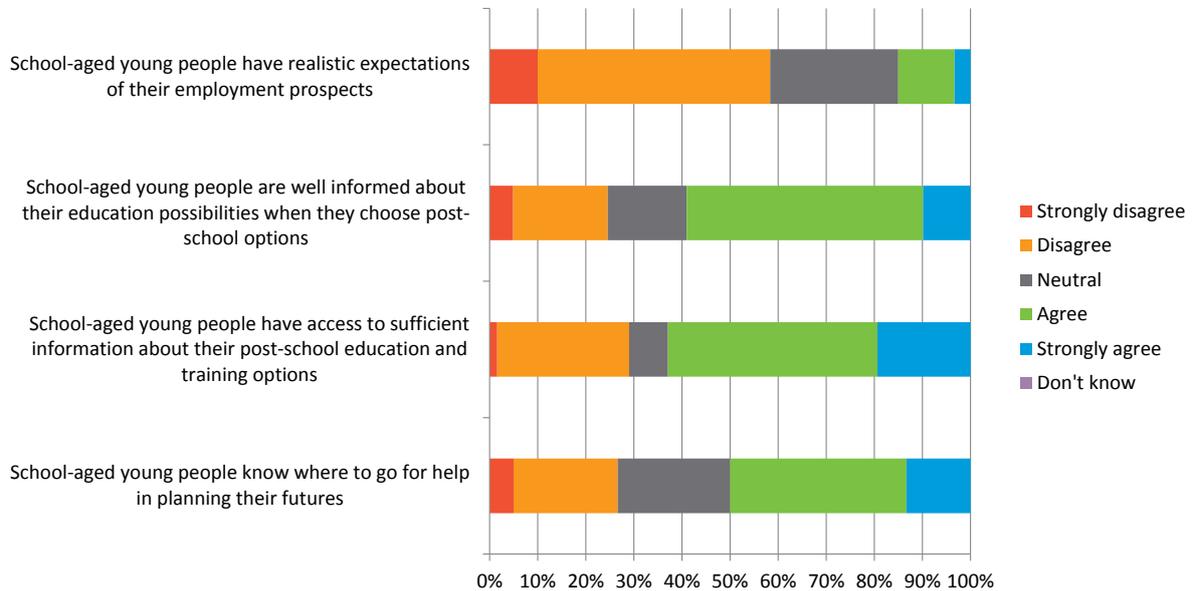
2 Challenges in transitioning from school



The consultation asked schools to identify the barriers that school-aged young people face in successfully navigating and transitioning through the education system and into employment. This was an important first step in clarifying the issues that school-industry engagement seeks to address.

The survey asked schools to express a view on a list of specific challenges. The results are shown in Figure 7 below.

Figure 7: School perceptions of the relevance of specific challenges to successful transition

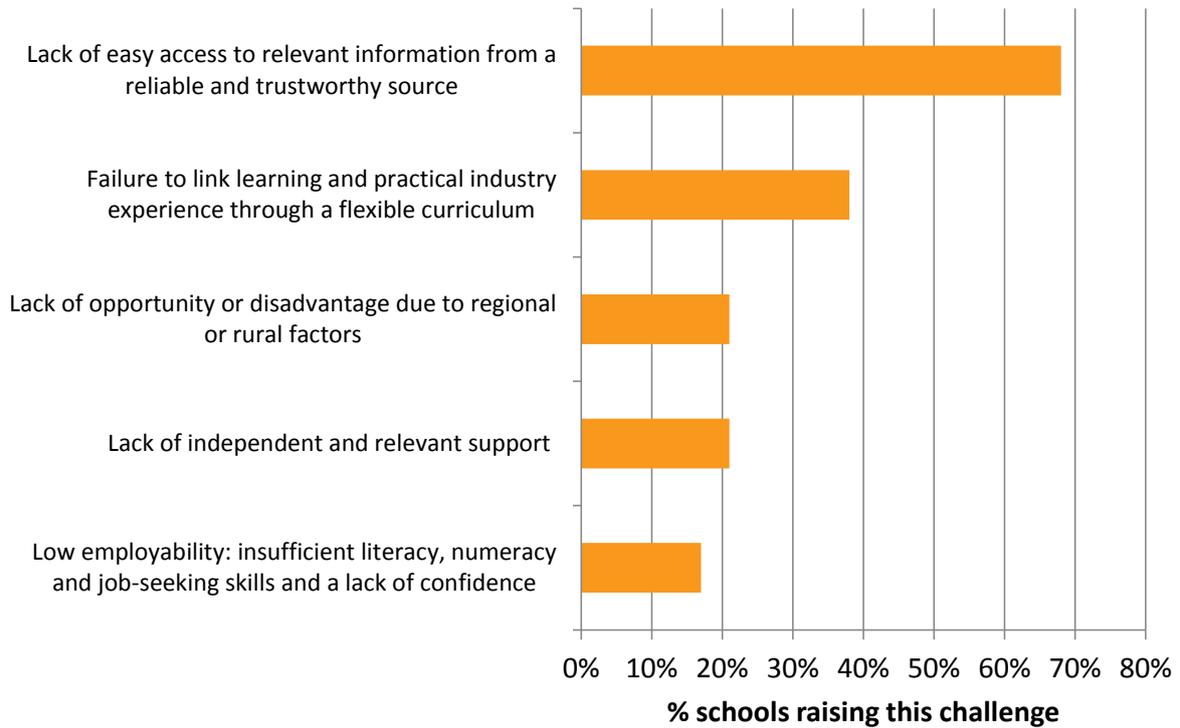


Key points to emerge from these responses:

- students are not perceived to have realistic expectations of their employment prospects
- opinions were mixed, but in general positive, that students have sufficient access to information, are well-informed about their further education options, and know where to go for help in planning their futures.

Schools were also asked to describe the most common challenges faced by young people in making a successful transition from school. The textual results were analysed and the challenges grouped into categories. The top five results are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8: Top five common challenges in navigating the education and training systems and transitioning to further education or employment



Each of the above five challenges encompassed a range of related issues. These issues are listed in Table 2, which also incorporates inputs from schools through regional workshops and formal submissions. By far the most common issue raised by schools was related to access to accurate, appropriate and trusted information.



“ As a career teacher, I am constantly bombarded with information from a range of different sources. Distilling what is relevant, and identifying who I should contact for the right information is really difficult. There is too much – I can’t possibly know everything! There is only one of me – and 1200 kids – time is a big issue.

Source: Regional workshop ”

Table 2: School understandings of key challenges

What did schools mean by each key challenge?

1. Lack of easy access to relevant information from a reliable and trustworthy source

Survey responses highlighted the following themes:

- Lack of exposure to the various roles in different industries
- Insufficient access to careers counselling (especially early on)
- Insufficient teacher knowledge about industry and career options.
- Complexity of available information about the training system and student funding
- Parents are not sufficiently informed so as to be able to provide effective guidance on student choices.

What did schools mean by each key challenge?



Some sample comments from schools:

- We need student and parent information sessions on transitioning, with a range of speakers including education providers and other relevant agencies such as Centrelink.
- People are not aware of what is out there. A lot of information is incorrect – and it is hard to distinguish this.

2. Failure to link learning and practical industry experience through a flexible curriculum

Survey responses highlighted the following themes:

- Weak links between school curriculum and jobs or careers, including how literacy and numeracy is a basic requirement for most jobs
- Limited opportunities for applied learning
- Inadequate attention to the development of 'life skills' (including resilience and confidence) to support successful transition to employment
- Lack of availability and access to taster programs
- Inflexibility of the academic curriculum to accommodate different learning styles
- Lack of structure and patchy quality of work placements
- Inflexibility in the system to accommodate young people who change their mind about subjects and chosen pathways.



Some sample comments from schools:

- Pathways like VCAL or TAFE are often talked down.
- Careers education as part of the curriculum or as part of pastoral care from at least Year 5 is crucial. Interaction with mentors and role models from industry and past students, with explanations around aiming high and why will help build aspiration.
- For schools, collaboration with industry is not seen as contributing directly to curriculum delivery and academic achievement. Instead it is related to careers development and therefore attracts lower priority when funding is tight.

3. Lack of opportunity or disadvantage due to regional or rural factors

Survey responses highlighted the following themes:

- A lack of available jobs in the non-metro regions
- Access and affordability of transportation in regional areas
- Lack of confidence and fear prevents young people from re-locating to areas with more opportunities
- Limited access to RTOs and other training options in the region.



Some sample comments from schools:

- All skilled work experience is out of town – this is a big cost to families and schools are also unable to coordinate visits.

4. Lack of independent and relevant support

Survey responses highlighted the following themes:

- Few people are able or willing to provide young people with the right guidance and direction
- Role models who are genuinely interested in young people and can serve as a source of inspiration and motivation are hard to come by.
- Mentors who are able to help young people remain in their employment choices or connect them to different options through their networks are limited
- Schools and employers often do not provide workplace support to keep a young person in that job
- Parents are often out of touch or confused by the plethora of information, so are unable to support their children.

What did schools mean by each key challenge?



Some sample comments from schools:

- In a small community there are few role models, professions or skilled trades so the school needs the capacity to present these possible futures to students.
- Parental engagement is hard for schools, especially in the secondary years. The kids are actually the barrier. They do not want to listen to their parents. They need an independent adult who shows an interest in them.

5. Low employability: insufficient literacy, numeracy and job-seeking skills and a lack of confidence

Survey responses highlighted the following themes:

- Young people are leaving school with low levels of literacy and numeracy
- Poor year 12 completion rates affect pathways into higher education, training and certain types of employment
- Young people do not possess basic 'soft' job skills such as communication and presentation skills
- Young people do not know how to search and apply for jobs or prepare for interviews



Some sample comments from schools:

- When there is a lack of language, literacy and numeracy skills, it impacts employability.

Other issues – beyond the 'top five' challenges – were also highlighted by schools, and many of them were interrelated. These are listed in Table 3 below. Again, this summarises outputs from all consultation processes including the surveys, regional workshops, forums, submissions and other online comments.

Table 3: Other challenges mentioned by schools in survey responses

Key challenges	Proportion of schools nominating this key challenge in surveys
Teachers' preconceptions of students' 'natural' pathways: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ there is too much focus either on TAFE or university options as exclusive options for different cohorts ◦ students can be pigeon holed, based on their gender or academic ability. 	11%
Students don't fully understand the realities of work commitments and likely financial returns.	7%
Students' own attitudes (including their degree of self-knowledge and approach to problem-solving) can work against them.	5%
Employer expectations: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ Employers recruit casual rather than permanent workers during times of uncertainty ◦ Employers seek employees with work experience, so school-leavers often don't meet this selection criterion ◦ Employer attitudes towards race, gender and/or disability can be a barrier. 	5%
Students' mental health issues and anxieties about home life	4%
Insufficient quality control of RTOs and LLENs/WLCs and/or enforcement of the career curriculum framework	4%
Students who have had bad school experiences disengage from learning	2%
Insufficient incentives for industry, especially small-medium sized enterprises, to accommodate young people when there are administrative/regulatory burdens to overcome (e.g. Working with Children checks)	2%

Key challenges	Proportion of schools nominating this key challenge in surveys
Schools don't have adequate administrative resources to support school-industry engagement.	2%

3 What are schools currently doing?

Schools carry out a broad range of industry and career-oriented activities that vary greatly from school to school. Figure 9 lists some of the responses from schools to the survey question "What are the most critical services and/or supports your school provides or accesses to support young people to transition from school?".

Figure 9: Responses to "What are the most critical services and/or supports your school provides or accesses to support young people to transition from school?"

Providing access to information	Linking learning with practical experience
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Encouraging career goals and pathway planning early • Making students aware of a range and number of support services • Parent information evenings on careers • Sharing of best practice with other schools in the region • Career counselling – career coordinators to help students find what they are good at and choose a suitable job • Providing apprenticeship information • Career Voyage program – matching of interests with potential jobs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • School Based Apprenticeships • Structured Workplace Learning • Industry links through tours and guest speakers • Work experience programs from an earlier age (yr. 10) • Taster programs of VET programs • Allowing students to experience VET as part of their school curriculum
Facilitating independent and relevant support	Developing 'job-readiness'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Connecting students with mentors, networks and resources • Using LLENs/WLCs to advocate on behalf students and focus on their abilities 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Delivery of employability skills and employer expectations sessions • OHS theory and practice so students enter a job work ready • Basic job seeking skills (eg: form filling advice, drivers licence, and interview preparation)

3.1 What works well

Schools identified the following as the most effective interventions to assist young people with their post-school transitions:

1. Providing easy access to relevant information from a reliable and trustworthy source

- providing impartial, in-person, tailored and expert career advice
- career days and expos that involve parents, students and teachers
- managed individual pathways (MIPS) to provide tailored career advice and support.

2. Linking learning with practical experience

- the availability of structured work experience programs
- VCAL and VET programs as they incorporate job readiness skills
- opportunities for ‘tasters’ of training and vocational options
- school-based apprenticeships
- getting young people out of the classroom to directly experience workplace settings
- shared classes with relevant industry representatives (when the right person is available and well-prepared); co-teach students (Business Blackboards)
- consistent implementation of the Careers Curriculum Framework² (CCF)
- access to Trade Training Centres.

Schools noted that there were trade-offs involved in exposing students to industry. While it was seen as more effective to get students out of the classroom and into an industry setting, it was also considerably more labour intensive and disruptive for industry than hosting industry representatives at school. Some schools have found innovative ways to have large groups of students experience an industry environment with minimal disruption by creating significant follow-up projects for students to draw more out of the limited on-site experience.

Table 4 lists some quotes of specific examples of ‘what works well’ to make successful transitions. These examples were provided in the regional workshops and the VASSP State Committee meeting.

Table 4: What works well

Source of quote	Quotes
<p>Quotes from the VASSP committee meeting</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ◦ The Beacon Foundation has done some work to help schools build industry connections. This is great for rural schools. ◦ Taster programs can be better than work experience. Unless work experience is structured and linked to the student’s career aspirations – it doesn’t do anything in terms of inspiring them about their future. ◦ Good careers teachers have a lot of networks. They can create the opportunity for young people to hear about and experience different options. ◦ Schools that have a careers focus work well. We have a strong vertical integration of careers thinking throughout the curriculum. It does take time from other things, but we are finding it actually results in better opportunities and reduced unemployment. We track the data and have been using this as PR to get kids enrolled in our school and to encourage business participation in the program.

² The CCF is designed to assist teachers, trainers and careers practitioners to identify career education learning outcomes for young people. It includes a progression of learning outcomes and activities from Years 7-12 and for young learners with Learn Local and VET providers that articulates a continuum of learning based on the three stages of career development: self-development, career exploration, and career management.

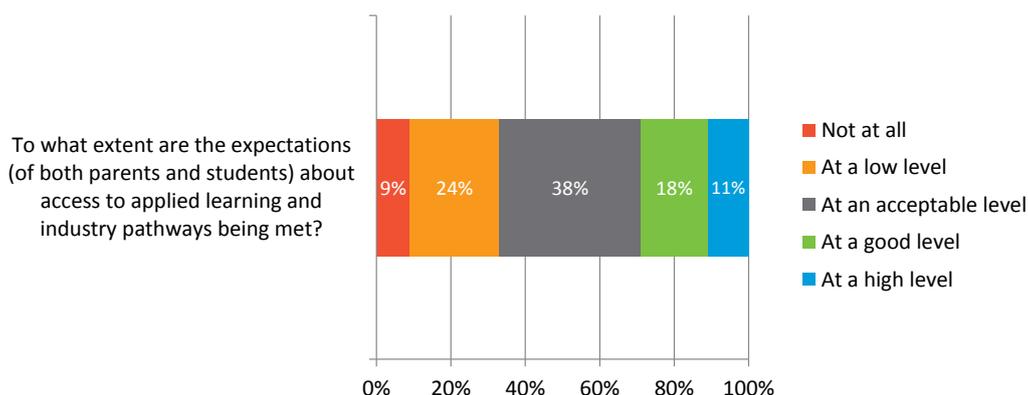
Source of quote	Quotes
<p>Quotes from regional workshops</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our staff member has been working over the last 20 years to cultivate a strong network of local business contacts. Thanks to him our school has been able to organise work experience, apprenticeships and other direct industry support at an individual level. • We have 1700 students in year 11 and 12. This size helps us to have dedicated and sufficient resources to manage relationships with local business.

3.2 What works less well

There were two main difficulties raised by schools in giving their students’ access to careers advice and industry knowledge: challenges surrounding access to applied learning pathways, and internal constraints faced by the schools themselves.

As visible in the survey results in Figure 10 below, schools themselves had a full range of views on the degree to which they were able to meet the expectations of parents and students in facilitating access to applied learning and industry pathways.³

Figure 10: School survey response on "To what extent are the expectations (of both parents and students) about access to applied learning and industry pathways being met"



Schools listed three areas affecting access to applied learning:

1. Stereotypes of attitude and perception
2. Limited availability of VCAL and school resources
3. Mixed parental support.

³ This data was collated using free text analysis of schools’ responses to an open question

Table 5 below lists quotes that illustrate these issues in more detail.

Table 5: Survey quotes highlighting why applied learning expectations are, and are not, being met by parents and students

Criteria	Quotes
 Attitude and perception	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> There is a perception that the applied learning pathway is the 'easy option' and therefore the less desirable pathway. It is ok for students who actually want to engage in this style of learning. Outcomes are very poor for students with disabilities and learning difficulties as employers are reluctant to take on disabled or dyslexic kids. Students have limited understanding of the real requirements i.e. maths, etc.
 Availability of VCAL and school resources	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Cost is the major barrier. There is restricted access to applied learning due to the high cost of delivery. Our school no longer has funding for VCAL or VET coordination so the program is suffering badly. VET courses at our closest TAFE (40 minutes drive) have been cut to shreds. There is a lack of viable enrolment numbers to run some vocational programs. The <i>Broadening Horizons</i> project has helped. It worked very well in our school.
 Parental support	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some parents have unrealistic expectations about their children. They need to instead provide support. Parents don't want their children to go down this path.

Schools reported many internal and structural constraints that limit their ability to offer more to students to inform and support them in their post-school transitions. These constraints include:

- The focus on the content over the potential real-life application in the curriculum and in teachers' minds.
- A lack of sufficiently dedicated resources or prioritisation to integrate careers thinking into the broader curriculum.
- The difficulty of catering to the large range of students and having sufficient depth of information on the full range of possible careers.
- The strong relationships and long personal history required to build trust and maintain direct relationships with industry.
- Performance metrics that encourage retention and high academic scores, which in turn inform student choices, transitions and ultimate employment outcomes.

Table 6 lists quotes relating to limitations of schools' ability to support young people.

Table 6: What limits schools' ability to support young people

Source of quote	Quotes
Quotes from the VASSP committee meeting 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Schools are measured on how many kids go into higher education. We do not get any credit for kids that actually finish VCAL or leave before year 12 but go into steady employment. The current pedagogy needs an update. It is simply not relevant for today.
Quotes from regional	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Without funding, it is hard for us to sustain programs to support engagement with industry, which is key in shaping a young person's understanding and experience of

Source of quote	Quotes
<p>workshops</p> 	<p>possible future outcomes.</p>
<p>Quotes from the surveys</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• No dedicated career planning class means it needs to be embedded in curriculum by other subject teachers who do not always have sufficient experience in this area.• Ad-hoc programs do not work in the long run because there is no continuity.

4 Options to inform future policy



“

As a team, we have noticed that many students start to feel disengaged from an early age. These students' goals and ideas are lost in the transition from primary to secondary and are only brought up again when they start year 10.

Source: formal submission

”

Schools made many suggestions as to what can be done to improve the experience of young people transitioning from school. These were not developed in full but provide ideas for further consideration. Many of these echo issues that have already been discussed. We summarise here the key ideas raised:

- Career and job information needs to come from a good, reliable, trustworthy and independent source. **Centralised resources with genuine experts** can sometimes provide this better than in-school careers counsellors with multiple demands and a diverse student cohort.
- Inspiration and education about industry options occurs when the **students are in a business environment and out of the classroom**. Specific suggestions were made about how to balance the benefits of high-volume industry visits with the logistical complexity of staging enterprise visits by large numbers of students.
- **Parents** are an important influence on their children. They **should be well informed and encouraged to participate** in the initiatives taken by others to support their children. Many schools currently struggle with this, but discussion of careers and employment may be a theme through which it is possible to engage more strongly.
- The best way to build aspiration and resilience in young people is to have a significant adult who shows an interest in guiding them. **Schools** may not be able to provide this directly but should be open to ways they **can support or facilitate the establishment of mentoring relationships**.
- Schools should **fully implement the Careers Curriculum Framework, and invest in their teacher professional development** on career related skills
- **Focusing on the fundamentals such as literacy, numeracy, confidence and soft skills in the early years** are important in setting a young person up for gainful employment.
- All students are different and should be able **to access one-on-one support** (e.g. MIPS). Year 11 and Year 12 students in particular require quality and tailored subject advice that map to the careers they are interested in
- Social disadvantages, particularly in rural regions should be taken into consideration and **specific and local or regional initiatives may be required. These may involve scholarships, funding support for transport, etc.**
- **Measurement of school performance should be done in a more nuanced way** i.e. comparing the profile of incoming students with the achievement of leaving students across a number of dimensions – employment status, educational achievement and especially success in transition.
- **Intermediaries**, such as the LLEN and WLC, between school and industry **who are able to facilitate the relationships and fill some of the gaps** students experience are well regarded.

Schools made some observations on what schools and industry can do to help each other better support young people to make informed choices and transition successfully from school. These are summarised in the table below.

Table 7: Schools' perspectives on the respective roles of schools and industry

<p>What should the role of schools be?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools should be flexible in terms of access to young people as it encourages industry participation. • Incorporating work ready skills into the curriculum will make young people more attractive to businesses. • Communicate more formally with industry about what assistance schools need to really help support young people.
<p>What should the roles of industry be?</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Cooperate with schools and understand their limitations with the timetable and curriculum. • Broaden and intensify involvement with schools to expose young people to current industry offers: structured work experience placements, school-based apprentices, VET placements, taster programs, guest speakers and mentor programs. • Have genuine partnerships with schools to enable mutual learning. Be proactive in educating schools, keeping them in the loop with industry requirements and job opportunities.

Schools were asked for their thoughts as to how to monitor and assess any future policy needs as they evolve. Their responses were grouped into three main themes, summarised in Table 8 below.

Table 8: Suggested criteria to monitor success of future policy

Criteria	Some quotes from schools
<p>1. Feedback from a range of sources</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Sourcing feedback from students once they leave school will be important in helping schools understand and tailor their initiatives. • Feedback from parents will help schools evaluate the success of the information provided to navigate the education and training system. • Ongoing feedback from employers (or higher education providers) on the performance of their students during work placements and employment will help. • Source feedback from other support providers in the system to have a better understanding of what works well and where the gaps are.
<p>2. Formal assessment results</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Formal assessments will build-in more accountability for success. • Pilot programs with evaluations will allow more creative or bold ideas to be tested.
<p>3. Successful pathway data</p> 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Tracking actual student completion will provide better value versus student retention and enrolment in higher education.

Nous will draw on the information above and in the appendices to develop its advice to the Department.

We would like to thank the participation of school representatives in this process and hope that this document provides some value in future planning and coordination.

Appendix A Methodology

Prior to undertaking consultations, Nous developed a detailed project consultation plan which was discussed and refined with key DEECD stakeholders. This plan set out the principles to guide consultations, our key lines of inquiry mapped against existing and proposed data sources, and data collection tools including stakeholder engagement methods.

All participants were provided with a background to the project by DEECD. In face-to-face/phone consultations, participants were encouraged to provide further feedback and encourage others in their network to participate via the online platform. They were advised that notes would be taken during the session to identify emerging themes, but that no comments would be attributed to individuals or organisations. At the conclusion of each session, facilitators reported to participants on their understanding of the key messages from the group, with opportunity to comment and revise as needed. Participants in the online platform tools were given the option to identify themselves and be contacted for further clarification if required.

The participation and engagement by stakeholders demonstrated a deep passion for and commitment to assisting school-age young people. We would like to record our gratitude to those who gave us their time and insight.

Nous is in the process of analysing the outputs of the consultation process and will develop advice on their implications for future policy on school-industry engagement in the first quarter of 2015.