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Strategic Review of Effective Re-Engagement Models for Disengaged Learners

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by Dr. Merryn Davies, Prof. Stephen Lamb & Esther Doecke

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Foreword

The *Strategic Review of Effective Re-engagement Models for Disengaged Learners* Report was commissioned by Skills Victoria on behalf of the Victorian Skills Commission's Access and Equity Committee and prepared by the Centre for Research on Education Systems (CRES), University of Melbourne.

The report profiles the characteristics of low skilled, working age Victorians who have disengaged in education and training and documents effective practices and programs to re-engage them. The report also provides advice on programmatic costs, potential funding models and approaches to program evaluation. It draws on Australian and international literature and advice gathered through targeted stakeholder consultations, including on effective practice in Victoria.

Those without qualifications at Certificate III or above are at a significant disadvantage in the labour market, increased risk of becoming marginalized from it and are more likely to experience social exclusion. Not only do such individuals face challenges in taking advantage of labour market opportunity in Victorian strong economy, they will be further disadvantaged as the Australian economy continues its shift towards knowledge-based activity.

The introduction of the Victorian Training Guarantee progressively from 2009 and reformed policy settings in the Adult and Community sector have seen a significant increase in participation by individuals from disadvantaged groups which are heavily over-represented in the population without qualifications who have previously been less likely to participate in education and training.

It is therefore more important that ever that effective practice exists in VET and ACE providers and the other service providers who support these clients. To that end the Report identifies the four critical elements of effective service delivery as outreach, wellbeing, pedagogy and pathways; as well as outlining the types of strategies available within these categories. It advocated a learner centric, wrap-around service delivery model.

We recommend this report to all practitioners, program designers and policy makers who are working to re-engage disengaged and low skilled adults. I trust the report will be of use to you all. I would like to thank Professor Stephen Lamb and Dr Merryn Davies, CRES for their work in its preparation.

Rowena Allen
Chair
VET Access & Equity Advisory Committee
Victorian Skills Commission

Kym Peake
Deputy Secretary
Skills Victoria

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Executive Summary

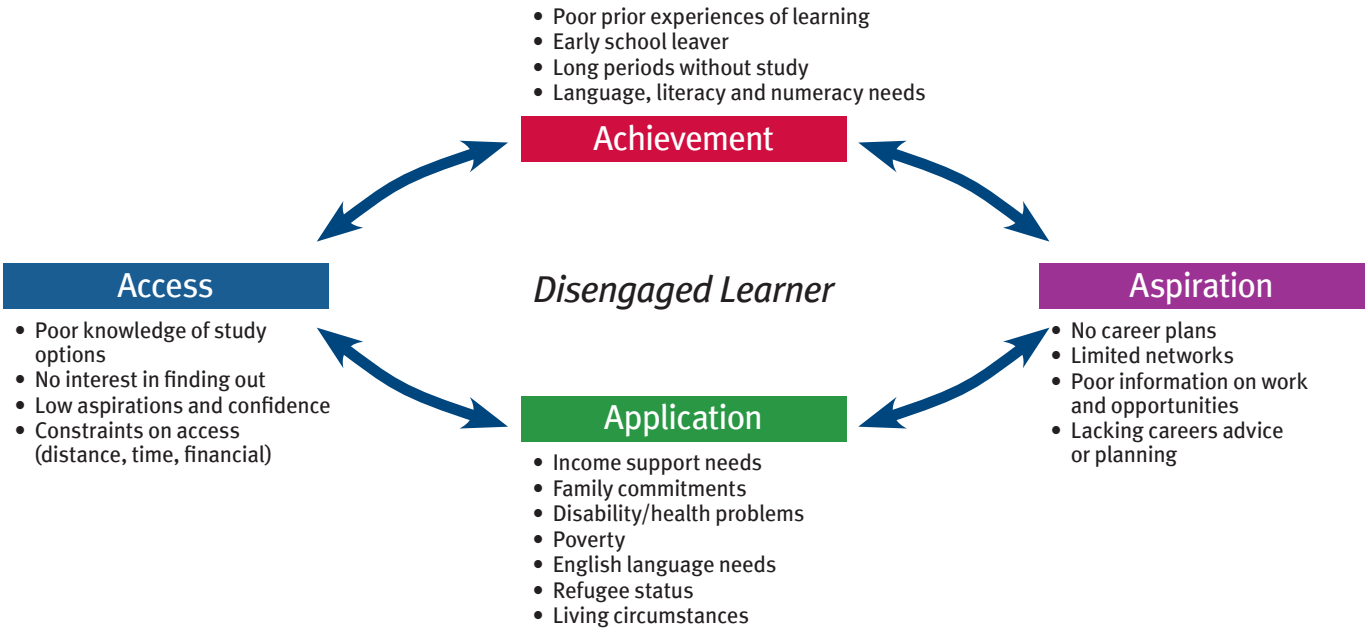
This report presents the findings from a review undertaken to identify practices and strategies that work to help improve levels of educational participation and attainment of low skill and disengaged adult learners. Focusing on 15- to 64-year-olds who have not attained initial qualifications (Year 12 or equivalent) and are unemployed, not in the labour force or in low-skill jobs, the review reports on the programs and strategies which have proven successful in helping this population engage in education and training and attain a qualification. The review is undertaken in the context of national attainment targets set by Australian governments to halve the proportion of Australian adults without qualifications at Certificate III level or above, and to increase the percentage of young people who complete Year 12 or its equivalent to 90 per cent.

The review draws on national and international literature on the practices and strategies best suited to meeting the needs of low-skill and disengaged adult learners, as well as information on effective programs obtained in a set of targeted consultations with key agencies at the forefront of service delivery for various groups of disengaged adult learners. The information that was obtained from the literature review and the consultations provides insights into the factors that lead to disengagement and the characteristics of the populations involved, as well as information on programs that have proven effective in re-engagement. There are many strategies or interventions that target low-skill and disengaged adult learners. However, many have not been properly evaluated, or, due to their small scale or limited resourcing, may not be adequately documented. In most part, we have attempted to identify interventions that have been evaluated as effective with evidence of impact.

Characteristics of disengaged learners

Low-skill and disengaged learners are drawn in disproportionately large numbers from key groups of disadvantaged Australians: the indigenous population, people with disabilities, early school leavers, the culturally and linguistically diverse including refugees, low-skilled older Australians without any qualifications, and those from socio-economically disadvantaged families. They often report relationships with learning and training best described as disjointed and problematic. Key factors contributing to disengagement relate to four main areas: access, achievement, application and aspiration.

Factors contributing to disengagement

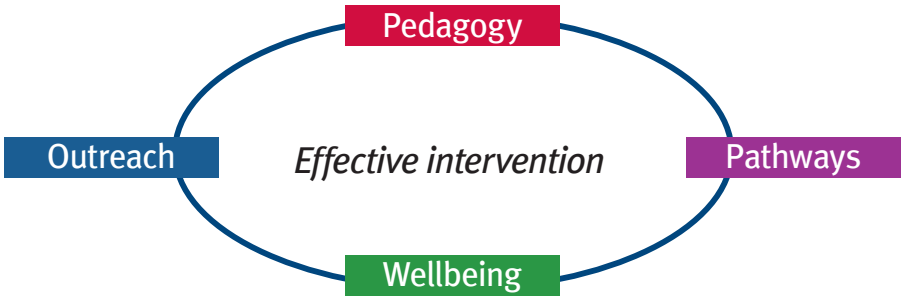


Due to their backgrounds and experiences, low-skill and disengaged learners often confront limited *access* to study and training due to a lack of knowledge of education and training options and availability, limited interest and confidence in undertaking study, and constraints linked to costs, time, and transport. There are also issues of low *achievement* linked to failure at school, weak language, literacy and numeracy skills, learning anxiety, negative views of classroom teaching, and early school leaving. Barriers to participation continuously undermine *application* or commitment to study, barriers such as family commitments, low income, disabilities, health problems, refugee status, age, and childcare needs. Disengaged adult learners often have limited networks linking to work and community life which contributes to low *aspiration* to work or train, compounded by unformed career plans, limited information on the links between qualifications and work, and a lack of careers guidance and pathways planning.

Effective approaches to re-engagement

Given the high-level needs, low-skill and disengaged learners require targeted support across these dimensions in order to promote re-engagement. The review of national and international literature identified a range of programs and interventions that are effective in helping re-engage adult learners. Strategies identified fall into one of four categories related to the focus of the program and the conceptual foundations at play within effective programs: (1) outreach, (2) learner wellbeing, (3) pedagogy, and (4) pathways.

Conceptual model of effective interventions



The first element, *outreach*, is related to the need to find some way of connecting with disengaged adults who may by socially and economically marginalised, in order to identify their needs and inform them of available options. Four strategies are used by effective re-engagement initiatives: providing easily accessible information, bringing learning to the learner, targeting high-needs groups, and establishing lasting meaningful relationships.

The second element, *wellbeing*, is paramount to any successful intervention and needs identifying and addressing the welfare needs of disengaged people. Best practice interventions recognise that they are often dealing with people who have a variety of structural or situational obstacles that affect their capacity to participate in learning. Intensive support through guidance, counselling, monitoring and follow-up, taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing, developing beneficial relationships within the community, the hubbing of services, and providing whole community or familial intervention are five essential strategies in addressing learner needs associated with wellbeing.

The third element, *pedagogy*, focuses on the approach to learning that is needed to take account of negative previous experiences of learning, failure at school, and avoidance of formal teaching and learning. Engaging pedagogy needs to be designed with an understanding of what disengaged learners require, acknowledging their learning interests and building upon their pre-existing knowledge and skills. Four core strategies identified from effective programs are: making learning applied or hands-on, providing flexible learning options, addressing literacy and numeracy skill development needs and offering programs that integrate technologies.

The fourth element, *pathways*, focuses on creating and presenting appealing and worthwhile pathways for learners that reach beyond the program and provide links to other study and to work and career development opportunities. Workplace programs are particularly relevant to the low-skill workers who hold full-time or part-time jobs. The four strategies that fall under this element are: embedding pathways in the intervention program, establishing connections with community and other institutions, using intermediate labour market approaches, and integrating work based learning programs with other supports.

The 17 strategies across the four elements are the basis for the most successful re-engagement programs. While the strategies appear to be independent, the prevention programs are most effective when they incorporate some or all of these strategies. An evaluation of programs to consider which could or should be implemented needs to consider how comprehensively and how well programs incorporate these elements and strategies.

Various programs that contain these elements are identified and listed in the review.

Funding models and costs of interventions

Two different types of approaches are explored in assessment of program costs. The first is program-based and involves identification of the costs of the individual programs or strategies that have been effective in re-engaging adult learners with high level needs. The second approach focuses on system-level needs-based funding and discusses requirements at a system-level for resourcing providers in a way that will facilitate more effective delivery across the state, and promote higher levels of engagement and attainment.

Program-based Costing

Costs of programs that have been developed to target the needs of marginalised and disengaged adult learners vary depending on the type of program. Some of the best and most effective programs, however, are multi-layered, responding to outreach needs, delivering teaching and learning sensitive to the disengaged learner, providing individualised care and wellbeing support, as well as information on links or pathways to employment. Programs range in cost from $294 per learner for an outreach program that has proven successful in helping engage adult learners to $24,425 per learner for a successful residentially-based program that leads to Year 12 equivalent qualifications.

Needs-based funding

Needs-based funding builds into resource allocation for service delivery a recognition of specific factors associated with learners that increases costs for providers if they are to achieve successful learner outcomes. It is used in various fields, such as aged care, schooling, and employment services to deliver supplementary resources where there are higher needs linked to characteristics of populations, locations or programs. Levels of supplementary funding can be assessed using provider characteristics, or on the basis of specific learner-assessed needs, such as disabilities.

There are important advantages to these models of funding:

- they set out universal procedures and entitlements for all providers in a system
- they allocate resources in a systematic way, empowering providers to implement learner-sensitive programs

- they acknowledge equity needs by reflecting differences in costs associated with differences in the characteristics of learners and programs
- they are transparent.

Several examples of needs-based funding models operating in other service delivery fields, including aged care, employment services and schooling, have been reviewed to inform a mechanism that may be applied in Victoria to target the needs of disengaged learners.

The key element is the recognition of high and additional needs of some learners through a weighted loading or supplementary amount allocated to providers who deliver services to disengaged learners. In the schools sector, this is achieved through a mix of provider-level funding supplements based on a student disadvantage index, such as the SFO, and learner-sensitive supplements based on individual learner characteristics, such as funds for students with disabilities.

Similar indexes and approaches are required to support education and training providers in Victoria delivering services to high-need learners, particularly disengaged adult learners. While parental occupation, which is used to construct the SFO index in the schools sector, may not be the most appropriate for the VET sector, other indexes may be. One example is provided by the 16- to 18-year-old and adult learner funding model developed in the UK where providers gain additional support based on their learner profile. Additional funds are provided using an index weighted by the English and Maths skills of learners as measured by point scores on relevant tests. The index used by Job Services Australia to assess work readiness of jobseekers—JSCI and JCA—may also be very useful, particularly in the case of disengaged adult learners.

As with any system that provides targeted resources using broad-level funding formulas there remains the need for accountability in the use of funds. Increased resources requires increased scrutiny, to ensure that learner-sensitive funds are actually used to deliver additional learner support, with providers, where appropriate, implementing the sorts of effective learner supports that have proven successful with disengaged adult learners.

Returns on investment

In exploring costs and benefits of raising literacy levels of adult learners to a level considered necessary for full participation in globally competitive economies (a level comparable to secondary school completion), economists link skill and qualification acquisition to macroeconomic performance. This draws on work demonstrating long term relationships between skill levels and growth of GDP per capita. In Canada, for example, nearly $6.5 billion is projected as a cost of providing literacy training and up-skilling of low-skill adult workers, encompassing large proportions of the adult population of Canada. However, benefits measured in terms of taxation revenue gains, and reductions in welfare, health and related costs, are estimated at roughly 251 per cent of that investment annually ($16.3 billion), based on productivity increases and savings on direct social expenditures such as assistance benefits (Murray et al., 2009). This means, in simple terms, at an aggregate level for every dollar spent on intervention, there is a saving to government and community of approximately $2.50.

It is important also to consider personal and social gains, as well as economic benefits. For some disengaged learners, particularly those in difficult circumstances associated with such things as drug dependency, health problems, disability, homelessness, and very poor literacy and numeracy skills, meaningful engagement in learning activities may well help improve their quality of life, if their other needs are met as well. Therefore, it is important for evaluations to consider the impact of participation on the individual learner using what are sometimes called 'soft measures' or 'intangibles' (non-monetary), such as increased morale, self-esteem and confidence, greater job satisfaction, greater participation and a willingness to continue study or undertake work-related training. Many of the programs discussed in this review have delivered important improvements in quality of life for individuals well beyond qualification attainment.

1 Introduction

This report sets out the findings from a review undertaken to identify practices and strategies that work to help improve levels of educational participation and attainment of low-skill and disengaged adult learners. Focusing on 15- to 64-year-olds who have not attained initial qualifications (Year 12 or equivalent) and are unemployed, not in the labour force or in low skill jobs, the review reports on the programs and strategies which have proven successful in helping this population engage in education and training and attain a qualification. Effective programs and strategies were identified through a review of national and international research on relevant initiatives, and through a set of strategic consultations with key agencies at the forefront of service delivery for various groups of disengaged adult learners.

Importance of the review

A major concern associated with low educational attainment is its impact on participation in lifelong learning. Studies conducted overseas and in Australia consistently show that initial educational attainment has a strong relationship with later participation in education and training. Munn and MacDonald (1988), for example, in an earlier survey of adults in Scotland found that while 42 per cent of adults returned to some form of education and training (courses extending more than six months) only 23 per cent of those who were low-skilled workers did so. The rate for professionals and those in occupations requiring post-school qualifications was over 75 per cent.

International comparisons of participation in further education and training have found that in nearly all countries examined the rates of take-up vary substantially by initial educational attainment (Belanger, 1999; OECD, 1998, OECD, 2000). In the United Kingdom, for example, over 60 per cent of those with a university degree were likely to participate in other forms of education and training beyond their initial qualification whereas less than 30 per cent of those who were early school leavers were likely to participate. Similar differences in rates of participation were documented in other OECD countries. In Australia, the rates were 55 per cent for those with a university qualification and 20 per cent for early school leavers. The patterns support the view that those who have more initially gain more across their adult lives.

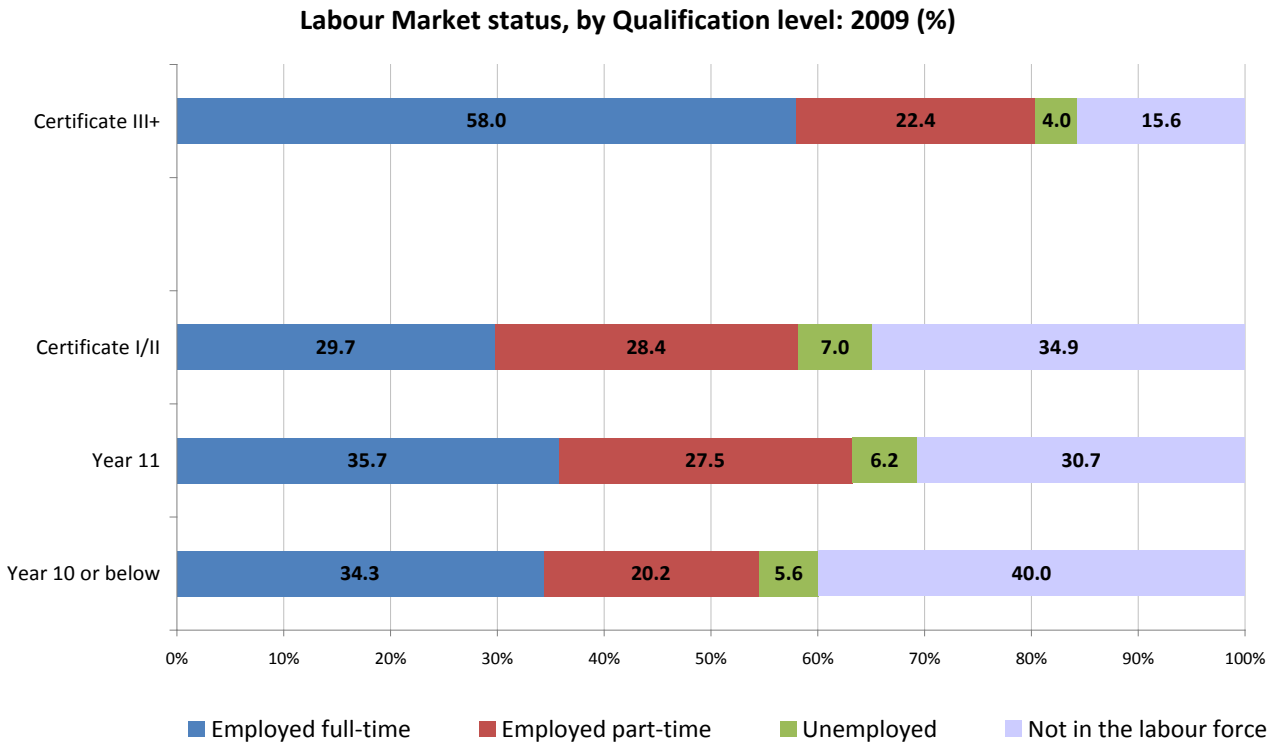
An analysis of factors influencing participation in further education and training, using ABS data from household surveys of education and training, reported that educational attainment exerted a strong influence on whether an individual participated in further education and training (Roussel, 2000). The study found that irrespective of the type of study or training (formal education, formal training, informal training) there was a higher probability of participation for those with higher levels of prior educational attainment. Participation in formal education was 27 per cent for those whose highest educational attainment was Year 10 compared to 60 per cent for those who held a postgraduate qualification.

Low attainment is also associated with poor labour market outcomes and marginalised labour market status. Figure 1.1 shows that in 2009 workers with qualifications at Certificate III or above, were much more likely to be employed full time than were those with lower levels of attainment: nearly six in 10 were employed full-time compared to only 29.7 per cent of those who hold Certificate I. Differences can be seen also in the rate at which these groups withdraw from the labour force — just on 40 per cent of those without Year 10 qualifications reported that they were not engaged in the labour force, compared to only 15.6 per cent for those with a Certificate III or above. Benefits of qualifications also extend to other labour force outcomes, such as earnings. Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD) indicators show that while there is variation from country to country, generally in all countries the higher the level of formal qualifications, the higher the average earnings are likely to be and the better the chance of avoiding unemployment (OECD, 1998, 2000). There is also evidence suggesting that the importance of qualifications has increased over time, for example, in respect of the likelihood of escaping from a period of unemployment and in relation to earnings (for example, Bynner & Parsons, 2001).

In view of the consequences of low attainment, federal and state governments have established critical attainment targets for Australians. In order to help improve prospects in the labour market and help young people make successful transitions from school to further study and work, a national target has been set for 90 per cent of all young people to complete Year 12 or its equivalent, by 2015. For the adult population, the goal is by 2020 to halve the 2009 proportion of Australians aged 20 to 64 years without qualifications at Certificate III level or above.

The review is undertaken in the context of these ambitious targets to help find effective ways to increase rates of attainment for those without initial qualifications.

Figure 1.1 Labour Market Status, by Qualification Level



Source: ABS *Survey of Education and Work*, 2009.

Key target groups

For this review, disengaged adult learners are defined as 15- to 64-year-olds who do not hold Year 12 or Certificate III or above qualifications and who either are unemployed or not in the labour force. The workforce status of those who are unemployed or not in the labour force indicates that they are not only disengaged from education and training, but also from paid work.

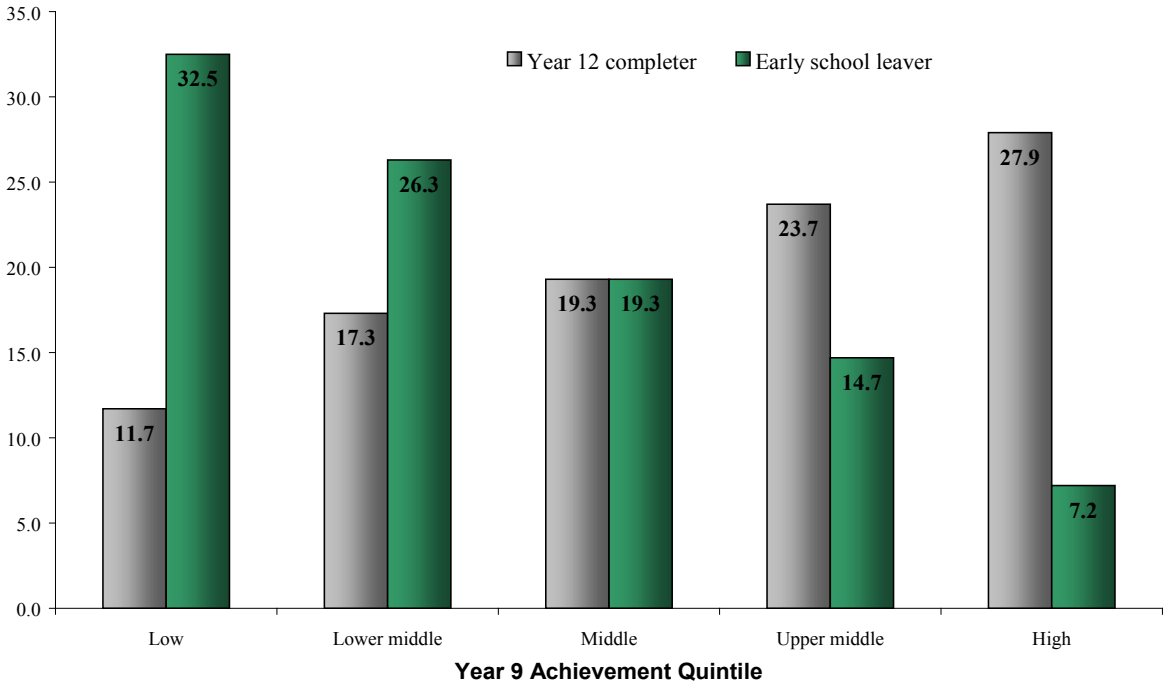
A further group of interest to this review comprises those who are in work, but in low-skill jobs and with low attainment (they do not hold Year 12 or Certificate III or above qualifications). Members in this group are employed in low-skill jobs working either part-time or full-time as labourers, machinery operators and drivers, or sales workers. This group may also be viewed as disengaged adult learners, but because of their work status are referred to in this report as low-skill adult learners.

It is recognised that Year 12 certificates, and their equivalents, are not in themselves guarantees of high-level skills and future success. Evidence from national cohorts of Year 9 students followed over time suggests that while early school leavers were much more likely to be in the lowest quintile of achievers in Year 9 (32.5 per cent), over 10 per cent of Year 12 completers were also from the lowest band (see Figure 1.2).

The activities of the students when they left school reinforce this point. Two years after leaving school 50 per cent of the Year 12 completers from the lowest band of Year 9 achievement were not engaged in any post-school study compared to only 15 per cent of Year 12 completers from the highest band of Year 9 achievement.[1]

Therefore, while those without Year 12 or Certificate III and above qualifications remain the focus of the current study, many of the effective re-engagement strategies for disengaged adult learners that are identified and discussed also have relevance for some groups of Year 12 completers. Some of the adults with Year 12 and equivalent qualifications can have similar needs, particularly in the areas of literacy and numeracy skill development.

Figure 1.2 Year 9 achievement levels of Year 12 completers and early school leavers: 1998 national cohort of Year 9 students (%)



Source: Figures derived by Stephen Lamb from the Y98 cohort of the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (N=8961)

[1] Estimates derived by Stephen Lamb from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth Y98 cohort.

The review and report draw on two separate sources of data:

1. Comprehensive Literature Review

The literature review surveys Australian and overseas literature on disengaged adult learners and identifies practices that effectively re-engage these individuals in education and training.

Using national and state datasets from the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS), the Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (DEEWR) and the Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (DEECD), the literature review includes a framing section that explores the locations, educational backgrounds, labour market activities, history and behaviour of the disengaged learners identified as the focus for this project – i.e. those 15- to 64-year olds who are:

- not in education and training and have not attained a Year 12 or Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) III qualification and/or achieving the knowledge and skills required for stable employment outcomes; or
- at risk of disengaging from learning prior to attaining a Year 12 or AQF III qualification and/or achieving the knowledge and skills required for stable employment outcomes.

Apart from developing learner typologies and investigating barriers to educational engagement the review reports on educational models and settings, programmatic costs, methods of funding, and returns on investment to support successful intervention strategies.

The source materials for the review include books, journal articles, and publications by government and non-government organisations and commissioned or independent research, published within Australia as well as overseas.

2. Targeted Consultations

Following consultation with the project's steering committees the researchers identified 11 organisations or individuals for extended consultations to explore themes associated with disengaged learners emerging from the literature review. Information drawn from these extended interviews has informed the review and is incorporated into the text where appropriate. A list of consultations undertaken is provided in Appendix 2.

The two complementary stages combine to develop a framework to understand best practice in effective re-engagement of disadvantaged/hard-to-reach learners.

Structure of the report

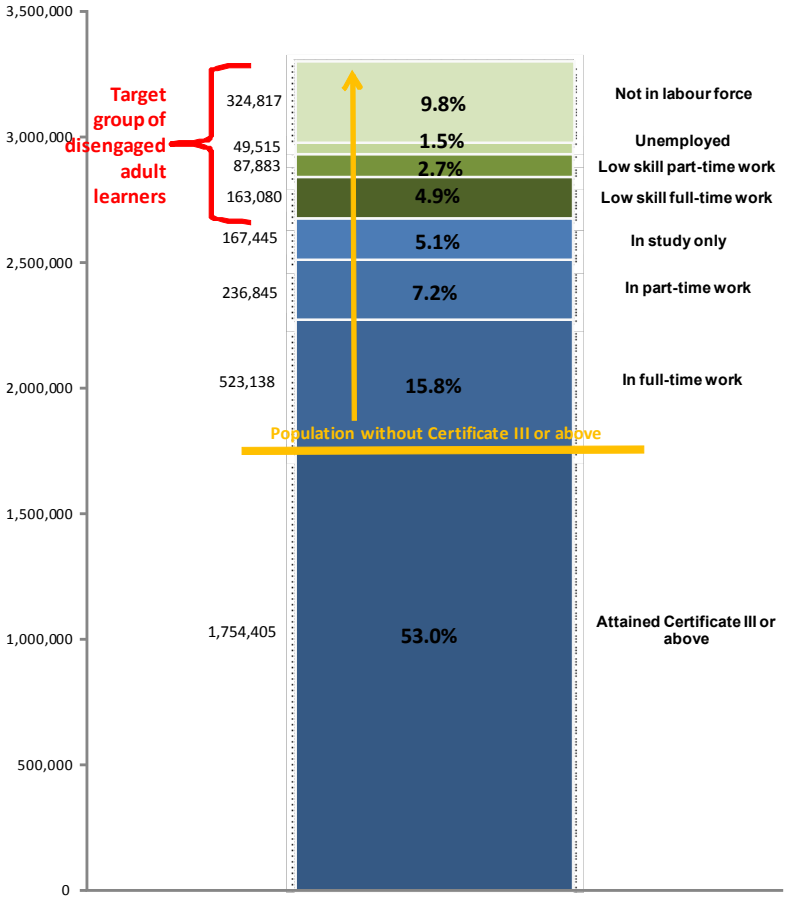
The review is presented in three parts:

1. A brief analysis of the population of adults who are not in education and training and do not have Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, including the numbers involved and the individual and background characteristics that reduce the likelihood of successful engagement.
2. An outline of the interventions that have been shown to work successfully to support engagement, covering:
   a. student wellbeing to underpin engagement (including material needs, personal support, engagement activities, social and emotional development)
   b. educational practices and settings that best work to build engagement and lead to the acquisition of skills and qualifications
   c. transition support to further education and training.
3. An outline of the costs associated with the various programs and strategies, and potential system-level funding models. The outline will include advice which specifies:
   a. what interventions are effective and how their success is best assessed and measured for the purposes of program evaluation and accountability
   b. the cost of the interventions
   c. approaches to funding to inform the Victorian Government's VET Fees and Funding Review such as investment models for government and private investment that support effective practice, the diagnostic frameworks available to underpin them and an analysis of the extent to which current approaches conform to these needs
   d. the return to government on investment in particular interventions.

2 The numbers of disengaged learners

The focus of this review is on 15- to 64-year-olds who have not attained at least an AQF Level 3 Certificate and who are either unemployed, not in the labour force or in low-skill jobs. According to the ABS *Census of Population and Housing*, 47 per cent of adult Victorians did not hold a Certificate III or above in 2006. Figure 2.1 shows that while almost half of adult Victorians no longer in school were without initial qualifications, many in this group were actively engaged in work, study, or both. Just on 15.8 per cent of adults did not hold initial qualifications and were in full-time work, but in jobs that involved intermediate or higher-level skills. A further 7.2 per cent were in similar work on a part-time basis. Some adults with low attainment were engage in full or part-time study, and not working. This applied to 5.1 per cent of all 15- to 64-year-olds.

Figure 2.1 Numbers of disengaged adult learners in Victoria



Source: ABS Census of Population and Housing, 2006.

The target group for this review made up 18.9 per cent of the adult population. Approximately 1.5 per cent of all 15- to 64-year-olds were unemployed, not in study and did not hold a Certificate III or above qualification. A much larger 9.8 per cent of the population were not in the labour force, not actively engaged in work or study and did not hold Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. A further 4.9 per cent were in low-skill, full-time work (drivers, machine operators, labourers or retail workers), and 2.7 per cent in part-time work.

Disengagement and age

Table 2.1 shows that disengagement more often involves older Victorians. Changes in education, training and labour market patterns over past decades have led to different patterns of attainment across age-groups. Older Victorians of working age less often hold initial qualifications, reflecting longer historical patterns of low school completion rates and low levels of participation in tertiary study. Younger Victorians are much more likely to have attained Year 12 or equivalent qualifications, a factor associated with the large increases since the early 1980s in Year 12 completion rates. It means that those who are disengaged and without qualifications tend to be older.

In 2006, over 30 per cent of all disengaged adult learners were 55 years of age or more—191,697 in total. This was more than three times the rate for 15- to 24-year-olds, who accounted for 56,641 disengaged adult learners. Another feature of the oldest age-group is that the vast majority are not in the labour force, rather than being unemployed or in low skill work. They account for over 40 per cent of those not in the labour force. Combined with those who are aged between 45 and 54, the numbers account for over 60 per cent of those not in the labour force.

Younger Victorians are more likely to attain initial qualifications. If they are disengaged adult learners, they are more likely to be unemployed than are those in older age groups. Those who are 15-24 years of age account for just over one-quarter (26 per cent) of all those unemployed and disengaged. By comparison, those in the oldest age group—55-64 years of age—make up only 11 per cent of the unemployed.

Low-skill work and low attainment are more frequent among the middle age groups. Almost 60 per cent of low-skill workers in both full- and part-time work are between 35 and 54 years of age.

Another feature to note from Table 2.1 is the differences by school attainment level associated with age. Improvements in both school completion rates and participation in further education and training of school completers has seen a decline in levels of low educational attainment for younger Victorians. Those who are disengaged were more likely to have remained at school until Year 10 or Year 11. For older Victorians, particularly those in the oldest age group (55-64 year-olds), more often had left school before Year 10. It means that not only do older Victorians make up more of the disengaged learners, they are also likely to have the lowest levels of attainment. If attainment levels are associated with literacy and numeracy skills, then older Victorians who are disengaged are also likely to have the greatest needs in literacy and numeracy skill development.

Of course, this does not deny the importance of disengagement as an issue for young people. While the vast majority of young people continue through to Year 12 and attain an initial qualification, there has continued to be a group of young people who choose not to complete school. In 2006, they comprised about 22 per cent of all school entrants in Victoria. So, despite dramatic improvements in rates of school completion during the 1980s and early 1990s, low educational attainment remains an issue for young people in Australia (Lamb and Watson, 2001; ABS, 2009).

Table 2.1 Disengaged adult learners in Victoria, by age group and school attainment: 2006

	Age groups					
School attainment	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64	15-64
	Unemployed					
Year 11	3,801	3,063	3,615	2,230	925	13,633
Year 10	5,736	3,998	4,320	3,284	1,883	19,221
Year 9	2,435	1,626	2,102	1,763	1,094	9,020
Year 8	990	859	1,227	1,646	1,726	6,448
None	58	194	290	405	247	1,194
All	13,020	9,739	11,554	9,327	5,875	49,515
	Not in labour force					
Year 11	5,461	10,934	18,935	13,849	17,732	66,911
Year 10	8,125	13,398	20,002	21,381	38,949	101,854
Year 9	4,098	6,026	9,914	12,982	24,054	57,075
Year 8	2,672	4,586	8,196	15,689	51,235	82,378
None	721	1,776	3,199	4,316	6,587	16,599
All	21,076	36,720	60,247	68,218	138,557	324,817
	Low skill part-time work					
Year 11	2,934	3,807	9,079	7,400	3,276	26,496
Year 10	3,550	4,164	9,216	10,231	6,493	33,654
Year 9	1,126	1,365	3,494	5,102	3,915	15,002
Year 8	381	712	1,666	3,228	4,784	10,770
None	43	131	304	499	327	1,304
All	8,034	10,179	23,759	26,460	18,795	87,227
	Low skill full-time work					
Year 11	5,316	9,843	16,058	12,323	4,471	48,011
Year 10	6,362	10,695	18,118	18,318	8,821	62,314
Year 9	2,059	3,514	7,743	10,127	5,983	29,425
Year 8	707	1,438	3,541	6,775	8,525	20,985
None	68	329	798	1,135	672	3,000
All	14,511	25,818	46,257	48,679	28,470	163,736
	All disengaged learners					
Year 11	17,512	27,647	47,688	35,801	26,404	155,051
Year 10	23,772	32,255	51,656	53,214	56,146	217,044
Year 9	9,718	12,530	23,253	29,975	35,045	110,522
Year 8	4,749	7,595	14,631	27,338	66,270	120,581
None	890	2,429	4,590	6,355	7,832	22,097
All	56,641	82,456	141,817	152,684	191,697	625,295
	Adult Population					
Population	673,895	677,883	741,347	679,517	534,487	3,307,129
	Rates of disengagement (%)					
Unemployed	1.9	1.4	1.6	1.4	1.1	1.5
Not in labour force	3.1	5.4	8.1	10.0	25.9	9.8
Low skill part-time work	1.2	1.5	3.2	3.9	3.5	2.6
Low skill full-time work	2.2	3.8	6.2	7.2	5.3	5.0
ALL	8.4	12.2	19.1	22.5	35.9	18.9

Source: ABS *Census of Population and Housing*, 2006.

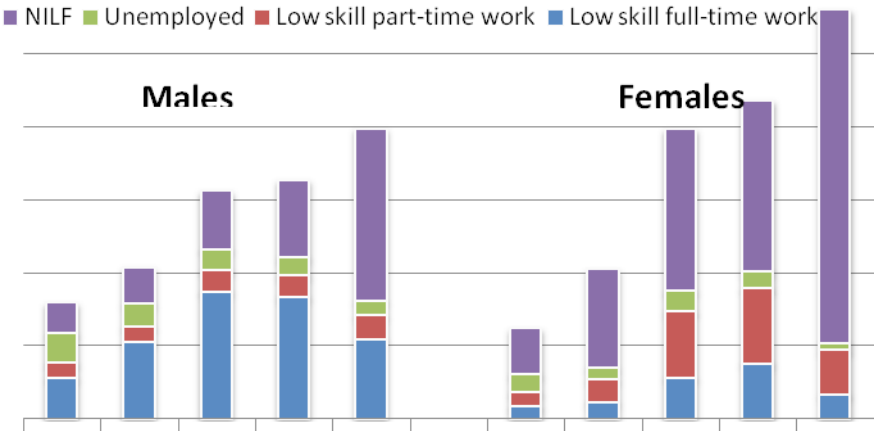
Disengagement and gender

While women now complete school and pursue further study at a higher rate than men, they also make up the largest numbers in the target group of disengaged learners for this review. Figure 2.2 reveals that while men are more likely than women to be low skill and disengaged if they are young (15 to 24 years of age), reflecting in part lower school completion rates and lower participation in further study, women are more likely to be disengaged learners among the older age groups where the numbers of disengaged learners are much higher. The biggest gap is among 55- to 64-year-olds; in this age group, men number 79,602 while women number 112,091.

For young adults—25- to 34-year-olds—the numbers are roughly the same, but the activities are very different. Women of this age are much more likely to be not in the labour force, while men with low attainment are more likely to be in low skill jobs.

The high number of females among the disengaged reflect the gender differences in labour force participation, and in family and caring responsibilities which combine with cultural and structural factors to limit training and employment opportunities. There is some variation by age. Men of middle age—35 to 54—are more often in low-skill work, while women with low attainment more frequently are not in the labour force, thanks to child-caring and family responsibilities. Closer to retirement age (55-64 years of age), both men and women with low attainment are mainly not in the labour force, though the rate is higher for women.

Figure 2.2 Disengaged adult learners in Victoria, by age group and gender: 2006



	15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64		15-24	25-34	35-44	45-54	55-64
NILF	8,441	9,822	15,896	21,256	47,291		12,634	26,897	44,350	46,961	91,265
Unemployed	8,113	6,467	5,894	4,831	3,885		4,907	3,272	5,659	4,497	1,990
Low skill part-time work	4,045	3,997	5,724	5,918	6,583		3,997	6,180	18,032	20,539	12,215
Low skill full-time work	11,239	21,187	34,922	33,454	21,843		3,267	4,632	11,339	15,232	6,622

Source: ABS *Census of Population and Housing*, 2006.

Disengagement and location

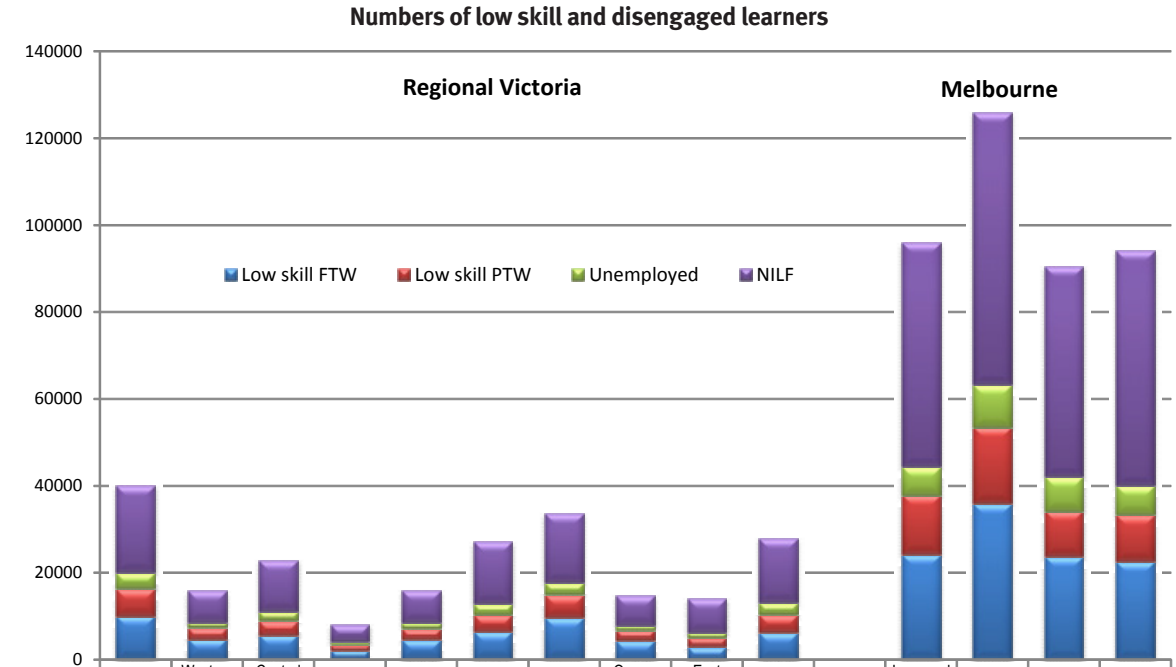
One of the more consistent themes regarding the engagement of low-skill and disengaged mature learners is the significance of place and of locally accessible and relevant training opportunities. The distribution of disengaged learners across regions of Victoria is uneven, as shown in Figure 2.3. The top panel of Figure 2.3 displays the actual numbers of disengaged learners, by region. The bottom panel shows the numbers of disengaged learners as a percentage of the adult population (15- to 64- year-olds) in each region.

Due to the size of the population, Melbourne has by far the largest numbers of low-skill and disengaged learners across the state. Two-thirds of the target group live in Melbourne. The share is marginally lower for those who are in part-time work (61 per cent), or unemployed (62 per cent) rather than not in the labour force (66 per cent) or in full-time work (65 per cent). Melbourne itself is diverse, however. The largest number of low-skill and disengaged leaners is located in South-Eastern Melbourne, including the city and surrounds of Frankston, the Mornington Peninsula and Southern Melbourne. This area accounted for the largest numbers of the unemployed (9,876), those not in the labour force without initial qualifications (62,490) and those in full-time work (35,929) as well as part-time work (17,502). Northern Melbourne accounted for the next largest numbers of disengaged learners not in the labour force (53,939), while western Melbourne had the next largest number of those unemployed (7,915) and the Eastern suburbs had the next largest numbers in full-time work (24,177) and in part-time work (13,601).

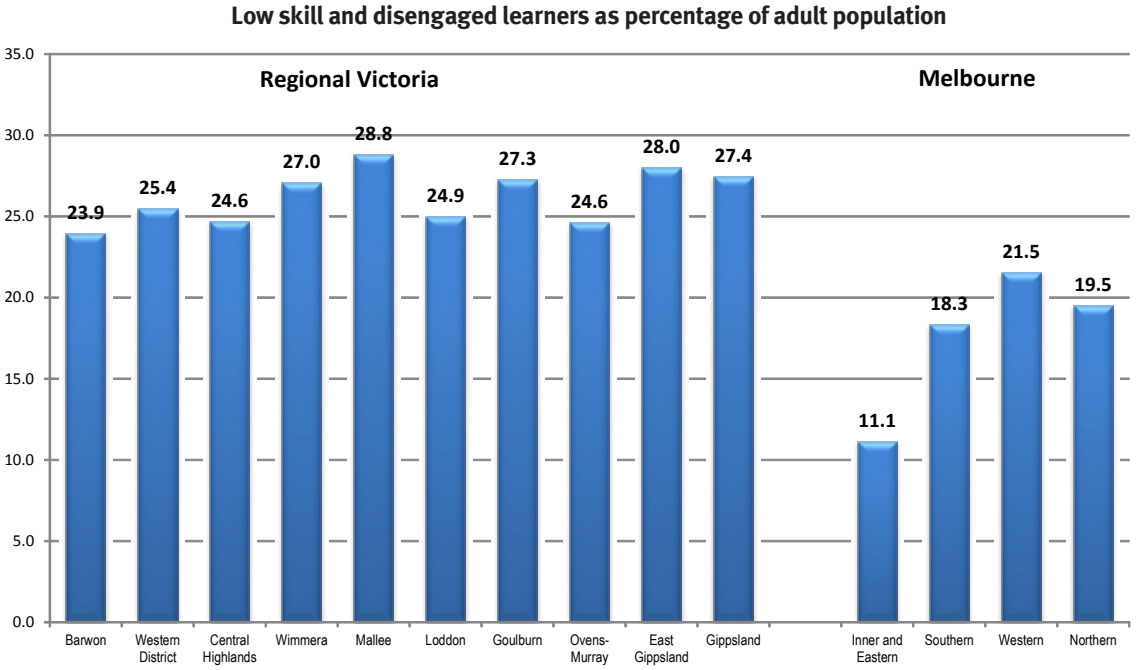
The western, northern and eastern regions of Melbourne had roughly similar total numbers of low skill and disengaged adult leaners, though as shares of the adult population, the regions varied considerably. The bottom panel of Figure 2.3 shows that in 2006 low skill and disengaged learners made up only 11.1 per cent of the adult population in the eastern suburbs of Melbourne, while they made up 21.5 per cent of the adult population in the west and 19.5 per cent in the north. The northern and western suburbs of Melbourne have the largest rates of disengagement expressed as shares of the adult population.

Although Melbourne numbers dominate overall, higher proportions of working-age Victorians located in regional areas of the state are unemployed or not in the labour market and without Year 12 or equivalent qualifications. The rates are highest in the Mallee and East Gippsland—28.8 per cent in the Mallee region and 28.0 per cent in East Gippsland. Compared to the areas of Melbourne, shares are higher in all other parts of the state, ranging from 23.9 per cent in Barwon to 28.8 per cent in the Mallee.

Figure 2.3 Regional Victorians unemployed or NILF and not in study (by region)



	Barwon	Western District	Central Highlands	Wimmera	Mallee	Loddon	Goulburn	Ovens-Murray	East Gippsland	Gippsland		Inner and Eastern	Southern	Western	Northern
NILF	19876	7169	11784	3851	7414	14164	15889	6820	7731	14706		51479	62490	48390	53939
Unemployed	3701	1271	2052	676	1285	2481	2792	1126	1263	2690		6574	9876	7915	6851
Low skill PTW	6305	2653	3321	1305	2547	3928	5324	2408	2130	4184		13601	17501	10529	10682
Low skill FTW	9983	4674	5643	2128	4559	6421	9568	4338	2886	6161		24177	35929	23600	22557



Source: *ABS Census of Population and Housing*, 2006.

Disengagement and labour market attachment

A recent account of adult learning in Australia reported that:

"Most of the learning that ends in a qualification occurs during our working years and in areas related to getting a job and then maintaining and building a career. Research into adult learning also indicates that the bulk of non-formal learning, or learning that doesn't result in a qualification, such as short courses, mentoring, or learning online, also occurs in the workplace. In addition, the vast bulk of government funding for adult education is aimed at workforce participation and productivity and is therefore targeted very much at those in the workforce or wanting to enter it" (Thompson, 2011).

For these reasons, those in the target group for this review identified as in full-time or part-time low skill jobs may be in a stronger position than those not in jobs for gaining access to skills training and pathways to formal education and training leading to qualifications. The workplace, according to Thompson (2011), provides opportunity for skill development and for helping re-engage adults in learning that leads to qualifications. The low-skill adult learners in work account for about 40 per cent of the target group of disengaged learners.

For disengaged learners who are unemployed or not in the labour force, detachment from the workforce carries with it important consequences in terms of weaker access to opportunities for gaining qualifications, and for participating in formal and informal learning more broadly. It places them in a more vulnerable or difficult position as a target group for intervention.

Approximately eight per cent of the target group of disengaged adult learners in Victoria are unemployed. Many in this group are likely to be long-term unemployed because low educational attainment is correlated with long-term unemployment. While many may be long-term unemployed, they are identified as actively seeking work and therefore are part of the labour force. Among disengaged adult learners there is a substantial proportion—over half—who are not in the labour force because they are not actively seeking employment. What is the main activity of this group? How detached are they from the realm of employment?

It is not possible using Census data to accurately identify the activities of this group and their reasons for not being in the labour force. It is possible, however, using the annual ABS publication on *Persons Not in the Labour Force* to gain some insights (ABS, 2011). According to the 2010 publication, excluding those in study, the single largest group of those not in the labour force nominated their main activity as home duties. This activity accounted for about one-third of all 15- to 64-year-olds not in the labour force in September, 2010:

Retired or voluntarily inactive	13.9%
Home duties (c)	34.0%
Caring for children (c)	17.6%
Own long-term health condition or disability	19.2%
Own short-term illness or injury	1.7%
Looking after ill or disabled person	5.7%
Travel, holiday or leisure activity	3.9%
Working in unpaid voluntary job	1.9%
Other	1.9%

A further 17.6 per cent were not in the labour force because of their role in caring for children. Sole parents make up a large part of those in home duties and those caring for children, particularly the younger mothers. Those in these circumstances are particularly vulnerable in trying to make the transition back to the labour market and engaging in study. Research on those in these circumstances highlights poor economic circumstances, restricted support and low educational attainment as major barriers (for example, see Millar, 2010).

Health or long-term injury involved about 21 per cent of those not in the labour force, while caring for someone who was ill or disabled accounted for another 5.7 per cent.

The activities of those not in the labour force vary by age and by gender. Keeping in mind that women make up almost 70 per cent of all those of working age who are not in the labour force, Table 2.2 reflects the role played by caring and family responsibilities in detaching people from the work force. In particular, carer and family formation roles are among the most important factors affecting women's relationships with paid work, the labour market and training.

Table 2.2 Activities of those not in the labour force, by age and gender: Australia, 2010 (%)

	Age group					
	15–24	25–34	35–44	45–54	55-64	15-64
	Men					
Retired or voluntarily inactive	10.1	10.2	5.0	10.3	41.6	24.2
Home duties (c)	8.5	16.5	16.7	13.0	10.6	12.5
Caring for children (c)	4.5	9.5	10.3	3.0	0.8	3.8
Own long-term health condition or disability	34.5	43.1	43.5	52.7	29.7	38.3
Own short-term illness or injury	0.0	0.0	5.7	6.4	1.5	2.9
Looking after ill or disabled person	0.0	0.0	7.3	7.2	4.5	4.8
Travel, holiday or leisure activity	21.7	11.1	4.8	2.0	7.3	7.2
Working in unpaid voluntary job	0.0	0.0	2.5	2.0	4.0	2.7
Other	20.7	9.6	4.2	3.4	0.0	3.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Women					
Retired or voluntarily inactive	2.6	0.7	0.7	6.1	25.3	9.8
Home duties (c)	29.5	40.3	46.6	53.1	39.3	42.8
Caring for children (c)	45.5	49.7	35.2	6.8	1.9	23.3
Own long-term health condition or disability	14.3	5.5	9.8	16.9	12.9	11.5
Own short-term illness or injury	0.0	0.3	1.6	2.7	1.0	1.2
Looking after ill or disabled person	0.0	0.0	4.3	9.5	10.7	6.1
Travel, holiday or leisure activity	3.8	1.4	0.7	1.6	4.9	2.6
Working in unpaid voluntary job	0.0	0.0	0.3	1.6	4.0	1.6
Other	4.3	2.2	0.7	1.6	0.0	1.2
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0
	All persons					
Retired or voluntarily inactive	4.8	2.1	1.7	7.5	31.3	13.9
Home duties (c)	23.5	36.6	39.9	39.7	28.7	34.0
Caring for children (c)	33.9	43.5	29.7	5.6	1.5	17.6
Own long-term health condition or disability	20.0	11.3	17.3	28.8	19.2	19.2
Own short-term illness or injury	0.0	0.3	2.5	3.9	1.2	1.7
Looking after ill or disabled person	0.0	0.0	5.0	8.7	8.4	5.7
Travel, holiday or leisure activity	8.9	2.9	1.7	1.8	5.8	3.9
Working in unpaid voluntary job	0.0	0.0	0.8	1.7	4.0	1.9
Other	8.9	3.3	1.5	2.2	0.0	1.9
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: ABS survey *Persons Not in the Labour Force* (ABS, 2011)

Overall, two-thirds of all women not in the labour force report home duties or caring for children as their main activity, but this varies by age. The level is 90 per cent for those between 25 and 34 years of age, and 81.8 per cent for those between 35 and 44 years of age, reflecting the influence of roles associated with child-rearing during this stage of family life. Lack, cost and quality of child care may contribute to the size of this group. Data from the ABS reveal that in 2010 over 37 per cent of women who reported caring for children as the main reason for not being in the labour force indicated they were not seeking work because of a lack of childcare (four per cent), or the cost (34 per cent) (ABS, 2011). The remainder report taking the carer role for other reasons — one group because they prefer to look after their children (40 per cent) and another because they regard their children as "too young or too old" for childcare (17 per cent).

For men who are not in the labour force, the major factor is long-term health or disability. This accounts for over 38 per cent of all men aged 15 to 64, and for over half of those who are between 45 and 54 years of age. Another category important to why men are not engaged in the labour force is retirement or voluntary inactivity. This accounts for about one in 10 of those not in the labour force between 15 and 54 years of age. For those 55 years of age or older, it involves more than 40 per cent. The rates for men are substantially higher than for women, and particularly in the oldest age group.

The variations in patterns of detachment from the workforce reflect the influences associated with stages of work and family life. The early years (15-24 years of age) reflect a period in which young people, particularly young men, often engage in study and are more likely to travel. In the middle years, from 25 to 44, many more men and women enter the family formation period. Home duties and caring for children account for large numbers of those not in the labour force, particularly women who take on the main carer role. In the older years, caring for children declines markedly as a primary activity, and long-term health issues, initially, and retirement become more prevalent.

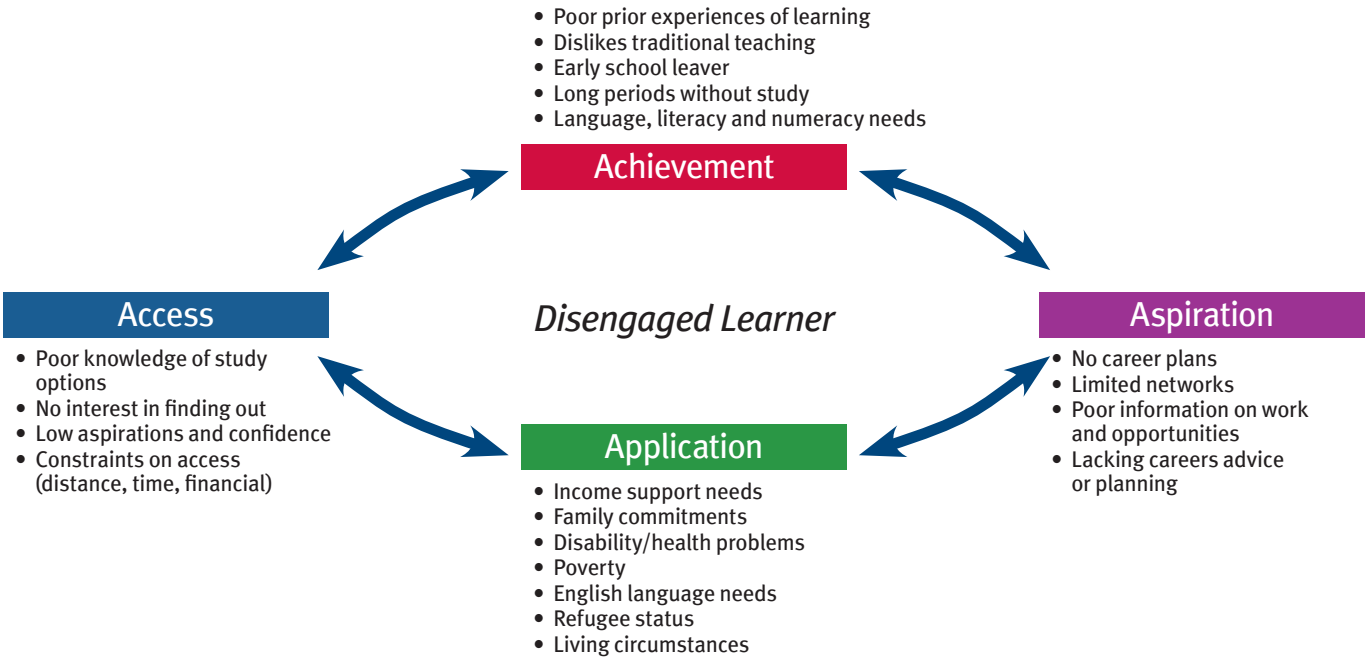
3 Characteristics of disengaged adult learners

What does the national and international literature tell us about the background characteristics, outlooks and needs of disengaged learners? What are key typologies of learners and the theoretical and conceptual understandings of barriers to successful engagement with learning and training for adult learners (including structural and social constraints)? How effective are they in informing and supporting intervention responses and strategies? These are important questions which will be examined in this section.

Backgrounds and needs of disengaged adult learners

There is extensive national and international literature on low-skill adult learners whose relationships with learning and training are disjointed and problematic (Foster, 2008; Hasluck and Green, 2007; NIACE, 2011; Watson, 2005). Members of the low-skill adult learner group are variously described as disengaged, hard to reach, and disaffected; their past educational experiences may not have been positive, their current skills and qualifications are insufficient to provide a secure platform for stable employment or further training, and their personal circumstances may present immediate barriers for successful engagement or re-engagement in education or training.

Figure 3.1 Factors contributing to disengagement



Key factors contributing to disengagement are presented in Figure 3.1. The factors are grouped into four areas, though are interrelated or interconnected. Disengaged learners often confront limited opportunities of *access* to study and training due to a lack of knowledge of education and training options and availability, they often don't aspire to undertake study partly due to a lack of confidence in their learning ability which limits the desire to find out about opportunities, and even if study options are available, access often remains an issue because of constraints linked to costs, time, transport and communication. There are also issues related to previous experiences of learning resulting in low *achievement*, linked to early school leaving, weak language, literacy and numeracy skills which limit capacity to engage in study, anxiety about formal learning which promotes avoidance of participation, and negative views of teachers, teaching and formal study modes. There are barriers to participation which continuously undermine *application* or commitment to study (what is required to apply yourself to a program of study for successful completion), barriers such as family commitments, low income, disabilities, health problems, refugee status, age, and childcare needs. Disengaged adult learners often have limited social capital or networks that link to work and community life contributing to low *aspiration* to work or train, compounded by unformed career plans, limited information on the links between qualifications and work, and a lack of careers guidance and pathways planning.

Disengaged adult learners are drawn in disproportionately large numbers from key groups of disadvantaged Australians: the indigenous population, people with disabilities, early school leavers, the culturally and linguistically diverse including refugees, low-skilled, older Australians without any qualifications, and those from socio-economically disadvantaged families. In Victoria the Adult, Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board has identified nine priority learner groups, which include those just mentioned. It is important to look briefly at how the circumstances and experiences of those from some of these key groups are associated with disengagement.

Disengaged Indigenous learners

Indigenous Australians can experience multiple disadvantages in accessing appropriate training, given factors such as low rates of school completion and limited participation in post-school study, poor health, geographic isolation and distance from training centres, variable rates of educational attainment, lower literacy and numeracy skills and low rates of employment (McGluskey and Thaker, 2006; Productivity Commission, 2009). As a result, Indigenous Australians are much less likely than the population overall to have post-school qualifications with the biggest gap in the 25- to 34-year old age groups, a time of peak employment activity and engagement. At the same time unemployment rates are significantly higher for indigenous groups across all age groups and labour force participation lower.

Patterns of participation in education and training illustrate some of the specific issues associated with indigenous learners as a group: many do not engage in study, and while participation in VET is comparatively high in population share terms, completion rates are not, contributing to low attainment. Furthermore indigenous learners tend to enrol in lower level courses whose pathways and employment outcomes are poor (Nechvlogod & Beddie, 2010).

Older disengaged learners – men and women over 45

In Australia, levels of educational attainment decline with age. Older Australians are much less likely than younger Australians to have completed Year 12, or to have participated in post-school study. As a result, this group has proven to be highly vulnerable to changes in employment and training environments. Global restructuring and the abolition or exporting of low-skill work has led to larger numbers of older Australians being unemployed or disengaged from the labour force altogether. Many in this group are unable to compete successfully against more highly qualified young people, while some older learners also report very limited skills in literacy and numeracy. Hancock has observed that mature workers constitute a significant group of the long-term unemployed, the under-employed "trapped in casual work", and the disengaged including "those who prefer to identify as retired rather than unemployed" (Hancock, 2006).

Structural barriers limit opportunities for older learners to engage in education training. Some aspects of public financial policy in areas of superannuation,

taxation, income support and welfare provide impetus to early retirement or transition to disability status despite government commitments to the extension of working lives (Foster, 2008; Fisher Foster & McQueen, 2005). Access to provision, and program structure and delivery also represent barriers for some mature learners—learning programs and settings tend to be formal and traditional whereas many low-skill adult learners prefer more informal approaches with learning "in situ" including at home, local community or in the workplace (Chappell et al, 2004; Dawes and Elvins, 2006).

Anxiety and attitude are among personal factors that work as barriers to engagement. Older learners with low skills or without positive experiences of education or training are much less likely to engage with training than older adults with post-school qualifications (Foster, 2008). Older learners often have not participated in formal learning for decades and experience strong anxiety about their own ability to engage. Research has pointed to a range of associated issues. A study by Keys and Young (2000), for example, identified a range of barriers including lack of knowledge in using computers, weak skills in literacy and numeracy, resistance to learning new skills, low self-esteem and self- confidence, and difficulty in accommodating and adapting to change, especially changes in practices and technologies. Cameron (2005) has noted that these barriers are not easily addressed by delivery of standard accredited training in formal settings. Rather there is a need for approaches which provide "an empathetic response to difficulties facing mature-age workers, showing how existing skills are transferable and still valid, collaborating with mature-age workers so they see themselves as agents of change, adjusting delivery methods and training in familiar surrounds" (Cameron, 2005).

Early school leavers as disengaged young learners

In Victoria, approximately 19 per cent of young people in school leave school without completing Year 12 (ABS, 2010). While 84 per cent of young people aged 15-19 are currently engaged in education, training or work, 13 per cent are not, and within this group most have left school before completing Year 12 or attaining a comparable qualification (Robinson, Lamb & Walstab, 2010). The short and longer-term labour market outcomes suggest that pathways and transitions represent real challenges for those who do not complete Year 12. Part of this is due to the backgrounds of those involved. In the UK, a recent OFSTED (2010) study identified those who did not complete school certificate and were not engaged in education, training or work as:

"those with low levels of literacy and numeracy, those whose attendance at school was poor, those whose unsatisfactory behaviour led to, or put them at risk of, exclusion, young people with a learning difficulty and/or disability, teenage mothers and pregnant teenagers, young carers, those with health problems, especially mental health problems, young people from disadvantaged or challenging family backgrounds, those with complex social and emotional needs, young people at risk of offending, those who were leaving a custodial establishment, young people who were gifted and talented but had become bored at school, those, especially males, from low-income families where there was a tradition of adults not participating in employment, training or further and/or higher education; and in some areas, some young people from particular minority ethnic backgrounds" (Ofsted, 2010: 9).

A critical issue is the multiple layers of need that many disengaged early school leavers face. Early school leavers tend to have low levels of literacy and numeracy, factors that lead to low confidence and self-esteem and low participation rates in education, training or work. Further factors may compound young people's disengagement from learning, including homelessness, disconnection from families and community, learning or behavioural difficulties, illness including mental illness, and drug or alcohol abuse (Nechovlogod & Beddie, 2010).

Disengaged learners with disabilities

The OECD's *Synthesis of Findings on Disability and Work* (OECD, 2010) examines the extent to which people with disabilities are included in training and work across 21 different countries. In Australia, up to 21 per cent of people are identified as having some form of disability. Early school leaving rates are much higher among those with integration needs, than among those without integration needs (Lamb et al., 2004). In post-school study, it is important to note that while people with disabilities are drawn from all levels of employment and educational achievement, people with a disability generally have lower levels of previous education and tend to take lower level

qualifications in VET, clustering below the Certificate III level. Completion rates also tend to be much lower (Cavallaro et al, 2005).

Barriers to participation for this group are many and diverse, given the diversity of disabilities. Yet, individuals with chronic illness, those with physical disabilities and those with mental illnesses appear to have similarly poor completion rates and outcomes in schooling and in post-school study (Pocock, 2009).

Disengaged learners with low levels of literacy skills

Literacy levels are linked to educational achievement and to the ability to participate productively in education and training. The 2006 *Adult Literacy and Life Skills Survey* (ALLS) showed that approximately seven million Australians (46 per cent) had literacy scores below the minimum level needed to function fully in life and work. The Council of Australian Governments (COAG) recently noted that many working age Australians—15 to 64 years—lack a proficient level of literary and numeracy skills, with more than four in 10 people possessing literacy and numeracy skills below level 3, the level considered by COAG to be the minimum level required by individuals to meet the complex demands of work and life in modern economies. Approximately 15 per cent (2.1 million) are in the lowest literacy category (level 1), while almost half (49.8 per cent) of the working age population have low numeracy skills.

A recent review of adult literacy, language and numeracy needs in Australia has suggested those most in need of targeted support include people with lower educational attainment (Year 10 or less), those unemployed or not in the labour force, older Australians (45 or older) and those from non-English speaking backgrounds (Pocock et al, 2011). Of this group those not employed or not looking for work are nominated by researchers as "those most in need" (Pocock et al, 2011: 43), key groups in the target population of disengaged learners.

Links between low literacy, social disadvantage and social exclusion are well documented. In Scotland, for example, clear connections are made between poor literacy skills and poverty; it is observed that adults living in the most deprived areas in Scotland were more likely to have literacy skills at the lowest end of the scale, as were the unemployed and those on state benefits such as housing benefits and jobseeker allowances (ALIS, 2002, 2011).

Learners from CALD backgrounds

Just over 21 per cent of Victoria's population can be classified as culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) and CALD learners make up a comparable proportion of ACE learners (around 19 per cent) (ACFE, 2011). They are also strongly represented among TAFE learners, especially among older learners (Fels, 2009). CALD learners are concentrated in metropolitan regions of Melbourne but the needs of regional learners are important to consider following the mapping of CALD learner needs in 2011, which identifies significant CALD populations across regions of Victoria (ACFE, 2011).

The needs of CALD learners with low qualifications and fragile connections to the labour market have been well documented in national, state level and local studies (Refugee Education Partnership Project, 2007; Miralles-Lombardo, Miralles, & Golding, 2008; Asylum Seeker Resource Centre, 2010; Australian Human Rights Commission, 2010). Researchers point to recognition of social, cultural and economic factors in programs designed to build language abilities and employability. While research and some consultations point to the strong motivation of CALD learners to secure employment transitions, barriers for "hard to reach" learners may involve inadequate guidance and pathways planning, poor information about training options, and the balancing of family and study commitments especially in contexts of social isolation.

Discussions of the disengaged learner drawn from local and international studies emphasise the layering of learners' barriers to engagement (Nechvoglod & Beddie, 2010; Newton et al., 2005). They flag the need for shared responsibility for disengaged learners' access to and success in education and training programs. Given the multiple range of structural, cultural and personal barriers that influence individuals' abilities to participate effectively in training, "linked up" support addressing social, medical, housing, and educational and employment needs may be required to effect successful transitions, involving an orchestrated approach to support and program delivery.

Responding to the individual learner: typologies of learners and need

Typologies of learner groups are often based on attitudes and motivations towards learning linked to backgrounds and circumstances. They can provide detailed insights into the characteristics of learners which then provide opportunity for the identification and mapping of appropriate learning interventions. A study undertaken over a decade ago in Australia by Dickie (2000), using a market segmentation approach undertook an analysis of the adult learner market, and identified eight segments in the general community, each with different individual learning attitudes, learning habits, demographics, and media/leisure preferences:

1. *Passionate learners* (21 per cent of the community) - people who value learning per se and are likely to continue to learn in the future
2. *Almost there* (six per cent) - those who value learning per se but see barriers to learning, nevertheless showing high intention of learning in the future
3. *Learn to earn* (17 per cent) - people who only value learning related to jobs and qualifications and are highly likely to learn in the future
4. *Might give it away* (seven per cent) - the segment that places little value on learning (second only to Forget it) but shows high intention to learn in the future
5. *Make it easier* (16 per cent) - those who value learning per se but see barriers to learning and are less likely to learn in the future
6. *Learning on hold* (11 per cent) - people who value learning per se but are less likely to learn in the future
7. *Done with it* (14 per cent) - people who only value learning related to jobs and qualifications and are less likely to learn in the future
8. *Forget it* (eight per cent) - the segment that least values learning and is less likely to learn in the future.

Several of these segments include disengaged adult learners. One group, defined as disposed to learn but overwhelmed by constraints and barriers—the "make it easier" segment—includes women over 45, people with disabilities, people not in the workforce, people with low income and those without post school qualifications. This group was identified as the least likely of all segments to have picked up new skills in the past five years and are not interested in further learning for the foreseeable future, due to their personal circumstances and constraints. Another group, the most resistant group, identified as "done with it"—those who no longer see education or training as part of their life trajectories—includes men over 45, people with the main responsibility for caring for dependents, people from non-English-speaking-backgrounds and again people with disabilities. People in this situation often have too many other non-work priorities in their lives to engage in learning.

The importance of the market analysis was a recognition of, and an attempt to capture, the circumstances and outlooks of different learners in order to identify what is needed to help them engage or re-engage in study. The analysis by Dickie (2000) included profiles of attitudes, habits and demographics of different types of learners, as well as a set of strategies to address the needs of the different learner segments in order to improve participation in education and training.

This is a useful analysis for thinking about strategies to address the needs of different groups. The challenge recognised by Dickie is the need to respond to individuals in terms of their current life circumstances, outlooks and opportunities. This requires ways of responding and being sensitive to the needs of the learner, that is, sensitive to the learner's own visions for their engagement with learning, and their current circumstances. Nechvlogod & Beddie (2010) have emphasised that the learner's own needs, wishes and circumstances must be considered as a starting point before any commitments are made to teaching programs or plans. Where the person is located in terms of their learning journey—previous qualifications, length of time since having participated in school or any form of study, literacy and numeracy skills, etc—will inform judgments to be made on achievable outcomes and on estimates of the levels of time and effort involved in "reaching", connecting with, teaching and retaining the student to a point where goals are reached and productive transitions achieved. On this basis the learner's immediate and more contingent needs must be identified, and any education/training plan must address how the immediate needs can be addressed, using targeted resources and realistic time frames. "Soft" entry points recognise that different learners

approach learning in different ways and from different starting points. Meta-analyses of multiple programs for unemployed people from disadvantaged groups in the UK reinforce this point. Identification of the needs and motivation of each individual "is a key factor in the effectiveness of any form of provision" (Hasluck and Green, 2007). It is emphasised that this is not merely paying lip service to a "desirable" ideal; rather that individual orientation and a relationship based focus "may be essential elements in the effectiveness or otherwise of provision" especially in work with the most disadvantaged" (Hasluck and Green, 2007).

Conclusion

Barriers to engagement and participation for disengaged adult learners tend to be a mix of factors that limit access (such as a lack of suitable learning opportunities at times and in locations that suit individuals, little knowledge of available opportunities), commitment to study or *application* (such as caring or work responsibilities, limited income, health, living circumstances), prior *achievement* (such as failure at school, weak literacy and numeracy skills, negative previous experiences of formal study, and anxiety about being too old to learn), and *aspirations* (such as uncertain career plans, weak or limited social networks, lack of information on jobs and no careers guidance or counselling).

The disengaged learner groups that are the focus of this review share low levels of attainment and limited experience in formal learning settings. Low skills limit their employability and constrain their access to and progress in any further education and training. For this reason, interventions to address these factors will need to be sustained and supported over an extended period. Researchers have for this reason identified education and training pathways for this group as "neither simple nor direct"; in fact the need to integrate preparatory with mainstream VET for this group has been highlighted by a number of researchers (Barnett and Spoehr, 2008; Martinson and Strawn, 2003). Appropriate preparatory provision supports subsequent successful engagement but necessarily involves additional resources in terms of provider time, extended periods of course delivery and the provision of sustained individualised services and support. A model of integrated delivery based on managed progression from preparatory to accredited courses would also involve collaboration at policy and delivery levels across sectors – implying the need for new agreements and protocols and new modes of accountability and reporting (Barnett and Spoehr, 2008). Personal support and "wrap around" pastoral care are identified as integral to meeting the needs of those with low confidence, prior negative educational experience, low literacy or unsupportive social and family contexts – and appropriate funding for such care together with appropriate pedagogies and resources are essential "as is training that minimises financial, temporal and spatial disruption" (Pocock et al., 2009: 53).

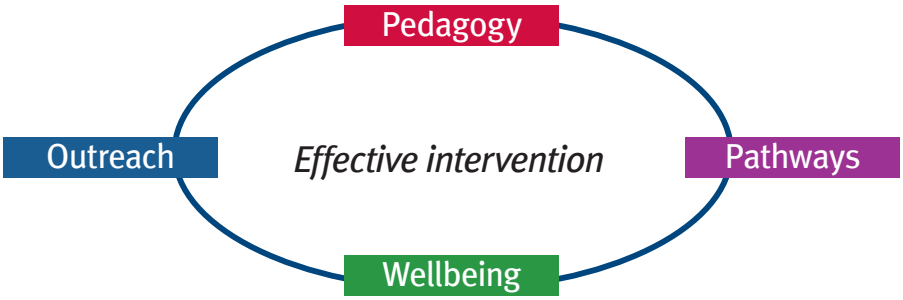
These incentives are more pressing because for many adult learners with low skills there will be a recognition that training itself may well be a low-return activity — the only training and qualifications levels they can realistically undertake may not in themselves guarantee outcomes they seek, such as recognised qualifications that can be converted to work or to increased income. Pocock et al. (2009), echoing this point, noted that although some short-term, low-cost Certificate III and IV courses could deliver a reasonable rate of return for many men and women those returns are unlikely to hold for disengaged adult learners, given the nature of their circumstances, their skill levels, and their previous experiences of formal learning.

4 Effective interventions for disengaged learners

Framework for grouping interventions

There are many ways of classifying approaches or models for re-engaging low-skilled workers, unemployed adults and those not in the labour force. It is possible, for example, to classify according to area of need or type of disengaged learner. Strategies indentified in this review, however, tended to fall into one of four categories related to the focus of the program and the conceptual foundations at play within effective programs: (1) outreach, (2) learner well-being, (3) pedagogy, and (4) pathways. They correspond to the areas of learner needs or factors contributing to disengagement outlined in Figure 4.1. The key areas of focus for successful re-engagement interventions for disengaged adults are displayed in diagram form in Figure 4.1.

Figure 4.1 Conceptual model of effective interventions



It should be stressed that the boundaries between the categories are not always clear-cut. There is not a neat division between the concept boundaries, rather each concept interweaves and builds upon the other. A disengaged learner does not make a linear journey from outreach to pathways. Outreach, wellbeing, pedagogy and pathways are mutually reinforcing and overlapping conceptual foundations at play within effective programs that target disengaged learners.

This section will utilise these four concepts as sub-headings to organise our outline of effective practices. To explore the four concepts, we draw upon interventions that are currently being used to re-engage disengaged learners as well as programs that have ended. The programs we cite are primarily Australian ones, although we also draw upon international examples.

There are many strategies or interventions that target low-skill and disengaged adult learners. However, many have not been properly evaluated, or, due to their small scale or limited resourcing, may not be adequately documented. In most part, we have attempted to identify interventions that have been evaluated as effective with evidence of impact.

Outreach

A key part to a successful program lies in its ability to draw in individuals who may be socially marginalised. International research indicates that "those with the weakest educational backgrounds also participate in all kinds of adult learning activities to a lesser extent than other groups" (Illeris, 2006). This holds true in the Australian context, as "people without formal qualifications, such as Year 12, are the least likely to engage in education and training, in spite of the potential benefits" (Watson, 2005: 13). The Australian Productivity Commission identified that it is hard to improve participation outcomes for disengaged and vulnerable people, as the characteristics of people who readily undertake education and training differ significantly from people who do not (Australian Government Productivity Commission, 2007). Typically, disengaged learners will not approach education or training providers, nor will broad untargeted advertising campaigns result in increased desire to participate, an approach identified as a weak inclusiveness strategy within the TAFE sector (Volkoff et al., 2008). Disengaged learners develop a social distance from education and training, which any subsequent outreach needs to break through.

Providing easily accessible information

Disengaged learners are marginalised in a number of ways and they often live in communities where the "effects of isolation and poverty are embedded within the social fabric" (Millar and Kilpatrick, 2005: 2). Locating services within communities that suffer from high levels of social marginalisation makes it easier to connect with the issues that prevent disengaged learners from participating in education and training. The Brotherhood of St Lawrence (BSL) has a "One Stop Shop" based at housing commission flats that provides easy access for people to link into their services. Melbourne City Mission (MCM) also has shopfront services that encourage young people to drop in and "plug in" to a course, program or pathway. It is important that disengaged learners have access to information within a relaxed and friendly environment that is easily accessible.

The Victoria University (VU) Community Gateways program puts careers educators, teachers and teaching facilities on the road in mobile access vans and portable booths that are set up in shopping centres and community locations. Their outreach service provides easy access and advice regarding further learning, with a focus on people from low socioeconomic backgrounds (Victoria University, 2011). This outreach program is one of several considered by the review that might be described as involving high levels of "front end" activity. The Gateways program involves:

- Career education resources and workshops
- Career counselling by appointment
- Skills recognition advice and referral
- Return to study assistance; and
- Course information – Community, TAFE and University

Participating staff discuss with the disengaged learner their circumstances and provide pathways advice. VU Gateways aims to help the learner negotiate the maze of information concerning courses and pathways (Victoria University, 2011).

The Gateways program is modelled on the *Norwich Learning Shop* (NLS) where 18,000 individuals were recorded as using the shop over a 12-month period (Consultation, Chris Mountford and Gateways Team, VU College Gateways Program, Victoria University, June 2011). A 300-person survey employed in an evaluation of NLS demonstrated that it is effective at reaching people who are thinking about learning and from this group it was able to attract a mixture of people from different ethnic backgrounds and those with an interest in basic skills (Learning Towns and Cities). However, it was reported that NLS is not effective in reaching those who have not contemplated learning — that is, hard-to-reach learners. Other strategies are needed to promote interest from those with no current intention of taking part in learning activities. The evaluation draws attention to some specific features associated with outreach activities, especially for disengaged learners. Institutional information that is more about courses and programs than about learners will have little resonance with the disengaged, appealing more strongly to those whose interest in study is much

more developed and conventionally focussed. The VU Gateways program does attempt to address this issue by undertaking mobile outreach (going from centre to centre) and inviting people to undertake one-on-one learning consultations based on their own hopes and needs, drawing strongly on individuals' own stories. In this respect it is emphasised by the team that people want one-to-one advice and support – information sessions are not as useful as personalised connections, "you will run a workshop but afterward everyone will come up to you wanting personal levels of advice...People need their stories told (and heard)" (Consultation, Gateways team, May 2011). This group emphasises the diversity of their community and the vast array of experiences in people who present for pathways advice. Active listening to the stories of disengaged learners builds trust but also builds the likelihood of development of learning and careers plans that might work for an individual over the long term (Consultation, Gateways team, May 2011).

One evaluation of the VU pilot scheme during 2009 and 2010 saw 100 clients per week use the resources available at the centre and 13 per cent of Community Gateways clients went on to gain entry into a course of study at Victoria University during the 2010 enrolment period (GPT Group, 2011). However, the program does not connect further with students if they enrol at VU, regardless of the level of enrolment (higher education, vocational education or further education). Key expenditures for the program are staff costs for project workers and the purchase, fitting and maintenance of the mobile classroom taken out to local settings. These costs are covered by the University. VU Gateways does not however involve delivery of programs and any evaluation of its effectiveness is challenging. An evaluation conducted at the Norwich Learning shop suggested that although these models of outreach sustain a high level of interest, "a great deal to be done in the development of evaluation strategies for this area of work" (Learning Towns and Cities). Like Norwich, a throughput is recorded at VU but this does not necessarily convert to student enrolments and nor is it necessarily intended to as the emphasis is on well-targeted careers and study advice.

Bringing learning to the learner

An essential part of engaging the low-skilled is to "bring learning close to learners in their communities" (European Commission, 2008: 71). Any outreach and program needs to be accessible, so it can be considered as an easy and viable option to attend. Above all, the learning that is brought out to the learner needs to be meaningful and worthwhile. There are several examples. Outreach in the context of the NSW TAFE sector involves a dedicated community liaison officer who aims to develop relationships with people to "overcome barriers to participation; to deliver community based learning opportunities in partnership with community/support agencies; to develop pathways for tentative learners; and to complement, link with and provide access into other TAFE provision" (Cooke et al., 2010). NSW TAFE Outreach coordinators work with communities across the state of NSW, including rural or geographically isolated areas that often sustain high populations of Indigenous families or refugees as well.

The NSW TAFE outreach program in Northern New South Wales involves learning delivery through a consortium whose members include the TAFE, Nambucca valley Youth Service, Nambucca Valley Community Service Council, and Miimi Aboriginal Corporation. The program delivery model is described as an "in-place" delivery model based on industry clusters. Community learning spaces are embedded with a host community organisation (for sustainability); are inclusive (a place for the whole community to access to learn skills aligned with community and industry), with links to policy makers and champions (someone with high profile to advocate or least support when needed). Many practitioners have written about the effectiveness of the Outreach program in various case studies that highlight their collaborative work within communities, their participatory learning framework and action pedagogy (Cooke, Kenny & Mohk, 2011; Cooke & Kenny, 2009).

The TAFE NSW Outreach budget varies but is currently around $123,000 pa and comprises a variety of different funding sources including in-place Delivery, the Outreach budget, and innovation funds. The consistency of this budget builds some security into the project allowing time and space to plan and progress in ways that are perceived as culturally responsible – to "be responsive and keep momentum going in these communities... I also have had the luxury of being able to slowly build up relationships and trust

in the community (this is particularly important when working in community with high Aboriginal population) (Consultation, Kerrie Bowtell, Outreach Coordinator TAFE NSW, June 2011). Effective outcomes involve "an informal relationship based approach rather than transactional – you come to me and this is what we will give you, off you go" (Consultation, Penelope Steuart, Manager, Social Inclusion & Major Redevelopments and Catherine McGrath, Project Manager, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Department of Human Services, June 2011).

Locating the learning closer to the learner is of particular benefit within rural areas as the disengaged typically do not have the resources to travel easily to education and training. The *Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan* provides support for volunteers to deliver one-on-one assistance to adult learners with low literacy skills within their community (Department of Education, 2010). The volunteers support disengaged learners within public spaces including local libraries and other municipal sites that are easily accessible (Department of Education, 2010). This localised approach may be more appealing for a disengaged learner as opposed to commuting to an RTO. The Tasmanian initiative is similar to a long-term strategy adopted in Scotland. In 2004, the Scottish Government launched "The Big Plus", an adult literacy and numeracy campaign, providing low-skilled adults with personal tuition that was facilitated by a volunteer network (Skills Development Scotland, 2011). The success of this program was achieved by reaching into areas that were considered hard-to-reach for established education and training providers. This form of outreach and program design aims to be appealing with relaxed learning settings and flexibility that can be arranged to suit the learner's work or personal commitments. The Big Plus's recruitment website clarifies the benefits of this localised arrangement: "it's not like being back at school. It's relaxed and friendly and can take just a couple of hours a week" (Skills Development Scotland, 2011). Although the Tasmanian Literacy Action Plan is in its infancy, an evaluation of the Scottish Adult Literacy and Numeracy Strategy, 'The Big Plus', found that adult learners responded well to the campaign, which they felt de-stigmatised adult learners. They identified key strengths of the program such as the informal learning environment, the teaching and learning practices as well as the social opportunities gained through participating in the program (Tett et al, 2006).

Targeting high-need groups

Who's missing out? A study of access and equity in vocational education and training found that "outreach strategies which are community-based, which seek out specific target groups, and which acknowledge complex patterns of disadvantage, appear to have the best chance of increasing VET access" (Considine, Watson, & Hall, 2005: 15). Sandybeach Centre is an example of a successful model within the ACE sector. Sandybeach Centre is a Learn Local provider in receipt of funds from the ACFE Board. It is an independent not-for-profit community co-operative society, serving people in the Bayside, Kingston and Glen Eira areas of Melbourne. The Centre is a Registered Training Organisation and a registered occasional child care centre, offering a hub of educational and cultural activities as well as pre-accredited programs. The participants are adults and young people undertaking a variety of nationally recognised training courses. The centre uses a variety of targeted outreach to generate awareness of their programs within areas that have high concentrations of hard-to-reach learners. For example, they distribute flyers regularly to a community housing estate, flyers that offer a 50 per cent discount to all residents and informs residents about grants that can also cover course costs. The centre also engages in outreach activities including running "taster" courses, which allow residents to trial the courses on offer and function as an informal information session. The centre offers support with other services including childcare and library outreach. Their strategy also involves participation in longer-term community initiatives such as revitalising community gardens, establishing community kitchens that provide a social opportunity and meal for marginalised people as well as workshops in mosaics, pottery and cooking (Bissland, 2011).

Outreach can start with engagement on a personal level that can then be used as a pathway to other opportunities. Sandybeach's outreach strategies were designed to build relationships with hard-to-reach learners. Their program evaluation found that individuals may have experienced life issues that were too overwhelming to consider embarking on education or training when they were first contacted, however "once the relationship is established, enrolments

have followed some months or years later thanks to maintaining a presence and visibility on the estates" (Bissland, 2011: 25). Their strategy recognised the multi-pronged approach required for successful outreach and they critically reflected on each step they took (Bissland, 2011). The project manager, stated that outreach means "you have to be willing to keep on going and not be discouraged...hard to reach learners are wary about participation and you have to be prepared to go back and back and have the funding to do it" (Consultation, Jeanette Brown, CEO and Judy Bissland, Curriculum and Client Services Manager, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011). The targeted work with hard-to-reach learners from the community housing estates increased the number enrolled in Sandybeach courses from 0 in 2007 up to 43 in 2010 (Bissland, 2011).

Establishing lasting meaningful relationships

Outreach is the chance to establish meaningful relationships that can continue throughout the delivery intervention. Melbourne City Mission believes that relationship building from the initial point of contact is the key to holding the disengaged in learning trajectories. A lot of work with these learners needs to start on a personal level that can "use that as a pathway to other opportunities" (Consultation, Department of Human Services, 2011). Relationship building can be supported through the creation of specific roles within the delivery intervention, such as a Student Engagement Worker (SEW) that works within school communities with high levels of disengaged students (Ellterton, 2010). However, supportive relationships need not always be between students and staff. Peer supports can be established, such as through the learning communities model which has been applied extensively in US community colleges. The model emphasises an integrated structure that allows students to get to know one another and form relationships that help them remain engaged within the course (Tinto, 2003; CCRC, 2011). Students may have timetables that involve regular classes with one another, or a class where they have the opportunity to come together that may be focused on student wellbeing or success (CCRC, 2011). Researchers found that students who are involved in programs that have been structured upon the learning communities model, "spent more time together out of class than did students in traditional, unrelated stand-alone classes and they did this in ways which students saw as supportive" (Tinto, 2003: 5). *Hard to reach learners: What works in reaching and keeping them?* describes a similar model within the Australian ACE sector, involving "group learning cohorts", which foster a sense of belonging for participants, provide mutual support and enhance their sense of security (Nechvoglod & Beddie, 2010: 20).

Outreach should not be seen as a single point of contact held at the outset of a learner's journey. The supports involved should extend throughout the delivery intervention. A good example of this is the *Gateway Program* run by Jesuit Social Services, offering a selection of training programs including arts, music, woodwork, hospitality and metalwork to young people from 17-28 years old who were disadvantaged, many of whom suffered from mental illness and substance abuse. The young people making use of the Gateway service have been described as a socially excluded and highly isolated group (O'Donohue, 2007) with extended histories with the health, medical and justice systems. The program's objectives included:

1. To engage at risk young people in a managed and supported developmental pathways and a range of intensive and co-ordinated programs that focus on personal development, education, vocational training and employment.
2. To develop and evaluate a best-practice model of service delivery based on service coordination that addresses the learning, social, health, welfare and economic needs of at risk young people.
3. To share expertise and learning from the best practice model of service delivery with other agencies and to utilise this knowledge for advocacy, policy and service development in relation to at risk young people and their service and support needs.

Two Pathway Support team personnel worked with the project, conducting all intake interviews and assessments and supporting the participants throughout the program, including offering them a supported exit. The role of the Pathway Support workers developed over the course of the program, especially when it was recognised that learners' earlier case managers tended to terminate their involvement with young people on their entry into the program. The support worker role was described as "integral to the success to the program as they have direct input with participants' at the most critical stages – entry, crisis intervention

and exit" (O'Donohue, 2007: 10). The program evaluation identified that the pathways support team was crucial to the program's success as they were able to maintain direct input with participants at critical stages such as entry, crisis intervention and exit (O'Donohue, 2007). Relationships developed within outreach should be extended right through, until the learner transitions out of the program and beyond.

The results of the program suggest that the intensive support succeeds. An evaluation of the program identified that 48 per cent of their sample participated in some form of education or training as a result of participation in the program with a further 38 per cent engaged in some form of paid employment. Many reported positive outcomes in many areas of their life including decreased drug use, positive mental health outcomes and a reduction in the level of offending. The point was made that this engagement was achieved only after long periods of initial connection and trust-building—best results were achieved from young people who stayed in the program for sustained periods of time. In this respect the evaluation report highlighted the importance of building extended connections with young people to continue support and guidance: "another important ingredient appears to be the length of time that participants spend in the program with long term retention in the program resulting in better education, training and employment outcomes" (O'Donohue, 2007: 30).

Wellbeing

Identifying and acting upon the welfare needs of disengaged people is paramount to any successful intervention. Best practice delivery interventions recognise that they are dealing with people who have a variety of structural or situational obstacles before them that affect their ability to learn. The impacts upon their wellbeing are complex including "mental-health, drug and alcohol issues, family violence, no history of people working in the family" – many programs adopt a holistic approach that simultaneously develops supports for addressing personal wellbeing needs while helping the learner access the vocational certificate course as well (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011).

Building in non-academic support

A longstanding international program that targets young mothers with low skill levels is the *Rosemount Lifelong Learning Centre* in North Glasgow (Rosemount Lifelong Learning, 2011). All tuition and childcare are provided free of charge by drawing on partnerships with other organisations. Students receive an allowance if they attend training, which is run over two to three days per week, and they receive a higher payment if they attend for the full course. The young mothers are provided with an intensive program that is run over three distinct phases with the opportunity to gain certificates in First Aid, IT and child development (Meikle and Urquhart, 2010). Rosemount Lifelong Learning draws on a range of organisations in its community area in a holistic manner of care for the young mothers, to provide the supports they need to participate in education and training. An evaluation conducted with 46 young mothers who had taken part in the program during 2008-2009 reported increased confidence and overall enjoyment of the course, with high levels of completion and attrition (Meikle & Urquhart, 2010).

Holistic approaches that cater for overall wellbeing may aid highly disengaged learners. A holistic approach involves developing a range of partnerships within a program that serves the needs of disengaged learners. Sandybeach Centre felt that an important aspect to a holistic approach is knowing where to find the supports and resources in the community that can be brought in around the learner, rather than believing that the program can deal with everything itself (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011). The Pavilion school in the northern region of Melbourne exists as a re-engagement school. The Pavilion started with 20 students in 2009, and it has since expanded to 150 students across two campuses, with many regions interested in adapting the model further (Howie, 2011). Its aim is to re-engage students who have been outside of any education and training for a minimum of three months by creating "a positive relationship with the student" and then using "that relationship to create positive change" (Howie, 2011: 14). The Pavilion offers the Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) program within a targeted curriculum that tackles individual learning deficiencies over a shortened-time period, while meeting the requirements of the certification. The Pavilion school is staffed by professionals who have

extensive experience in both social work and education. Each student's initial contact point is with the school counsellor, who instigates one-on-one therapeutic sessions to talk to students and their families, to identify the support structures they need to have put in place to re-commence their studies and start at the school. The school does not deny the right to an education to any child, rather it increases the supports around the disengaged learner, often drawing on the variety of partnerships it maintains with welfare agencies and community groups, instead of simply letting the learner go.

Taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing

The desire to re-engage a variety of equity groups into education and training may mean that it is beneficial for a program in some cases to target the group and develop client sensitive delivery approaches that address specific areas of wellbeing (Richardson and Teese, 2008). Initiatives that target refugees and asylum seekers provide a range of supportive services to address disconnection upon arrival, such as the Changing Cultures project that was designed to enhance the mental health and well being of young refugees who recently arrived in Australia with severely disrupted or no education (Giddens, 2003: 4). In Shetland, Scotland, a program has been developed for new migrants to the region called "Welcome Point". This program provides a social meeting point for new migrants to get advice, come together, practice their English, meet new people or use the internet to keep in touch with family back home (Scottish Government, 2010). The program supports 60-70 new migrants each year and the numbers attending the "drop-in" sessions are small, to allow for personalised feedback and support. Welcome Point continually conducts self-evaluations of their program, using a template provided by the Scottish government and recent feedback shows that over 80 per cent of service users were very satisfied with the service (Scottish Government, 2010).

A long-term and highly successful targeted initiative is the Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTC) in Ireland that are designed as a second-chance education setting for the Travelling community, many of whom only have a primary education or may not have attended school at all. The initiative dates from the late 1960s and there are now 33 centres across Ireland that emphasise literacy, numeracy, communication and new technology skills, while also offering a range of vocational options supported by work experience (STTC, 2011). The flexible learning program is delivered across 44-weeks over two years and this time length varies according to the vocational certification chosen. Throughout the program the participants are paid a training allowance (WRC Social and Economic Consultants, 2007).

The STTCs have developed positive relationships within the Traveller communities. Their programs have a strong emphasis on Traveller culture including: "décor and artwork, the use of materials that are relevant to the lives of participants (where these are available), involving participants in the development of program content, and supporting the involvement of participants in decision making regarding the Centres" (WRC Social and Economic Consultants, 2007: 33). The STTC programs play a vital role in the lives, welfare and cultural transfer for the Traveller communities. Although the strategy was intended to initially target young people in the Traveller community aged from 15-25 years old, the demand exceeded this scope and the upper age limit was removed. In 2005, 54.5 per cent of participants in the program were over 25 years of age (WRC, 2007). The STTC's success is evident in that the numbers of young Travellers in the program are steadily declining, whilst their enrolment and engagement in secondary schooling has increased (WRC, 2007).

Developing beneficial relationships within the community

Effective programs often draw upon their community to forge relationships that help disengaged learners. Many disengaged learners have not had good or positive experiences of schools and as a result of that there are barriers to them being able to engage effectively. In some cases the wellbeing of disengaged learners may be obstructed by a disconnection between their culture and the formal structures of education and training. A successful approach to combat this disconnection has been to engage a community member, who is sensitive to cultural and social themes and can understand the issues that may affect student wellbeing and their engagement within programs. The *Swinburne Indigenous Youth Re-Engagement Program* ran classes within an informal environment that were supported by an Indigenous worker, with additional support and mentoring provided by Indigenous Elders

and community leaders (Swinburne University, 2010). The program is run at a "socially inclusive community site" and targets Indigenous young people who are currently not participating in mainstream education or employment (Swinburne University, 2010). At the end of 2009, 12 out of 13 participants continued into further education or employment, with some articulating into the VET certification, Mumgu-dhal tyama-tiyt: Learning Pathways for Australian Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Swinburne University, 2010). The Pavilion School also employs an Indigenous Elder who develops relationships with Indigenous students and their families to ensure they come to school. Involving prominent members of the wider community lends the program status that can strengthen participant commitment and sense of wellbeing.

Hubbing

Hubbing of delivery, the drawing together of various services into one location, has been highlighted in a number of programs, such as in some neighbourhood renewal arrangements and in the programs provided by NGOs, like Melbourne City Mission. The model lends itself to areas characterised by vocational disadvantage, or to rural areas where distance imposes significant costs in time and resources for learners, providing accessible one-stop-shop delivery of programs and a broad range of supports. The place based nature of the operation facilitates local partnerships. The breadth of the hub activity reduces any sense of stigma associated with accessing specific support, training or other services and builds educational activity into a more holistic and social framework of community participation. A hub-based provision would allow providers to transfer learners between programs or to suspend participation while learners are dealing with health, family or other personal issues, without losing the learner from training. It would also allow learners to develop a "learning credit" register, recording achievements progressively and allowing exit and re-entry as needed. It would also allow learners to exercise use of a "pause button" from time to time, again without feeling that their progress has been irrevocably compromised. As shown by some programs, the costs associated with this mode of delivery need not be high; the collocation costs would be shared by providers/partners and the primary costs would lie in the staffing of a small coordination team to manage the partnership and oversee wraparound delivery. It might be suggested that such hub activities could be conducted from a local setting based in school/ACE/TAFE or library facilities, linking in with services from municipalities, Centrelink, health, housing, education and training providers and others such as LLENs whose services play a role in the lives of learners and their families. The coordinator and learning support team would serve as the "glue" connecting what is essentially a community partnership.

One model for this role would be the Key Worker role attached to Careers Scotland where the support workers work closely with individuals (young people) customising pathways plans to specific needs. Careers Scotland (CS) Inclusiveness and Key Worker services aim to help 16- to 24-year-olds with additional support needs improve their chances of progression to further education, training or employment. Working in partnership with schools, local authorities, and other agencies such as social services, Careers Scotland looks to build up strong partnership links amongst its partners to ease the transition to further education, training or employment in order to help young people who require additional help. Partner organisations refer clients to Careers Scotland's key worker support network who then provide individual tailored help to clients in helping them to move on. In evaluations this personal and ongoing connection was regarded by those involved as "the most important form of assistance" available to them (Scottish Executive Social Research, 2005).

Giving intensive support through guidance, counselling, monitoring and follow-up

Increasing the overall wellbeing of disengaged learners may require an intensive approach, involving a live-in component of care. There are a number of initiatives designed to provide a place for disengaged young people within residential accommodation whilst they undertake education or training, such as Youth Foyers or the Lighthouse Foundation's places to stay (Martin, 2010; Gonzalez and Hussein, 2011). Youth Foyers provide accommodation, support and security for multi-disadvantaged young people who are at the risk of homelessness. Once these basic foundations to wellbeing are established, each young person has access and typically an obligation to

participate in education, training/job opportunities and work experience. The model has been adapted within various countries and evaluations point to the average length of stay as being generally from 11 months up to two years (Carter and Chesterton, 2009). This model has a high success rate with 75 per cent of international Youth Foyer program participants leaving the program with full-time work or a place at further studies (Martin, 2010; Lovell, 2011). The Victorian Government is currently in the first stage of funding for the planning and design of three 40 bed Youth Foyers in Melbourne and regional Victoria (Lovell, 2011).

International examples include the Danish Folkehøjskoler, or Folk High Schools, that offer non-formal education in the form of residential winter courses of four to eight months or shorter courses of one to two weeks during summer months. Nearly all courses (85 per cent) are residential where teachers and students live together during the program. Living communally allows both students and teacher to form "microcosmic societies, with students and staff living, eating, and sharing the same daily routines together for the duration of the course" (Carlsen and Borgå, 2010). The Folk High Schools provide a "general broadening education" and they are not allowed to award marks or grades, instead they provide the freedom for students to choose their subject area, method of teaching, and negotiate their curriculum. Every year close to two per cent of Denmark's adult population attends a course at a Folk School (Carlsen and Borgå, 2010). The United States Job Corp program is another example of a residential program that engages young people within education and training and removes disengaged learners from their social milieu. Programs can involve short residential components, such as the Rosemount Lifelong Learning program in Scotland which is designed with a few weekend residential stays towards the end of the course for young mothers and children. An intensive strategy to improving student wellbeing may be an effective model for some learners, to ensure that they feel completely supported whilst undertaking education and training.

Providing whole community or familial intervention

Whole community or family interventions represent a holistic approach to "traditional 'silo' service delivery models" (The Smith Family, 2010: 2). The DEECD Extended School Hub is one such initiative that works in partnership with government, local providers and community members "to offer a range of extended services to students, their families and the community" (DEECD, 2009a). Student wellbeing is addressed in NSW TAFE Outreach by providing a series of inclusive learning spaces that are positioned in the community at a number of sites and as such avoids any negative stigma that may be attached to them. They are heavily supported through existing community services and are linked to social enterprises as well relevant industry groups, thus providing credibility and prestige.

There are other delivery interventions that aim to increase the wellbeing of individuals, as part of their family or wider community, such as the Family Centred Employment Project. The DEEWR funded Family Centred Employment project coordinates service delivery to aid overall family wellbeing that is intrinsic to their education and economic participation (DEEWR, 2011b). The families that are eligible to take part in this initiative are those classified as "jobless", "defined for the purposes of the project as a family with a dependent child under the age of 16 where either one or both parents are on income support and have no reported earnings in the previous 12 month period" (DEEWR, 2011b). This approach recognises the multi-generational effects of disengagement, as patterns of disengagement are set up early for young children (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011).

The Department of Human Services' (DHS) *Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies* represent an important Victorian community re-engagement strategy. The Department of Human Services has also been involved in Neighbourhood Renewal across 19 sites in Victoria. The Neighbourhood Renewal Strategies are place-based initiatives developed with an understanding of the people who live in the area as opposed to "generic programs that may miss the mark in terms of appropriateness" (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011). Neighbourhood Renewal has six objectives: increasing community pride and participation, enhancing housing and the physical environment, lifting employment and learning opportunities and expanding local economics, improving personal safety and reducing crime, promoting health and wellbeing and improving

government responsiveness (DHS, 2011b). This approach is comparable to the recently ended UK Learning Communities model that funded the most socially disadvantaged neighbourhoods to improve outcomes in the areas of employment, crime, education and skills, health, housing and the physical environment (Communities and Local Government, 2010). These community development models employ a range of approaches to increase overall wellbeing and recognise the multitude of factors that hinder re-engagement in education and training.

Pedagogy

Pedagogy lies at the heart of effective delivery interventions. Pedagogy is crucial to the learning gained through the program and the richer the learning, the more meaningful the delivery intervention. Engaging pedagogy needs be designed with an understanding of what disengaged learners require, acknowledging their learning interests and building upon their pre-existing knowledge and skills (NVEAC, 2011). It is important for the curriculum to be contextualised for disengaged learners, with a clear connection to their everyday lives.

Making learning less formal

The pedagogies within delivery interventions can be either formal or informal. Although informal learning may be harder to quantify, arguably it is just as important as formal learning for disengaged learners. Some learners may be enticed by informal, hands-on learning opportunities, such as education programs offered within the Men's Sheds (Golding et al. 2007). The *East Reservoir Breakfast Club*, a partnership between Neighbourhood Renewal, Melbourne City Mission and Reservoir East Primary School, was a pre-vocational learning opportunity that employed local residents to deliver a Breakfast club for children. This opportunity re-engaged learners by specific skill development within the food/catering industry and provided valuable work experience as well. Residents involved in the program reported that they felt increased levels of confidence and the project also provided an incentive for children and families to come to school earlier. Due to the success of this project, short-term funding initially provided through DHS has now been taken over by Melbourne City Mission and Reservoir East Primary School (DHS, 2011b).

The ACE sector has been funded by the Victorian Government to offer semi-formal entry level training with vocational intent through pre-accredited training which has been delivered across Victoria for over 30 years. This provides an important stepping stone for people who have little or no recent experience of education, and, for reasons associated with different kinds of disadvantage, find it difficult to commence formal training as a first step. Pre-accredited delivery has a sound pedagogical base through the design and development of a quality framework – the A-Frame – through which teachers and learners interact to contextualise and develop a learning plan that engages the learner in designing their learning pathway and which acknowledges different teaching and learning structures.

A soft-entry point is essential for disengaged adults so that they can build up confidence in the informal learning environment leading on to further education and training. Stramash is a social enterprise based within Scotland to re-engage young people that "uses the outdoor environment as a vehicle for personal, social and economic development" (Scottish Government, 2010). It provides disadvantaged young people and adults with the chance to experience the outdoors and learn new activities. Stramash provides a range of day and residential courses and all disadvantaged participants are offered access to a subsidized place. Since the project began it has worked with over 5000 people, averaging 35 users per week all year round (Scottish Government, 2010). This example of informal learning re-engages disengaged learners easily through the opportunities afforded to experience something different to their everyday life. The outdoor environment may reaffirm the disengaged learner's sense of self and may lead to positive outcomes in terms of future considerations of employment or training.

Providing flexible options

Flexible learning options, including part-time or distance learning, can reduce the opportunity cost of studying. The learning provision needs to meet the specific needs of adult everyday lives, "otherwise there are no incentives for dropouts to return to an experience in which they had already failed once" (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007: 75). Flexible learning opportunities can also be centred on adult learning principles

such as a self directed or co-negotiated learning agenda as a way of empowering the contract with the learner. This flexibility is seen within the Jesuit Gateways program: "Gateway is open five days per week and participants are able to choose their days and hours of attendance. Staff believe that this flexible model of operation is particularly attractive to at-risk young people" (O'Donohue, 2007).

Certain organisations may be able to provide the flexibility in curriculum better than others. NSW TAFE Outreach has educational practices that are based on negotiation and are project based, providing purposeful education with VET accreditation when required. Accredited learning is provided through this model. An international example is the *Swedish Municipal Adult Education Centers* (Komvux) that are open for low-skilled and unemployed adults over the age of 20. Throughout 2002, 4.4 per cent of Sweden's population aged between 25-49 were registered at a Komvux at some point (Stenberg, 2010). Programs run free of charge and provide flexible study options for adults to pursue basic adult education and advanced adult education certificates. Participants choose the pace of study, the place of learning and the form of study (Swedish National Council of Adult Education, 2005). Subjects offered are taken from the Basic or Advanced Adult Education certification and generally mirror those offered at upper-secondary level. However, Komvux also offer alternative programs that work towards the adult education certification for immigrants or students with a disability.

Designing programs with a portfolio approach, rather than a linear curriculum, may suit the learning requirements of disengaged learners better. This can be seen within Ireland's *Back to Education Initiative* that was designed to raise the qualification levels of low-skilled workers in the economy particularly to engage the "long-term unemployed, lone parents, people with disabilities, ex-offenders, people with addiction problems, homeless people, travellers and migrants" (European Commission 2007). During 2005, 22,000 participants took part in the *Back to Education Initiative* and an evaluation found that 55 per cent of these participants were classified as outside of the labour market, of which 55 per cent had been outside of the labour market for more than three years (Further Education Development Unit, 2006). *Back to Education* offers part-time training and education that leads to certification through the National Framework of Qualifications. Participants take qualifications in components, in a modular fashion, that builds up into a whole award over time. The part-time provision is designed to be flexible to ensure that the leaner can "reconcile participation in education with family and/or employment responsibilities" (European Commission, 2007). Disengaged learners may benefit from programs designed upon units of competency that may not be embedded within a certificate. This flexibility allows them to change their minds, move around and find what suits them best.

A program implemented across several European countries and sponsored by the European Commission in the late 1990s was *Second Chance Schools* (European Commission, 2001). This initiative was designed to provide new education and training opportunities for early school leavers who lacked the skills and qualifications to enter further training or the job market. The schools, operating in a range of countries, were organised to fit in with local certificate and labour market circumstances but shared a number of features including flexible teaching modules allowing combinations of basic skills development (numeracy, literacy, social skills, etc.) with practical training in and by enterprises; a committed partnership with local authorities, social services, associations and the private sector; a teaching and counselling approach focused on the needs, wishes and abilities of individual pupils; and a central role for the acquisition of skills in and through ICT and new technologies.

An evaluation of the scheme by the European Commission claimed to demonstrate that the model of recovery schooling had a 94 per cent success rate in reintegrating about 4000 young people who lacked basic skills and qualifications (European Commission, 2001). Of those who entered the schools, 27 per cent had later gained employment, 11 per cent had gone on to other forms of training and education and six per cent had dropped out. A survey of a sample of the pupils reported that 90 per cent felt that their participation in the program had brought about a genuine improvement in their situation (European Commission, 2001).

Addressing literacy and numeracy skill development needs

Literacy and numeracy can often be central to the problems of disengaged learners (Cole, 2004). The Pavilion has an intensive wellbeing component

to its delivery, yet it also maintains a strong focus on literacy and numeracy. The Pavilion prides itself on a strong academic program, as they believe that they have the engagement factors sorted out. Their original program design recognised that a weakness within many alternative education programs was a focus only on wellbeing without a concern for pedagogy. The Pavilion delivers "an academic program that adheres to the standards set by the Victorian DEECD" within a shorter time frame (Howie, 2011: 4). They run a shortened timetable with teachers who have strong relationships with their students. The relationships form the basis of a targeted and focused instructional model, that enable students to experience success every time they enter the classroom. The Pavilion's pedagogical base is constantly evaluated by staff and students, with high levels of success in literacy and numeracy skill development.

Some research has shown that "embedding literacy in VET courses supports learners and develops literacy in a non-threatening contextual environment" (Nechvoglod & Beddie, 2010: 24). Educators may design the initial learning stages by "stealth", with the learner's interest at the forefront and the learning outcomes occurring by default. The Wheels Program run by MCM incorporates literacy and numeracy instruction into a driving skills program. The opportunity to drive is a key incentive for young people who are offered five driver theory sessions and five driving lessons (MCM, 2011). Over the eight weeks participants also have the chance to take part in an accredited certificate such as Level 1 First Aid, Barista Coffee Marking or Food Handling (Workplace Hygiene). Wheels had an overall completion rate of 75 per cent during 2010 and a client tracking project reported positive learner outcomes, with 22 per cent participants in employment, 26 per cent engaged in training and 24 per cent returned to mainstream education (MCM, 2011). There are other examples of arranging the learning by stealth, with the learner interest first but also with strong pedagogy at its core, such as the YWCA Roundabout program in Edinburgh (Scottish Government, 2010).

The pedagogical practices within interventions for disengaged learners are often skewed towards youth, with little attention paid to the learning needs of older learners. Some models replicate the school environment, which may be demoralising or not appropriate for an adult learner whose disengagement indicates that the traditional schooling context didn't work for them. The ACFE Board promotes pedagogic practices for adults, with over 80 per cent of its delivery to learners over 25 years of age. A significant proportion of delivery is in literacy and numeracy and through the ACFE Board owned Certificate in General education for Adults, which integrates literacy and numeracy and vocational skills to support progression to employment and further vocational studies.

Successful adult literacy acquisition is often a social practice, where people develop their skills within purposeful interactions with other literate people. The Tasmanian *Adult Literacy Action Plan* is designed upon these principles with intense one-on-one support provided to learners to support their skill development. The YWCA Roundabout program provides an inter-cultural summer school for children and young people as well as their parents, targeting young single mums under 30 (Scottish Government, 2010). This program provides participants who often come from Black and Minority Ethnic families, with English as their second language, the chance to practice language skills during the summer break within a fun and relaxing environment (Scottish Government, 2010). This program's design is based on the view that purposeful literacy acquisition is developed within social relationships and interaction. The YWCA Roundabout program has provided a place to over 3000 learners during its four-year history (Scottish Government, 2010).

Making learning applied or hands-on

Applied or hands-on learning may appeal to disengaged learners, especially people who may have been excluded from the academic focus of traditional education programs. The practical application of skills is extremely important for hard-to-reach learners, as a more traditional abstracted instruction will only lead to further disconnection and affirm their distrust of educational settings (Consultation, Sally Thompson, CEO Adult Learning Australia, June 2011). The Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL) course is an accredited secondary school certificate that offers a hands-on option. VCAL gives students "practical work-related experience, as well as literacy and numeracy skills and the opportunity to build personal skills that are important for life and work" (VCAA, 2011). These learning

opportunities can prove an effective way to re-engage young people, particularly Community VCAL that is delivered by an external provider, an option available for young people aged 15-21, who are not suited to a mainstream school setting (DEECD, 2009c). A VCAL "taster" course can provide an important link into the Community VCAL program. A report on the VCAL "taster" course run at the Frankston High Street Centre during 2009 found that of the 16 participants involved in the program, 15 subsequently enrolled in the Frankston High Street Community VCAL course and many opted for training areas in VET such as hospitality, nursing, social work and protective care. Students responded particularly well to the teaching and assessment that are underpinned by principles of adult and hands-on learning (Myconos, 2010).

Applied learning is also a feature of the *Youthreach* program, which was established in Ireland in 1988 and had been operating since (see Department of Education and Skills, 2010). *Youthreach* offers second-chance education and training to young people who have dropped out of school early. It is directed at young, unemployed, early school-leavers aged 15 to 20 years and operates on a full-time, year-round basis. *Youthreach* seeks to provide early school-leavers with the knowledge, skills and confidence required to engage more fully in society and to progress to further education, training, and employment. According to the scheme, the objectives for its participants are:

- personal and social development and increased self-esteem
- second-chance education and introductory-level training
- the promotion of independence, personal autonomy, active citizenship, and a pattern of lifelong learning
- integration in further education, training opportunities or the labour market.

The program is delivered through a network of 103 centres for education managed by Vocational Education Committees. The centres in which the program is delivered are out-of-school settings and are distributed throughout the country, mainly serving disadvantaged areas. *Youthreach* centres cater for almost 6,000 learners annually (Department of Education and Skills, 2010).

On average, learners spend two years in a *Youthreach* centre, and while *Youthreach* is a national program, centres are locally managed, and programs can therefore reflect the particular social, economic and cultural environment in which they operate. Courses that are offered in *Youthreach* Centres lead to certificates accredited by the Irish Further Education and Training Awards Council. However, other courses can also be offered and provided, including school and senior school certificates. The courses are often focused on youth work, training, and general education, with a heavy emphasis on applied or vocational skills. Youth work aspects of the program usually focus on social skills training, delivered in informal settings and in an informal manner. The provision of work experience, along with a number of practical or vocational subjects, is a major feature.

According to a recent review, the program worked successfully for many young people, but not for all. Inspections of centres found that, *"the Youthreach experience was working for the majority of enrolled learners. Many centres had succeeded in providing an individualised, flexible and balanced programme that facilitated learners in moving towards positive participation in society. The programmes offered to learners in the different centres varied, and this was due to centres developing programmes to meet the identified needs of their own cohort of learners" (Department of Education and Skills, 2010, p. 74).*

A study of completion and dropout rates from the program found that the dropout rate in 2005 was 21.6 per cent, and slightly higher for males than females (WRC Social and Economic Consultants, 2007). At the same time, progression rates for participants leaving *Youthreach* on completion of their course and moving on to employment or further education and training was in excess of 70 per cent.

Offering programs that integrate technologies

Programs that effectively integrate technology into the delivery and teaching of the curriculum may promote student engagement. The recently-opened Jesuit Social Service's Community College will offer training for young people who are known to the justice system, have complex needs and/or are residents of public housing with low job skills, including recent arrivals to Australia (Jesuit Social Services, 2011). The Community College is located in Collingwood but will offer accredited training in ways that suit people's circumstances – including portable technology (Jesuit Social Services,

2011). Another successful partnership that incorporated information technology was developed by North Melbourne Institute of Technology and NorthStar Specialist Employment Services, where students with various disabilities worked on a social networking site to develop an e-portfolio of their employability skills. The curriculum's IT focus was designed to be appealing to the young people involved and enable them to take away a body of work that they could present to potential employers (NVEAC, 2009). The course involved 10 students during its pilot year, and upon completion, three of the students moved into employment and five continued with further study (NVEAC, 2009).

The Bytes project in Northern Ireland engaged unemployed young people in IT skill building within community based programs. There are 10 Bytes Centres across the UK that have benefitted from funding from the Department of Education, the Department of Employment and Learning and the European Social Fund. The program is targeted to young people aged 16-25 who are registered as unemployed and provides them with a personal computer within a community setting that is overseen by a Development Officer. The participants work towards a qualification in IT that is portfolio-based that will "encourage them to go back into further education or into employment" (European Commission, 2004). The program was based upon an American initiative for 'at risk' young people in Costa Rica, and has expanded across a number of areas in Northern Ireland since 1993 (Bytes, 2011). Programs that successfully integrate technologies into their training model can be appealing to many disengaged young people across the world.

A program in Scotland that has had success in re-engaging youth through the use of technologies is the Transform TV initiative. This program provides students the opportunity to make their own film with professionals from the industry, while "they gain skills in all aspects of the filming process including: lighting, sound, camera work, editing and interview techniques" (Scottish Government, 2010). There are two elements to the program, an outreach video scheme and a six-month training course. All videos are loaded onto a website that can be viewed and shared by young people. Although the training component of the project remains unevaluated at present, an in-depth analysis of the outreach film projects has contributed a social return for stakeholders of almost £14 for every £1 that was invested in the scheme (Scottish Government, 2010). The *Core Connex project*, also in Scotland, is supported by the Scottish Lanarkshire Council and the European Social Fund. The digital media project creates an online world for young people in the area to create their own avatars on a closed website that is only accessible to the young people involved. Whilst online, the young people can use their avatars to access social services and socialise with one another. The project teaches web skills, behavioural skills and general confidence in dealing with the wider community. Most importantly, the online forum creates a space for young people to find out further information concerning education and training.

Pathways

The OECD report, *No More Failures: Ten Steps to Equity in Education* maintains that equity outcomes within an education sector are increased if the system "remove(s) dead ends, offer(s) second chances and provide(s) guidance throughout the transitions involved" (Field, Kuczera, & Pont, 2007: 78). An effective program ensures that it keeps these principles in mind, especially with an eye to transition points. A characteristic of many disengaged learners is that they "cannot see the connection between training, jobs and career progression" (McGivney, 1992: 5). Creating and presenting appealing and worthwhile pathways for learners that reach beyond the program are the vital final component to effective interventions.

Embedding pathways in the program

Programs that develop student pathways and build them in from the start are extremely important for a disengaged learner. Examples of embedded pathways within a program may include role modelling, work experience or engagement with industry. All these program components require careful handling and management to ensure they form the foundation for an effective pathway for a disengaged learner.

The *American Job Corp* program is an approach that embeds career pathways planning in the design and development of individualised education and training plans. The scheme provides hands-on career technical training within a wider educational program for young

people aged 16 to 24 years old (Job Corps, 2011). Students are provided with accommodation, food and money throughout the course, as well as access to services including health and child care. Early on the learner develops a personal career development plan (PCDP) that informs all further stages of the program including career preparation, career development and the career transition. Upon completion, the learner is provided with up to 21 months support to ensure a smooth pathway into further education or employment. This longstanding program scaffolds the learner clearly through the program and into a suitable pathway. A nationally representative evaluation of the program found that it was one of few programs that was effective for low-income youth who had dropped out of school of obtaining high school equivalent qualifications (Schochet, Burghart, McConnell, 2008). The student outcomes data reflects the strength of the program, during 2008, 59,357 students took part in Job Corp and of these students, 66 per cent entered employment or education, 55 per cent attained a HSD/GED or vocational certificate and 58 per cent reported literacy and numeracy gains (Job Corps, 2011).

Transition should not come as an isolated step, rather it should be embedded within all components of delivery (Brown & North, 2010). Involving guest speakers and mentors in programs, for example, can provide a perspective for learners as they consider their options once the program has ended. Mount Beauty Neighbourhood House developed a Secret Men's Business course that leads towards the attainment of a Certificate II in Hospitality (Grosse, 2011). The program specifically targeted blue-collar workers in the area who were retrenched or had retired early. A series of guest speakers came to speak to the men about the hospitality industry. They specifically chose speakers who the men could relate to, to help break down the assumption that hospitality was only a women's area of work.

Mentors can provide an important link that will strengthen the learner pathway. The BSL's Given *the Chance* (GtC) program is an employment and education pathways program for refugees with a strong mentoring component. An evaluation identified that the participants found "mentoring was the most beneficial aspect of the program, they particularly emphasised its contribution to expanding social networks" (Mestan, 2008: v). Participants develop relationships with their mentors, who support them while they undertake work placements and training. The Given the Chance Program recognised that "work placements offer refugees the opportunity to get acquainted with the work culture in the resettlement country, improve vocational language skills and build references for their resumes" (Mestan, 2008: 12). Work experience supported by the mentoring relationship allowed these participants to demonstrate their skills and experience within a new country. A high percentage of *Given the Chance* participants achieved successful employment and/or education outcomes following the program (66 per cent) (Mestan, 2008).

Providing work experience opportunities can also be valuable in creating connections between the delivery intervention and the wider community. The Department of Human Services went into partnership with the Darebin City Council to provide work opportunities for disengaged learners in the community under Neighbourhood Renewal. Through consultations with the community many residents identified a lack of flexible and local job opportunities within the area. In response, training opportunities were developed that allowed disengaged individuals to pick up the skills required for entry-level positions within administration and customer service roles. The participants were given the chance to complete work experience at the council and use this experience to apply for vacancies that arise at the council, or in other similar fields (DHS, 2011a). Through this program, all participants received accreditation for the Certificate III in Transport and Logistics and all had the opportunity to gain a forklift license, First Aid certificate and HR license. Four out of nine participants went on to register as casual workers with the council (DHS, 2011a). Work experience can allow participants the opportunity to apply in a practical way their developing skills and gain self confidence.

The Victorian Careers Curriculum Framework provides a scaffold for a career development program for all young people from Years 7-12 in government and non-government schools and for young people in the Adult Community Education (ACE) and TAFE sectors. The Framework supports the work of teachers, trainers and careers practitioners in the preparation of young people to make a successful transition into further education, training or employment and focuses young people's attention on

recognising or creating opportunities, making informed choices and defining and achieving their career goals. At each stage of their career development journey, young people should develop and revisit an annual Career Action Plan that reflects their increased learning, builds on previous planning and identifies future actions. The Framework has additional guidelines and customised Career Action Plans for four targeted cohorts: Koorie, English as a Second Language (ESL), Low SES communities, and young people with disabilities. The Framework provides the basis for an embedded approach to career education and is focused on providing opportunities for young people to advance their capabilities in managing their own career development. It is best delivered within a whole-school or organisational approach to career education. This holistic approach will give all partners in the process an opportunity to provide valuable input into the career development needs of young people. The Framework is mapped against the Victorian Essential Learning Standards and the Australian Blueprint for Career Development and as the new Australian Curriculum is implemented in Victoria, the Framework will be updated as appropriate.

Establishing connections with community and other institutions

Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN) work to improve the transitions into education, training and employment for young people between the ages of 10 to 19. There are 31 LLEN providers in the state and they work with their respective communities through fostering connections between the DEECD, education providers (training providers, Government and non-Government schools), industry, local government and community organisations (DEECD, 2009b). The North Central LLEN developed a new VET Community Services program with direct links into employment within their community in childcare and aged care sectors. This direct connection to viable employment and training futures is to give students who are considered "at risk" the incentive to stay at school by developing an employment prospect and concurrently helps the area with their skills shortage (DEECD, 2010b). This is similar to a successful program in Spain designed to combat social exclusion called "Opening Pathways". The Spanish program was initially developed with the support of the city council of Lugo and the European Social Fund to help combat the rising unemployment in the region that had particular impact on older workers and women. The training courses were in the areas of community service, childcare, aged care or work with the disabled. These areas were identified as having plenty of employment opportunities as well "they often do not require high levels of qualifications" (European Commission, 2004). Two hundred and ten people were involved in the first year of the Opening Pathways program, with 194 participants completing the training and subsequently 93 of these participants finding work (European Commission, 2004). The success of the model has meant that it has since become adopted in eight other regions in Spain.

Successful programs tap into the variety of resources around them to deliver positive outcomes and nuanced pathways. The BSL's *Centre for Work and Learning* (CWLY) is responsible for many projects that work closely with Job Services Australia providers, employers, enterprises, industry groups, training organisations and community and government support services. The Centre runs a range of initiatives that support learners with accredited and non-accredited vocational training within community projects. These community projects create paid and unpaid work experience opportunities and "increase access to life skills education such as English and financial literacy training" (BSL, 2011a: 5). The view of BSL is that training and work experience must provide a line of sight into open employment (BSL, 2011b).

MCM and the Darebin council are partners in a program for adult disengaged learners that involves work experience and site visits with post-program employment opportunities within aged and community care and municipal services such as garbage collection and cleaning. Melbourne City Mission believes that adult learners respond best to "place-based responses" where learners are overtly and strategically connected into work within their own community. This place-based approach minimises travel time that can be a major barrier to re-engaging learners and most importantly they bring to the work local knowledge, commitment and connection that adds value to the community.

Using intermediate labour market approaches

Intermediate Labour Markets or social enterprise is an effective approach that

hooks the learning into employment right away. The *Intermediate Labour Market* (ILM) model "provides a period of transitional employment which allows on-the-job skills development and the learning of work requirements but removes the risk from employers during the period" (Ziguras and Kleidon, 2005: 6). The model typically combines on-the-job training, so that learners are provided with the practical skills and experience, while undergoing the formal certification required by the industry. The programs generally last 12-18 months, with pre-employment work, a traineeship and then post-placement support. An example of this is the AMES/BSL cleaning partnership that targets the long-term unemployed, particularly those from CALD backgrounds and public housing tenants (Social Traders, 2009). Participants are given a 12-month contract which involves working part time with commercial cleaning contracts along with on-the-job training leading to a Certificate III in Asset Management (Cleaning and Operations). Of the first group of 12 trainees, 11 (90 per cent) completed the traineeship and all eleven moved into full-time work (Ziguras and Kleidon, 2005). Another ILM adopted by BSL and DHS is the Community Contact Service that employed residents within the public housing towers in Fitzroy, Collingwood and Richmond as concierges whilst participants concurrently undertook accredited education (Social Traders, 2009). The social enterprise offers 20 positions annually, with 80 per cent of participants moving into employment or further education upon completing the program (Social Traders, 2009). The success of these ILM programs is that they provide "intensive personal support at the same time as training and employment assistance" to overcome barriers with a focus on employment outcomes (Ziguras and Kleidon, 2005: 6).

Mission Australia's *Charcoal Lane* is a restaurant which provides hospitality training and personal development for Aboriginal and disadvantaged young people in partnership with the Victorian Aboriginal Health Service and the William Angliss Institute of TAFE. *Charcoal Lane* provides support, life and employability skills in a real work setting, with a six month program to enable Certificate II in hospitality for 30 trainees each year and a 12-month program for Certificate III in hospitality for 15 apprentices each year. Another social enterprise is the *Sliding Door Cafe*, a partnership between RTOs, local council and NGOs which provides on-the-job training for young men and women interested in re-engaging in education or training while gaining certificates in Food Safety and Hygiene, preparing and serving espresso coffee, sandwiches, food, non alcoholic beverages and Responsible Service of Alcohol. The cafe is only open during school hours and on weekdays to provide flexible arrangements for participants.

Social enterprises that are set up for disengaged learners require business or industry support. Organisations and institutions need to enter into business with the social initiatives; otherwise they have no market to operate in. DHS has implemented several supportive social procurement strategies, including building in social benefit clauses into their new contracts for housing commission construction sites. The social benefit clause specifies that "tenderers are requested to consider and propose ways in which the project could be used to provide broader social opportunities for public housing tenants, the wider community or, alternatively, what opportunities may be capable of provision by the tenderer beyond this contract" (Department of Human Services, 2011). Generally this clause has led to the contractor providing on-the-job training to selected housing commission residents during the site construction. Initiatives that support social enterprises are an important part of the work to re-engage disengaged learners.

Integrating work-based learning programs and supports

Work-based learning programs can be an effective way to reach low-skilled workers and provide them with the chance to up-skill and gain qualifications. They are a different type of re-engagement strategy to those developed for adults who are unemployed or not in the labour force largely in that the programs involve delivery of training within workplaces with some of the training being industry specific, but other programs providing more generic skills training for workers.

The incentives for participation also distinguish workplace-based programs from those for the disengaged adults who are unemployed or not in the labour force. A study by Pocock et al. (2011) on work and VET participation for low-skilled workers reported that the motivation to take part in education and training for low skill workers is sometimes linked directly to a career pathway in the workplace or

to promotion. Other more immediate motivations can also play a part. Evidence presented by Pocock et al. (2011) indicated that low-paid workers often undertake training to retain their job, rather than to gain career progression or higher pay.

While the incentives to participate may be more instrumental and the opportunity to intervene more concrete, effective workplace programs for low-skill workers still need to address many of the same needs identified for unemployed disengaged adults and those not in the labour force. For example, the programs often need strong outreach to bring in the various stakeholders, while wellbeing components are needed to factor in supports for learners who may not have participated in education and training for some time and have significantly higher work-life interference. Pedagogies also have to be meaningful, relevant and good quality, with solid interconnection between workplace and industry need (Pocock et al., 2011). Workplace programs also are often dependent on the support of employers in providing release time, and encouraging participation.

There are many workplace-based programs that have been documented in the literature, ranging from national schemes down to localised one-off individual site initiatives. Several key ones are outlined here.

Workplace English Language and Literacy (Australia)

One example of such a workplace initiative is provided by the *Workplace English Language and Literacy* (WELL) Program established in Australia. This program began in 1991 combining English as a second language (ESL) training formerly operated by the Department of Immigration and Ethnic Affairs with a workplace literacy program managed by the Department of Employment, Education and Training. The aim of the program is to assist workers, particularly recent immigrants and others with weak English language skills, acquire English language and literacy skills to a sufficient standard to enable them to meet the demands of their current employment and provide a foundation to further study leading to qualifications and better meeting future employment and training needs. Through the program, enterprises can access government funding for the delivery of accredited training. The training, mostly delivered at the workplace, is often organised through "program contractors" such as unions, enterprises, TAFE institutes, Adult Migrant English Services (AMES), private providers and community providers.

Funding is provided on a competitive grants basis for organisations including businesses, Commonwealth and State/Territory departments, representative bodies and registered training organisations (RTOs) to help workers develop English language, literacy and numeracy skills that can serve their current employment as well as future training and employment needs (Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, 2011a). Organisations applying for WELL funding must meet a set of criteria. The resources developed must have a national focus, be linked to appropriate training packages and address language, literacy and numeracy issues for a specified industry (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006). Further criteria involved in obtaining WELL funding is that successful applicants are "required to make a cash contribution to the provision of WELL training of at least 25 per cent in the first year, increasing to 50 per cent in subsequent years, to a maximum of three years" (Department of Education, Science and Training, 2006: 17). This condition ensures an ongoing and sustainable partnership between government and industry partners and is similar to those in place in many other OECD countries.

There have been two major reviews of the impact of the WELL program. The first was conducted in 1995 and involved a survey of 10 per cent of projects funded over three years to 1994 (DEET, 1995). The survey comprised telephone interviews with project personnel, workplace and union staff, training providers and project participants, and face-to-face interviews with 50 representatives of key agencies involved in the program. The evaluation attempted to assess the impact of WELL projects on workplaces in terms of outcomes for participants (achievement of credentials, confidence and work orientation, participation at work, career pathways), outcomes for project personnel, and outcomes at the enterprise level (communication practices, commitment to training, links between training providers and enterprises, industry commitment to training). The review reported that at the participant level, one of the main outcomes cited by survey respondents was increased confidence leading to enhanced participation in training,

interaction with management, and work commitment (DEET, 1995). Greater participation in work, based on the acquisition of better literacy and English-language skills, was also cited as another major outcome for participants. Evidence was also provided of pay and careers advancement linked to participation in WELL projects. At the enterprise level, the majority of informants considered the WELL program to have had a significant impact on facilitating reform in their enterprises leading to improved communication practices, stronger commitment to and awareness of workplace training, and improvements in identification of professional development needs. The results of the survey suggested that WELL had led to improvements for low skilled participants in skill development and, more importantly, a greater preparedness to participate in education and training in the longer term. However, specific data concerning the impact of WELL projects was not systematically recorded or maintained over long periods of time which would be necessary to provide a more rigorous assessment of the benefits of the program.

The second major review of WELL was published in 2006 and was based on surveys, interview and focus groups with program participants (employers, employees and RTOs) and other key stakeholders (DEST, 2006). According to the review, participating employers reported that the WELL program had contributed to improved team work and communication in their workplaces, a more flexible workplace, improved career pathways for participants and improved productivity. The review did not report hard data on individual and workplace gains associated with the program, but survey feedback from participating employers, employees and training providers suggested that the program did deliver important outcomes. One concern, however, was that the program was mainly taken up by large employers (over 100 employees) rather than small to medium sized businesses where many low-skilled workers may be located.

Basic Competence in Working Life (Norway)

The Norwegian *Basic Competence in Working Life* (BKA) Program was established in 2006 with the goal to stimulate businesses to initiate training programs for their employees and to strengthen basic skills in reading, writing, numeracy and ICT amongst adult employees or job applicants and to increase participation rates in education and training programs. The program was implemented by Vox, the Norwegian Institute for Adult Learning, on behalf of the Norwegian Ministry for Education and Research (European Commission, 2010). The program's objective is to assist adults with basic skills required in order to cope with the "demands of the labour market and processes of reorganisation, and thereby prevent persons with weak basic skills from being excluded from the labour market" (Vox Mirror, 2010: 26).

Within the Norwegian *Basic Competence in Working Life* program, the vast majority of courses are initiated through collaboration between industry and education providers. An application for funding under the scheme can be made by employers or course providers. For employers, the target may be their own employees or personnel from other businesses as well, in collaboration. Course providers can apply on behalf of several enterprises, and groups of enterprises can organise joint training programs. Trade unions and employer organisations can also apply on behalf of businesses, sometimes in conjunction with course providers. Course design is adapted to the needs of the company, based on the profile and needs of the employees, and the training needs to sit within the Competence Goals of the Vox adult framework (European Commission, 2010). The program concentrates on reading, writing, numeracy, and ICT skills. Any enterprise in Norway, private and public, can apply for funding from the program to support training where the learning activity is combined with work and the training is linked to other job-relevant learning. A focus is on strengthening participants' motivation to learn by combining learning with motivational activities is considered vital.

Success of the program has been measured mainly by the reach of the scheme in terms of numbers of applications, the number of participating businesses and the numbers of participants. The scheme commenced in 2006 with 64 successful applications and reached over 204 successful applications in 2010. The numbers of participating employees increased from 2,032 to well over 3,000 over the same period, and the number of businesses involved had trebled from 134 in 2006 to over 400 in 2010 (Vox Mirror, 2010). The participation data suggests that the program has been successful in reaching large numbers of low-skilled adults.

Workplace Education Initiative (Canada)

Several Canadian provinces have instigated schemes to try and address the education and training needs of low

skill workers. One key example is the Workplace Education Initiative (WEI) in Nova Scotia, an initiative that provides on-the-job training customised to the requirements of the organisation or industry, with a focus on small business and workers in transition (Myers & de Broucker, 2006). WEI uses a partnership model linking government, business, and industry, and aims to cultivate a culture of learning within workplaces. The WEI program is advertised and promoted through business associations, community organizations, labour unions and the public media. Participating employers undertake training needs assessments of employees which then allow the business to customise the program to the skill set of workers and the employer's business. This flexibility allows the programs to respond to the needs of large and small businesses, of apprentices, of displaced and unemployed workers, and of specific industry sectors.

WEI begins when an employer or employee group expresses interest in having an essential skills training program in their workplace. At this point, a project team is established made up of various representatives of the organisation, including a designated instructor, and a Skill Development Coordinator assigned from the Department of Labour and Workforce Development. The project team becomes responsible for the implementation and progress of the initiative within the workplace. The program team starts by conducting individual needs assessments of the employees and an assessment of the organisation as a whole. This helps determine the essential skill units required that include areas such as numeracy, reading , writing, document use, oral communication skills, working with others, continuous learning, thinking skills and computer use (Department of Labour and Workforce Development, 2010). The resulting training plan is then endorsed by a joint employer-employee project team, before being implemented at the site. Classes are structured according to adult learning principles set forth by organisations such as the Conference Board of Canada, who has done important work in mapping success factors for workplace literacy programs (Conference Board of Canada, 2005). Classes involve seven to 12 participants, and participation is voluntary. Instruction is typically delivered in two- to four-hour blocks, over a set term which can range from 40 to 120 instructional hours (Department of Labour and Workforce Development, 2010). Through the project team, the Workplace Education Initiative aims to foster a culture of ongoing learning within the workplace.

In terms of funding, the Nova Scotia Department of Labour and Workforce Development provides the costs for the workplace education coordinators, the initial assessment costs, the instructor costs associated with course development, delivery as well as funding to support tutoring for registered participants (Department of Labour and Workforce Development, 2010). Workplaces are expected to make a co-contribution of time release, teaching space, materials and supplies.

Evaluations of the initiative have found that for those organisations that participate there is often a high rate of success as measured by completion and enhancement of skills. According to one evaluation, up to 87 per cent of participants successfully complete workplace education courses at their work sites, and up to 73 per cent of participants who were surveyed indicated that they would not have enrolled in essential skills or academic upgrading programs if these were not offered within their workplace (Kelly, 2000). While participants have very positive views of the program and its impact, one concern expressed about the program has been its limited uptake. According to the Canadian Council on Learning (2009), despite its proven effectiveness, there is only a limited proportion of the workplaces in Nova Scotia that have participated thus far, despite considerable effort having been expended to inform employers, employees and the wider community about the program.

Workforce Development Partnership Program (United States)

A number of states in the US have also implemented targeted initiatives to provide workplace training for low skill workers. One of the more successful schemes is the New Jersey *Workforce Development Partnership* (WDP) Program, one of the largest state-subsidized, firm-based training programs in the US (Van Horn & Fichtner, 2003). The WDP consists of two parts. One part involves grants paid to partnerships developed between employers and training providers, to provide low-skilled workers with forms of work-based technical training designed to meet the particular needs of the employees and the employer. The second part is the "Supplemental Workforce Fund for Basic Skills", which

provides grants for "literacy training" (basic reading and math and ESL) (Martinson & Halcomb, 2007). Employers can apply to receive the customised training grants, grants for basic literacy or a combination of both. The New Jersey WDP also provides grants to community-based organisations or community colleges to provide basic skills training for unemployed or underemployed individuals. This element of the program means that smaller organisations can choose to send their workers into these educational organisations to take up the opportunities that funding affords, if it is not viable to hold learning on-site.

The New Jersey WDP draws upon employer unemployment insurance taxes to pay for the Workforce Development Program. As part of the grant applications, employers need to guarantee that they will continue to pay their employee wages whilst they attend training. The program has been found to attract a range of low-skilled workers, including welfare recipients and immigrants due to its basic skills component (Martinson & Halcomb, 2007). Workers are also encouraged to talk to careers counsellors at One-Stop Career Centres to ensure a good skill fit with the training gained. One program evaluation found that 86 per cent of firms involved in the program used the scheme to train production workers, many of whom were paid on an hourly basis and in non-supervisory positions. These participants were often individuals with a high school level education or less (Van Horn & Fichtner, 2003).

Career Pathway Initiative (United States)

Another US workplace learning program is Kentucky's *Career Pathway Initiative* (CPI). The CPI is overseen by the Kentucky Community and Technical College System to connect "education and training programs with support services to help people — especially those who are most disconnected and disadvantaged — gain employment and/or advance within an occupational or industry sector" (Kentucky Community and Technical College System, 2011). The career pathways model has been recognised to meet "the interdependent needs of two major groups: *businesses and individuals*' or in other words, to bring "supply and demand to the table" (Jacobs & Warford, 2006). Based on employer input, career pathways lay out a sequence of connected skill upgrading and job opportunities, with each education step on the ladder leading to a job or further training. The career pathways are primarily credit-based training that may be augmented with non-credit customised training as necessary.

As part of the initiative, community colleges receive a grant to design career pathways with employers and other stakeholders who are from industry sectors including manufacturing, health, construction and transportation. "Career ladders" are conceptualised in the partnerships that focus on job and educational advancement for low-income individuals that also meet business need (Jacobs & Warford, 2006). Community Colleges design and implement "bridge programs" that teach basic skills in the context of training for specific jobs. These programs are designed to articulate into "certificates, diplomas, and associate's and bachelor's degrees for those students who wish to pursue additional education" (Jacobs et al, 2006). The community colleges offer curriculum in modules, during times such as the evening and weekend and hold them at alternative sites including workplaces. Alongside the pedagogical content, wellbeing factors are built in, including access to child care and transportation, financial aid, tutoring, academic advising, career coaching, and job placement (Martinson and Halcomb, 2007).

Evaluations of individual programs suggest important outcomes for individual workers and for employers (Martinson & Holcomb, 2007). However, the evaluations also suggest that the programs can be large and require the involvement of multiple partners and approaches, including workforce development, community colleges, the business community, unions, and community groups, which can be difficult to coordinate and organise. Also, such collaborations are dependent on employers who are willing to contribute staff time and financial resources.

Workforce Skills Qualifications and Workforce Skills Training (Singapore)

The Singapore Workforce Skills Qualifications (WSQ) framework is a nationally recognised competency-based training system developed with the main aim of upgrading and re-skilling the workforce. It is a national continuing education and training system designed for adult workers which complements the formal education system for secondary and tertiary students. WSQ training is accessible to all workers and does not require academic pre-requisites. It is based on industry agreed national skills standards, and courses only cover skills training which is determined by employers to be relevant to prevailing occupations in the industry. WSQ training is quality assured by the

Singapore Workforce Development Agency (WDA) and is delivered to suit adult workers—modular, flexible, not necessarily classroom based and recognises past skills and experience that workers already acquired. There are seven qualification levels from basic Certificate to graduate Diploma and these spell out the upgrading and career advancement pathways for workers. Workers can also be certified with Statements of Attainment for individual modules to fill gaps in their skills.

The WSQ framework caters to the training needs of 26 industry-specific sectors. Under the approach Approved Training Organisations (ATOs) and Continuing Education and Training (CET) Centres deliver training either as public training providers or in-house training providers (Lin & Bound, 2011). Singapore has had traditionally very high levels of WSQ participation with more than 200,000 workers attaining WSQ modular Statements of Attainment in 2009, doubling that of 2008 (Singapore Workforce Development Agency, 2010b). Researchers identify Singapore as one of the best-known examples of a nation that "has successfully and continuously up-skilled its workforce through workplace focused programs" (Kuruvilla, 2011).

A review of the WSQ framework reported that the majority of WSQ training is classroom based as opposed to on-the-job training or practicum (Lin & Bound, 2011). However, there is a push to focus on more workplace based delivery. A recent Singapore Workforce Development Agency annual report indicated that they are moving to contextualise WSQ delivery, which for the retail sector, as an example, means bringing "training to the workplace for retail workers through modularised or 'On-Site-Bite-Size' programs at shopping malls" (Singapore Workforce Development Agency, 2010b). A feature of Singapore's WSQ participation, including the participation of low-skilled workers, is the support provided by the Skills Development Fund. The Skills Development Fund was implemented in 1979 and presents a unique grant/levy mechanism to subsidise employee-training costs. The Skills Development Fund is supported by the Skills Development Levy, whereby "it is a statutory requirement for employers to make SDL contributions for employees who fall within the salary ceiling for levy contributions" (Singapore Workforce Development Agency, 2011). The fund allows employers to access grants for staff training, although the funding differs according to the participating worker and type of training sought (Singapore Workforce Development Agency, 2011).

The Singapore Workforce Development Agency has introduced some recent changes in order to generate a new funding/levy structure specifically designed to give "low-skilled, low-wage workers a stronger foundation" to "continue with workplace skills training and enhance their ability to take on better jobs" (Singapore Workforce Development Agency, 2010a: 18). This new funding, called "Workfare", combines two streams of support, the *Workforce Training Support* (WTS) Scheme and the *Workforce Income Supplement* (WIS) Scheme. Workfare is available for Singapore citizens who are 35 years and over, and earning up to $1,700 per month. Other requirements are that they have worked at least 3 months in any 6-month period in a calendar year and reside in a property with an annual value of not more than $13,000 (Workfare, 2011). Workers who qualify benefit from a high fee support.

A key element of WTS is a training scheme, *Workfare-Skill Up*, which provides customised training programs for low-skilled workers, especially those without secondary education, and covers all low-skilled workers regardless of their employment status. *Workfare-Skill Up* comprises motivational workshops and support networks designed to build confidence to attend and complete training through group support and guidance. Employees attend initial workshops aimed at building confidence in trainees to commit to sustained training, with trainees given techniques and tips aimed at helping them persevere in training. *Workfare-Skill Up* also provides basic literacy training in reading, listening and speaking in English.

This new scheme to encourage low skilled workers to participate in training also provides a cash incentive to encourage satisfactory completion of the modules undertaken. The *Training Commitment Award* is $200 for every 2 modules of WSQ statements of attainment achieved or $200 for completing a WSQ qualification. The maximum award that a participant can achieve in a year is $400. A similar incentive scheme is in place for workers who participate in a foundational literacy course, "a milestone award of $200 will be given each time they attain a literacy gain" (Workfare, 2011).

Employers are also financially supported to encourage their low skilled workers to take part in WSQ training. Employers

who sign their employees up to registered training providers or CET centres receive absentee pay roll support to cover the salaries of their workers while they are away at training.

An evaluation of the Skills Development Fund (SDF) model found that the levy/grant system has "ensured that roughly one out of three Singaporeans receives some training through SDF activities every year" (Kuruvilla et al., 2011: 16). The evaluation also suggested that the investment in training had paid off in terms of increased productivity, with average levels of productivity growth high in Singapore and the biggest investors in training also being the most productive. The report authors conclude that the Singaporean system provides a good example of a concerted national effort involving collaboration between private sector and government that has been successful in delivering enhanced workforce skill development (Kuruvilla et al., 2011).

Summary: identifying effective programs

The literature documenting re-engagement programs for adult learners is fairly extensive, however, there is a shortage of information on evaluation of impact. This is largely because it is often very difficult to determine with any precision the immediate and long term outcomes associated with specific programs, and even to identify the best or most appropriate indicators, methods, techniques and approach to use for evaluation. Some programs are initiated without consideration of the need or requirements of evaluation, and as a result there is often an absence of standardised reporting of program outcomes.

Available evaluations of programs tend to focus on capturing immediate outcomes, such as levels of participation, and learner responses. Longer term outcomes, such as completion, attainment, use of skills and pathways are often not provided. Evaluations tend to be dominated by qualitative approaches to measuring outcomes, with quantitative data related largely to program outputs.

There is debate over appropriate evaluation methods. Some experts believe that evaluation methods should be more rigorous i.e. formal, quantitative, scientifically-informed, and focus more on longer term outcomes or impact. Others argue that a qualitative approach is well-suited to capturing outcomes that quantitative methods can miss or capture imperfectly, in particular improvements in soft skills, or employee attitudes and behaviours. There are many barriers to evaluation including lack of resources and capacity, but also the traditional tensions between quantitative and qualitative researchers and the complex nature of the evaluation process.

The overall effects of the programs presented in this chapter should be considered in the context of where they were implemented, what strategies were employed, how much they cost and how effective they were. Even with this, the information represents only part of the many considerations that policymakers and practitioners must take into account when identifying which programs to adopt and/or replicate.

Identifying and selecting effective programs for implementation requires a consideration of the nature and features of the programs themselves. Understanding the composition of effective re-engagement programs is critical to policy creation and successful replication of best practices. As outlined in this chapter, the review of effective initiatives has identified four key elements that define the most effective programs: (1) outreach, (2) learner wellbeing, (3) pedagogy, and (4) pathways. Within each of these elements there are distinctive strategies that are at the basis of effectiveness.

The first element, *outreach*, is related to the need to find some way of connecting with disengaged adults who may by socially and economically marginalised, in order to identify their needs and inform them of available options. Four strategies are used by effective re-engagement initiatives: providing easily accessible information, bringing learning to the learner, targeting high needs group, and establishing lasting meaningful relationships.

The second element, *wellbeing*, is paramount to any successful intervention and needs identifying and addressing the welfare needs of disengaged people. Best practice delivery interventions recognise that they are often dealing with people who have a variety of structural or situational obstacles that affect their capacity to participate in learning. Intensive support through guidance, counselling, monitoring and follow-up, taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing, developing beneficial relationships within the community, the hubbing of services, and providing whole community or familial

intervention are five components of addressing learner needs associated with wellbeing.

The third element, *pedagogy*, focuses on the approach to learning that is needed to take account of negative previous experiences of learning, failure at school, and avoidance of formal teaching and learning. Engaging pedagogy needs be designed with an understanding of what disengaged learners require, acknowledging their learning interests and building upon their pre-existing knowledge and skills. Four core strategies identified from effective programs are: making learning applied or hands-on, providing flexible learning options, addressing literacy and numeracy skill development needs and offering programs that integrate technologies.

The fourth element, *pathways*, focuses on creating and presenting appealing and worthwhile pathways for learners that reach beyond the program and provide links to other study and to work and career development opportunities. Workplace programs are particularly relevant to the low skill workers who hold full-time or part-time jobs. The four strategies that fall under this element are: embedding pathways in the intervention program, establishing connections with community and other institutions, using intermediate labour market approaches, and integrating work based learning programs with other supports.

The 17 strategies are the basis for the most successful re-engagement programs. While the strategies appear to be independent, the prevention programs are most effective when they incorporate some or all of these strategies. Table 4.1 illustrates which strategies are incorporated into the most effective programs identified in the review. An evaluation of programs to consider which could or should be implemented, needs to consider how comprehensively and how well programs incorporate these elements and strategies.

Evaluating programs for the purposes of identifying prospective initiatives for implementation or replication also requires a consideration of impact or outcomes. If programs do contain the features that have been listed in this chapter as important to re-engagement, and they are resourced adequately, then under these circumstances we might expect to see improvements in participation of disengaged learners (as measured by the numbers participating, particularly of members from key target groups), in achievement (as measured by successful completion or improvements in skill levels), articulation to other types of study (as measured by enrolments in further courses) and, at an aggregate level, a reduction in the numbers in the population (in a given area) without Certificate III or above qualifications.

It is important also to consider personal and social gains which may not be as easily measurable as course participation and completion outcomes, but may be as, or even more, significant. For some disengaged learners, particularly those in difficult circumstances associated with such things as drug dependency, health problems, disability, homelessness, and very poor literacy and numeracy skills, meaningful engagement in learning activities may help improve their quality of life. Therefore, it is important for evaluations also to consider the impact of participation on the individual learner using what are sometimes called "soft measures" or "intangibles" (non-monetary), such as increased morale, self-esteem and confidence, greater job satisfaction, greater participation and a willingness to continue study or undertake work-related training (Pye and Hattam, 2008). For those in the workplace, this is also a highly relevant and important perspective. As Wolf (2008, p.1) reported in a study on enhancing skills for life, "the most marked benefits for individuals and organisations are in personal and/or work satisfaction. Workplace learning has the potential to change individuals' 'learning trajectories' and encourage them to rethink their ambitions and capabilities... and continue with formal learning in later years" (Wolf, 2008: 1).

Table 4.1 Strategies used by effective adult learner re-engagement programs

PROGRAM	OUTREACH				WELLBEING					PEDAGOGY				PATHWAYS			
	Providing easily accessible information	Bringing learning to the learner	Targeting high needs groups	Establishing lasting meaningful relationships	Intensive support through guidance and follow-up	Taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing	Developing beneficial community relationships	Hubbing of services	Providing whole community intervention	Making learning applied or hands-on	Flexible options	Addressing literacy and numeracy skill needs	Offering programs that integrate technologies	Embedding pathways in the program	Establishing connections with community	Using intermediate labour market approaches	Integrating work based learning programs
Australia																	
Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan		✓					✓				✓	✓			✓		
NSW TAFE Outreach		✓	✓			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓				✓		
Shopfront Services, Melbourne City Mission	✓			✓			✓								✓		
'One Stop Shop' - BSL	✓			✓			✓	✓							✓		
Community Gateways, Victoria University	✓			✓			✓								✓		
Sandybeach Centre	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓	✓			✓		✓	✓		✓		
Swinburne Indigenous Youth Re-engagement Program			✓	✓	✓	✓	✓				✓	✓		✓	✓		
Gateway Program - Jesuit Social Services			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓
The Pavilion			✓	✓	✓	✓					✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		
Workplace English Language & Literacy		✓								✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Wheels, MCM			✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓	✓	✓		✓			
Northern Ireland																	
The Bytes project		✓			✓		✓				✓		✓	✓			
Scotland																	
Big Plus Initiative	✓	✓					✓				✓	✓					
Welcome Point		✓		✓		✓	✓								✓		
Edinburgh's Women's Training Course			✓		✓						✓	✓	✓	✓			
Core Connex						✓		✓		✓			✓		✓		
Pathfinder projects		✓	✓			✓	✓		✓	✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		
Ireland																	
Back to Education Initiative		✓	✓								✓	✓		✓	✓		
Youthreach			✓		✓	✓				✓	✓	✓	✓	✓			
Senior Traveller Training Cetnres			✓			✓	✓		✓		✓	✓		✓			
Denmark																	
Folk High Schools					✓						✓	✓					
Sweden																	
Komvux	✓										✓	✓					
Spain																	
Opening Pathways							✓			✓				✓	✓		

Table 4.1 cont...

PROGRAM	OUTREACH				WELLBEING					PEDAGOGY				PATHWAYS			
	Providing easily accessible information	Bringing learning to the learner	Targeting high needs groups	Establishing lasting meaningful relationships	Intensive support through guidance and follow-up	Taking a client sensitive approach to wellbeing	Developing beneficial community relationships	Hubbing of services	Providing whole community intervention	Making learning applied or hands-on	Flexible Options	Addressing literacy and numeracy skill needs	Offering programs that integrate technologies	Embedding pathways in the program	Establishing connections with community	Using intermediate labour market approaches	Integrating work based learning programs
United States																	
Job Corp	✓		✓		✓	✓				✓		✓		✓	✓		
Career Pathway Initiative		✓								✓	✓	✓	✓		✓		✓
Workforce development Partnership		✓				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				✓
Canada																	
Workplace Education Initiative		✓				✓				✓	✓	✓	✓				
Singapore																	
Workforce Skills training	✓										✓	✓		✓		✓	✓
Norway																	
Basic Competence in Working Life		✓									✓	✓	✓	✓			

5 Funding Models

The review has identified a range of programs effective in helping re-engage numbers of disengaged adult learners. It is now important to turn to the costs of the programs and to look at funding models that can support wider implementation and delivery of effective practice. In looking at funding models it is important to keep in mind that, because of their marginalised education and employment status, disengaged learners will often need approaches that include a range of human services such as health, housing, education, training, employment and community development. The complexity of barriers to engagement demands a funding approach that recognises the cost and importance of collaborative, cross-agency packages of care or service delivery that might include partnering between education and training providers and agencies involved in housing, employment, mental health, and primary care.

While there is quite of lot of information on the features and design of re-engagement programs, there's much less information readily available on their costs. Others have noted the difficulties in using literature reviews and program scans to derive precise costs of "good practice" delivery models (FAHCSIA, 2009, 174). While this is particularly true of the diverse range of individual and one-off programs operated by individual providers, there are some system-level approaches and models in other fields that do offer some guide on costs. Models of funding in fields such as employment services, aged care and schooling have been developed and implemented to deliver targeted funds for providers to give additional support to higher need groups. It is possible to draw on these models to identify an approach to funding in the VET sector which can ensure that education and training providers are resourced to deliver the continuum of service provision essential to meeting the needs of disengaged adult learners.

This section brings together information on two different types of funding approaches. The first is program-based and involves identification of the costs of the individual programs or strategies that have been effective in re-engaging adult learners with high-level needs. These are the sorts of programs that providers of education and training in Victoria will need to adopt if they want to expand participation and attainment for disengaged learners. The costings will provide a guide to providers of what is required to run different types of engagement strategies. The second approach focuses on system-level, needs-based funding and discusses requirements at a system-level for resourcing providers in a way that will facilitate more effective delivery across the state, and promote higher levels of engagement and attainment. It is worth initially examining some of the factors associated with programs that influence the costs.

Cost implications of effective delivery strategies for disengaged learners

Evaluation and costing of programs as diverse as those explored in the previous chapter involves challenges not least because some of the programs have relied on one-off funding or draw on a range of "cobbled together" funding sources and project partnerships, some involving in-kind contributions. Others are more established, have been in place for a long time, and continue thanks to funding certainty, usually provided by government. This section looks at some of the features of effective practices and relates these to the characteristics of low-skill and disengaged adult learners to gain insight into why resourcing effective programs can be expensive.

One of the main cost implications is the need for extended program time and for the inclusion of pre-accreditation programs where appropriate. Learners nominated for inclusion in this review are those who are categorised under a range of frameworks as high need. It cannot be assumed that their engagement with education and training programs will occur along conventional lines and within mainstream timeframes. Not only are many of these learners unlikely to be completing qualifications within the nominated time but providers and researchers indicate the need for an "engagement" or lead-in period that may develop foundations for effective involvement with more vocationally specific programs. This initial phase may be extended and within the timeframe significant interruption may occur—programs should involve sufficient flexibility to accommodate learners' periods of disconnection and maintain contact and continuity over time. Long lead times accordingly need to be factored into program costs based on the projected time a learner may need to attain designated outcomes. The Nous Group for example recommended that funding frameworks for employment services build in more attention to initial work with clients ("upfront engagement") to build stronger trust based relationships and stronger social and economic outcomes (Nous Group, 2010).

Local outreach and subsequent delivery, at least in initial stages, are nominated as essential in enlisting participation from learners who may be unable or unwilling to travel any distance for education. Disengaged learners are often uninterested in and unaware of education and training opportunities in their area so that word-of mouth and referrals will be unlikely to elicit engagement. In these cases, as Cole points out, outreach services and other pro-active approaches that enable the provider to go and discuss possibilities with potential clients may also be necessary (Cole, 2003). Such a labour-intensive approach has, of course, resource implications. It is argued that locating initial education and training contacts and experiences at the local level builds familiarity and trust, signalling respect for learners' contexts and needs. For disadvantaged communities there are further benefits in locating training activity at the local level, in raising the visibility of training and demonstrating successful participation. Programs need therefore an element of portability and flexibility; they benefit also from the role of local partnerships in the securing of appropriate foci and affordable (or in kind) contributed accommodation and personnel. This focus on the local and on responsiveness to local contexts however is not without complexities; there may be tensions for example between the perceptions of the provider or funding body and those of the community regarding learners' needs. "Outposting" of location as a feature of program provision has specific implications for costs and for the establishment of partnerships that may facilitate successful delivery.

Many good practice programs are partnership focused and policy and funding frameworks today encourage strong connections between community and non-government organisations and training providers in the shared planning and delivery of interventions aimed at building participation of the disengaged in training and employment or community pathways. There are good reasons for this focus; bringing together providers of social, housing, employment and other services assists in developing a "full service" approach to the individual, positioning the learner at the centre of the process and building responses around individual needs. For the individual this means less fragmentation in engagement with systems, less repetition of experiences and a more holistic approach to needs. The partnerships can also inform program delivery and content especially in connecting learners to workplaces. It is evident however that "partnership

working is not without problems and one important reason is the scale and frequency of change in the attitudes and institutional structure of agencies" (NDCNE, 2009).

Partnership building and maintenance is time and resource intensive, and this needs to be taken into account in program funding and in the understanding of costs. It is not necessarily a "cheap" option or an opportunity for cost shifting – partnership benefits may lie more in the networks of associations available to more effectively support learners over an extended training journey than in economies achieved through accessing in kind and other contributions of local partners. A recent evaluation of UK Learning Community initiatives acknowledged the primacy of partnerships in these initiatives noting in particular the importance of:

- the need to combine talk and the development of shared vision with practical action and achievement to secure and retain commitment
- the value of a "patron" or "champion", a substantial figure prepared to act as a figurehead for the project providing credibility and status
- the need for an "honest broker" at the heart of the project to ensure that the project/partnership doesn't become the property of a particular sectoral interest
- the necessity of involving a wide range of partners and of developing clarity about what is required of those who are involved
- projects are conscious of the need for evaluation but rarely engage in the process of defining the means of evaluation at an early enough stage
- there are real issues for all initiatives in maintaining momentum and commitment. Even the most successful has found the status of members of the core group decreasing as other calls press on members' time. When this happens communication and high-profile activities become even more important for strategic level partnerships.

It should also be recognised that when partners bring a range of resources and funding streams to a project the disentangling of costs and expenses can be problematic.

For low-skill learners with limited experiences of success in any education endeavours it is important that programs be responsive to immediate needs, relevant to future needs and contain opportunities for accessible experiences of successful learning and of agency as learners. Sometimes this may involve the embedding of basic skills into program content to build confidence without focusing on learning shortcomings. Consultants have made reference to a range of means available to program providers to build these elements into programs to invite and sustain engagement. They may include strategies such as customised program delivery, group based participation, and problem based learning. They may also involve the modularisation of programs to reflect limited capacity for engagement at specific points – allowing for "bite sized" units of learning to be undertaken on a cumulative basis to build qualification development over time. The flexibility of this approach better reflects needs of key groups of disengaged learners for whom illness, family circumstances or other factors may entail sporadic attendances and participation, especially in initial phases of engagement.

Programs identified as demonstrating good practice in engaging low-skill learners were characterised by high levels of linked-up and constant support frameworks, providing personalised program and pathways advice from the outset. Support service roles may not be limited to one project team member but may extend to a central agency with which the learner maintains connections from the initial point of outreach and engagement through to the achievement of personal and program objectives including where appropriate access to social, community, educational and employment pathways.

For low-skill learners whose connection to educational, social and economic networks may not be strong this support provides the social capital connections that allow aspiration building, the knowledge and frameworks to underpin the exercise of effective choice of options and the management of opportunities. Funding models underpinning such support vary; what is consistent in effective programs, however, is the continuity and stability of the connection, building familiarity and trust on the part of the learner. There are instances where the support function is vested with the training provider, allowing direct and timely connection to pathways and programs. In other cases this role lies within case management responsibilities associated with employment services providers or elsewhere. In the Melbourne City Mission *Youth Enterprise Hub* at Braybrook, for example, a precinct-based approach brings together community education,

health, employment and neighbourhood house activity. In this example the JSA worker's case management role is "a really crucial part of the package" (MCM 2010). The program overall brings together ACFE funded training, JSA case management and pre-employment training such as Wheels that acts as the initial engagement approach, building connections with young people and underpins subsequent training. Key elements here involve "intensive case management support to connect with school or work training programs to prepare participants to enter the labour market or return to further studies and work experience opportunities through social enterprise outcomes.." (MCM, 2010). The need for intensive support involving guidance, counselling, monitoring and follow-up involves considerable resource costs.

Such support services are not always evident even in programs designed to deal with acknowledged needs of learners undertaking low-level qualifications. Pocock et al (2009, p.42), for example, highlight the resourcing implications of this student body in VET, whose dependence on lecturers for guidance and support is intense: they note "difficulties faced by educators finding enough resources to meet the needs of students who in some cases had complex, multiple needs" noting that such work involved "a pastoral care role for which (they are) not paid". For these students essential support included "appropriate levels of general support, assistance in navigating education and income support systems, job search advice and other forms of pastoral care", essentially "wrap around support" (Pocock et al., 2009: p.42).

Lastly, there are questions of incentives and financing. What funding parameters are best suited to support providers in meeting the often longer term engagement and progression needs of the most disengaged learners, those who are "hardest to reach" and who have the longest distances to travel as learners and as workers to a point where they are able to participate confidently as citizens, workers and learners? (Freud, 2010). A number of the programs described in this review cater to longer-term learners and consultations have supported the building of wellbeing services and program delivery environments that span years of learner activity. To what extent can funding and support extend to accommodate the distance to be covered? And, added to this, is it appropriate to nominate a cut-off point for engagement activity? As Lattimore (2007) would have it, is there a point at which some "outsiders" will remain by preference outside education and employment systems, especially those elements of the system associated with attaining and deployment of accreditation and qualifications?

Estimates of program-based costs

Costs of programs that have been developed to target the needs of marginalised and disengaged adult learners vary depending on the type of program. Table 5.1 presents the costs associated with some of the main programs identified as effective in re-engagement of low-skill and disengaged adult learners. Unit costs have been estimated from available information on program delivery costs and numbers of participants, or successful learner outcome. The costs are all taken from the most recently available information and, for overseas programs, estimated in Australian dollars using current exchange rates. The main focus of the program is indicated: (1) outreach, (2) wellbeing, (3) pedagogy, and/or (4) pathways. Please note, though, that some of the programs contain elements that combine strategies relevant to all of the four areas. Some of the best and most effective programs are multi-layered in this way, responding to outreach needs, delivering teaching and learning sensitive to the disengaged learner, providing individualised care and wellbeing support, as well as information on links or pathways to employment.

Table 5.1 Costs of implementing effective re-engagement programs

PROGRAM	Country	FOCUS	(AU$) Estimated per learner cost
Community VCAL	Australia	Pedagogy	$6,833
Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan	Australia	Pedagogy/Pathways	$1,259*
Family Centred Employment Project	Australia	Pathways	$3,300 per family
Swinburne Indigenous Youth Re-engagement Program	Australia	Outreach/Wellbeing	$4,615
Wheels - Melbourne City Mission	Australia	Outreach/Wellbeing	$1,500
The Pavilion	Australia	Wellbeing	$8,000
NSW TAFE Outreach	Australia	Outreach	$294
Sandybeach Centre	Australia	Outreach/Wellbeing	$361
Work Skills e-Portfolio for Jobseekers with a Disability	Australia	Pathways	$7,250
Gateway Program - Jesuit Social Services	Australia	Outreach/Wellbeing	$13,500
Folk High Schools	Denmark	Pedagogy	$1,871
Job Corp	United States	Pathways	$24,425
New Jersey Workforce Development Program	United States	Pathways	$406
Edinburgh Women's Training Course	Scotland	Wellbeing	$13,533
Komvux	Sweden	Pedagogy	$7351-$6157
Back to Education Initiative	Ireland	Pedagogy/Pathways	$969
Opening Pathways	Spain	Pathways	$3,972
New Deal for Communities	UK	Outreach/Wellbeing	$49,746 for every job
Vision 21	UK	Wellbeing/Pathways	$8,922
The Bytes project	Ireland	Pedagogy/Pathways	$2,710*
Basic Competence in Working Life	Norway	Pedagogy/Pathways	$3,918
Worforce Training Scheme (WTS)	Singapore	Pathways	$1,450
Worforce Income Supplement (WIS)	Singapore	Pathways	$250
Youthreach	Ireland	Pedagogy/Pathways	$10,373

* Per successful learner outcome

Several types of programs are worth examining for an assessment of program costs.

Pathways: Employment Services

Job Corps, US

The US Job Corps was established in 1965 and is the largest 'residential, educational and career technical training program' in the United States (US Department of Labor 2009: 6). It is a federally funded program that provides intensive and residentially based training for disadvantaged young people aged between 16 and 24 (Job Corps 2011). It offers hands-on training in vocational areas and also gives participants the chance to complete their high school diploma or General Educational Development (GED) certificate. Students in consultation with staff design a personal career development plan (PCDP) that then informs all further stages of the program including career preparation, career development and the career transition. The program offers courses in independent living, employability skills, and social skills to help students 'make the transition into the workplace', they also provide post-program support for up to 21 months upon completion (Job Corps, 2011). The approximate per-person cost is AU$24,425 per-year according to recent budget submissions (Office of Job Corps, 2011).

New Deal for Communities, UK

The Job Corps estimate may be compared with recent figures for the New Deal programs in the UK, where the half a billion pounds spent on helping people find work in 2009 benefitted 16,200 people, working out at $49,746 per job (Grayling 2010). The estimate includes costs of training associated with employment preparation (including counselling and case management) and is based on recorded employment outcomes only; it does not include benefits that may have been less quantifiable for other learners. Cancellation of the program, however, has also involved restructuring of future payment arrangements for providers, who are now paid on "results" rather than on upfront estimates. While payment on final results— such as securing employment or achieving a nominated qualification—may have distorting effects on provision and serve as a disincentive for providers to engage in provision of services to high-risk learners, the development of a staged set of milestones for "results" payments may better reflect real achievements and the challenges met by learners in staying on course.

Second Chance schools, Europe

In resource terms, the needs of young disengaged learners, as with disengaged learners more generally, should not be underestimated. The widespread networks of *Second Chance Schools* in Europe, for example, were established to address needs of young people (primarily) who had left school early; evaluations undertaken in the early pilot years of the programs established positive outcomes while noting considerable variation in cost by country and program design. On average however costs per pupil were estimated at around 70 per cent higher than costs for pupils in secondary school settings, an increase attributed primarily to significantly smaller class sizes associated with the nature of re-engaging students (European Commission, 2001). While the average unit costs for education of a secondary school student in a mainstream school setting was reported as $6,456, *Second Chance Schools* average per unit costs were $10,862, a ratio of 1.7:1. This cost covered salaries, course materials, administration, equipment and write-offs.

YouthReach, Ireland

Similar findings were reported in Ireland in comparisons of programs for disengaged young people that compared several key education and training programs for young people. Youthreach is a program aimed at early school leavers in the 15-20 year age group, Senior Traveller Training Centres (STTCs) for people aged 15 years and upwards; Community Training Centres (CTCs) which are independent community-based organisations oriented specifically to the needs of low-skill and low qualified young people from 16 to 21 years of age (with some provision for extension to the age of 25); and for purposes of comparison post primary schools dealing with young people remaining within the school system.

Total enrolments and costs for the programs' tuition are set out below. If we take costs of post primary tuition as a base indicator it can be shown that costs for these training programs for young people varied between nearly twice the rate as that provided for post primary schools (STTCs) to just under one and a half times that funding (CTCs). This ratio compares with that reported for Second Chance schools where costs are reported as 1.68 times that of the schools sector per student:

	Youthreach	STTC	CTCs	Post primary
Total enrolments	3258	1084	2196	335,162
Cost per student	10780	13398	10076	6791
Estimated tuition hours	2165	2011	2406	1286
Cost of tuition per learner hour	6.85	9.16	5.76	7.26
Ratio to post primary	1.5:1	2:1	1.5:1	1:1

However when other attendant costs are included, such as staff costs, student allowances, running costs, consumables, building repairs and equipment, final costs show :

- Broad comparability across the non-school programs for disengaged young people, and
- Costs around double that of school based programs, reflecting the nature of the student group, the higher student staff ratios in the non-school settings, increased hours allocated to non school programs and possibly diseconomies in accommodation and other services.

Although the full costings do not compare with costs reported for Second Chance schools the broad ratios between school and non-school providers are consistent.

Wellbeing: intensive support

Gateways Project, JSS, Australia

The JSS Gateways project was conducted in Collingwood between 2002 and 2007 and targeted highly marginalised young people. The program's objectives included:

	Overall costs	Learners	Annual Unit cost	Ratio to post primary
STTC	29,719,341	1,084	27,417	**2.5:1**
Youthreach	64,538,556	3,258	19,809	**1.8:1**
Postprimary	3,713,234,863	335,162	11,079	**1:1**
CTCs	53,477,600	2,196	24,353	**2.2:1**

- engaging at-risk young people in a managed and supported developmental pathway and a range of intensive and co-ordinated programs that focus on personal development, education, vocational training and employment.
- developing and evaluating a best-practice model of service delivery based on service coordination that addresses the learning, social, health, welfare and economic needs of at-risk young people.
- sharing expertise and learning from the best-practice model of service delivery with other agencies and to utilise this knowledge for advocacy, policy and service development in relation to at-risk young people and their service and support needs.

The Colonial Foundation allocated Jesuit Services a grant of $1 million per year for five years to develop and deliver the program, meaning a total cost of $5 million. The unit cost or per learner price is estimated at $13,500. This estimate is based on 370 young people who were engaged in the program between 2003 and 2007. This estimate takes into account variations in levels of engagement and attrition.

Wheels Program

Melbourne City Mission has delivered the Wheels program since 2002. Wheels (*Return to Learn*) is an eight-week pre-vocational/pre-employment program for homeless and severely disengaged young people (15-25 years). It aims to increase young people's preparedness to engage in employment, education and training. The Wheels program realises a 75 per cent completion rate; a substantial result for this target population.

The Wheels program costs $150,000 per year – nearly $20,000 for each of eight programs provided. This is a cost per head (100 participants) of $1,500 for the two month program, conducted two days per week.

Essentially models such as the Wheels program involve targeted programs for hard-to-reach learners comprising partnership-based delivery and management. A related model involves Melbourne City Mission's *Youth Enterprise Hub* which provides a precinct based approach that brings together community education, health, employment services and neighbourhood house cultures. In a program conducted under such arrangements, Job Services Australia has funded a case worker to provide case management for young jobseekers, a factor described as "a really crucial element of the package". The Youth Enterprise Hub draws together a linked-up delivery optimising individual partners' expertise with accredited training hours funded through ACFE, case management supported through JSA, Wheels and other programs providing engaging pre-employment learning programs aimed at building meaningful and customised individual learning programs and pathways. Key elements therefore involve "intensive case management support to connect with school and work, group training programs to prepare participants to enter the labour market..." (MCM, 2010). The partnership itself demands funded support, provided primarily in the form of coordinator and program staff.

Outreach: wraparound and one stop shop approaches

The combining of wraparound delivery with "hubbing" service provision, where learners can access a team of support workers with distinctive areas of specialised expertise, may provide an effective model for sustainable and effective education and training delivery for disengaged learners especially those within disadvantaged communities. In the context of disengaged learners the wraparound approach allows the development of an effective and stable support network, a chance to develop a sense of confidence and acquire new skills in managing learning, training and employment pathways, with access to a range of supportive resources needed to build a productive future.

One example of this approach would be the Key Worker role attached to Careers Scotland localised programs where support workers (Key Workers) liaise closely with individuals customising education and training pathways plans to specific needs. This personal and ongoing connection was regarded by those involved, particularly the most disadvantaged, as "the most important form of assistance" available to them (Careers Scotland, 2005). Comparative costings for such programs can be problematic as the service is generally "nested" within broader programs; however estimates can be made of the cost of a full-time worker to fill this role on a local basis. Essentially the model works well with hubbing arrangements allowing an integrated model of delivery that contains and focuses case management and supports collaboration and alignment between support services (e.g. health, housing and community services) and education, training and employment systems.

The costs can be estimated using the model applied in New South

Wales. The TAFE outreach program in northern New South Wales, provides a different perspective on this approach, with less focus on individualised case management and more on the targeted delivery of locally appropriate and accessible learning programs to designated learner groups. Described as an "In Place" delivery model based on industry clusters, the program catered for 419 learners over a range of local community learning spaces in 2010. The program is a longstanding one and acknowledged as a model of strong practice in TAFE NSW. In 2010, its budget of around $123,000 per annum was derived from a variety of different funding sources including In Place Delivery, the Outreach budget, Innovation funds and some funding and in kind support from local partners. The per student cost of around $294 allowed for the employment of project staff to manage logistics of localised delivery and to generate and build local partnerships that support effective and decentralised delivery of programs.

Pedagogy: literacy and numeracy skill development

Adult Literacy program models: UK

The Scotland Pathfinder Projects, undertaken between 2003 and 2006, aimed at building engagement of low-skill learners in education and training programs centred around adult literacy's (see summary provided in Appendix A) . The programs focused on the building of effective local partnerships to optimise outreach and engagement approaches and on building active partner involvement in program planning and delivery. $1.5 million were allocated to the eight projects over the 2003-2006 periods – averaging around $63,000 per year per program. As most programs employed a full-time coordinator and part-time support worker (around 0.5) for administrative and clerical support the funding allocation was largely consumed by salary costs. Most programs have also been significantly supported through in-kind partner contributions. It is notable that these reported costs relate to establishment programs and that outreach and partnership development in these contexts is proportionately high at this phase of the programs. Costs after this initial establishment phase may better reflect delivery and continuation roles with less focus on time-intensive activities in areas of partnership building and outreach (although partnerships do need to be sustained in the longer term and outreach can be an ongoing activity).

Central to each program's resourcing then were salaries for a coordination and support administrative role. Other activities attached to the programs can be shown to be delivered through in-kind support from project partners.

Tasmania's Adult Literacy Action Plan is targeted in similar ways to increase the numbers of adults who meet minimum literacy skill benchmarks. The program involves the establishment of an informal community and workplace network of adult literacy support from a statewide team of coordinators and a pool of trained volunteers to drive the Adult Literacy Network. The cost of the program over four years is estimated at $12 million which, if the program achieves its expected learner outcomes, will mean a unit price of approximately $1,259.

Needs-Based Funding

Needs-based funding builds into resource allocation for service delivery a recognition of specific factors associated with learners that increases costs for providers if they are to achieve successful learner outcomes. For delivery of effective education and training programs for disengaged learners these factors include motivation, economic security, skills, pathways understanding, current learning levels and qualifications, labour market status, and personal and family circumstances. The funding is not necessarily program specific, but designed to deliver to all providers the resources they need to implement effective practices to address the needs of the learners they deal with.

Needs-based funding is a concept that has existed for some time. It is used in various fields to deliver supplementary resources where there are higher needs linked to characteristics of populations, locations or programs. For example, many government school systems around the world allocate base resources (teachers and or funds) to schools simply on a per enrolment basis and then, in addition, provide certain schools with supplementary resources where these schools have numbers of high and additional needs students. Levels of supplementary funding can be assessed using provider characteristics, such as, for example, schools identified as serving poor or disadvantaged communities according to certain indicators of "poverty" or "socio-economic disadvantage". Or, amounts of supplementary resources

can be assessed on the basis of specific learner needs, such as disabilities funding, for example, where need is often assessed on an individual learner basis rather than at a school level. Sometimes systems take the location of schools into consideration and then provide extra staff or allowances to schools that are considered to be isolated because of their distance from population centres. They can also take programs into account by providing higher than average resources for enrolments in schools that have been charged with the responsibility of offering special programs (such as vocational education and training programs) or specialist schools that deal only with certain categories of students, such as special schools for students with disabilities or language learning centres.

The approach represents system-wide finance models that are integrated with agreed educational values and policy, grounded in available research, and accessible to all stakeholders. There are important advantages to these models of funding. A critical one is that it sets out universal procedures and entitlements for all providers in a system. Another is that it is used to allocate resources in a systematic way that empowers providers to implement learner-sensitive programs relevant to the groups of learners that the provider deals with, rather than ad hoc resources linked to particular programs. Another advantage is that it embodies a genuine attempt to satisfy agreed educational needs in a fair and reasonable way by reflecting differences in costs associated with differences in the characteristics of learners and programs. It is also transparent allowing all stakeholders to understand why there are differences in levels of funding that occur across providers.

An example of this type of funding in the VET sector is provided by the funding of pre-accredited courses through ACE providers. In Victoria, through the ACFE Board, the government invests in pre-accredited training delivery through around 320 ACE providers. Investment is approximately $10 million in delivery annually. Funding for this purpose is available to any learners that require this support. The funding is allocated on the basis of population demographics and prior education less than Year 9. Significantly, this funding is generally for programs that are short in duration, emphasise vocational intent in language, literacy and numeracy, employability skills and basic vocational programs and provide pathway planning and support to learners leading to participation in formal qualifications.

There are several examples of needs-based funding models operating in other service delivery fields that are used to resource providers so that they can match service levels to individual need. It is worth looking at these models briefly before turning to a mechanism that can be applied in Victoria to target the needs of disengaged learners across the VET sector.

Aged Care Models of Needs-based Funding

Aged care in Australia is provided by not-for-profit (religious, charitable and community groups), private sector operators and governments. The sector offers an example of consistent needs based classification informing funding allocation. Residential aged care is financed by the Commonwealth Government on a need-based classification model, the Aged Care Funding Instrument (ACFI), which was introduced in 2008. It represents a significant change in the way the Australian Government allocates around $5 billion in subsidies each year for the care of older Australians in government-subsidised aged care facilities. Individuals are categorised on a series of diagnostics based on activities of daily living, behaviour and assessment of complex health care needs. Categorisation involves eight levels of care needs, arrived at through application of the ACFI. The approach aims to secure a more targeted approach to funding, connecting medical providers more closely into ongoing care for and monitoring of individuals.

Employment Service models

Job Services Australia replaced the job network employment service in 2009. The new service involves four service streams and seeks to improve links between the labour market and vocational education and training. The program aims to place a stronger emphasis on addressing skills shortages, social inclusion and the needs of disadvantaged job seekers. It does this by categorising jobseekers into groups according to assessed need. A Job Seeker Classification Instrument (JSCI) is used to compartmentalise job seekers into one of three streams, while a Job Capacity Assessment (JCA) is used to classify the most marginal jobseekers into a fourth stream. On the basis of job seekers' individual circumstances an assessment is made of

their "employability" and connection to the labour market. The stream to which a job seeker is allocated is determined by the job seeker's assessed level of disadvantage.

The JSCI consists of 18 factors (including sub-factors) considered important predictors of the likelihood of a registrant remaining a job seeker for at least a year. Jobseekers are classified using a score derived from allocated points weighted across each of the following indicators:

- Age and Gender
- Geographic location
- Recency of Work Experience
- Proximity to a Labour Market
- Job Seeker History
- Access to Transport
- Educational Attainment
- Phone Contactability
- Vocational Qualifications
- Disability/Medical Conditions
- English Proficiency
- Stability of Residence
- Country of Birth
- Living Circumstances
- Indigenous Status
- Ex-offender Status
- Indigenous Location
- Personal Characteristics

A JCA is an assessment of a job seeker's vocational and non-vocational barriers to employment and the impact these barriers have on the job seeker's capacity to undertake work.

Stream 1 encompasses "job ready" job seekers, while Streams 2 to 4 deal with those whose search for work is more sustained or whose personal circumstances contribute to a "disadvantaged" classification, with Stream 4 encompassing those with the most significant barriers to work. Particularly disadvantaged groups were recently defined as including young people, people experiencing homelessness, people from diverse language backgrounds, people with mental illness, people from indigenous backgrounds and people with a disability (DEEWR, 2011c).

Base amounts of funding are made available to jobseekers, in Stream 1, while additional resources are made available for Stream 2 to Stream 4 jobseekers, increasing by stream category, reflecting the higher and additional needs of each category. The streams and their levels of funding are as follows, demonstrating the recognition of the significant resources required to address effective employment transitions for higher need job seekers:

	Work ready	Disadvantaged jobseekers		
	Stream 1	Stream 2	Stream 3	Stream 4
Assessment of need score	0-19	20-28	29 or more	JCA
Percentage of jobseekers	53%	22%	10%	15%
Employment Pathway Funding	$11	$550	$1,100	$1,650
Job Placement funding	$385-440	$385-2200	$385-6600	$385-6600
Service Fees	$781	$781	$781	$781

In addition, a 1.7 multiplier applies to Employment Pathway Funding (EPF) and service fees for remote areas to reflect challenges involved in accessing workplaces and building liaison opportunities (DEEWR, 2011c).

Schools and Needs Based funding

Victoria's Student Resource Package (SRP) arrangements provide a good example of a needs-based funding model. The Student Resource Package was introduced for Victorian government schools in 2005 to bring about improvement in learning outcomes for students. A key aim of the SRP was to shift the focus from funding based on inputs (resources required to deliver a service) to funding based on the resources needed to improve student outcomes. It does this by aligning resources to individual student learning needs and providing schools with the flexibility in their resources to meet diverse student and community needs.

The allocation of resources under the SRP is based on a single core amount, or 'price', allocated to schools on a per student basis, plus a tapering base amount to cover minimum overheads. The core amount is adjusted for:

- *stages of schooling*—differences in funding needed to address variations in costs of delivery, programs, emphasis and organisation associated with different stages of learning such as primary and secondary, and the early years.
- *school location*—differences in costs of delivery associated with urban, rural or remote location, particularly assisting schools in rural areas that are small by necessity and unable to access cultural and other resources available to schools in city areas.
- *student and school characteristics*—differences in costs of students with high and additional needs, involving extra resources for schools serving students with disadvantages related to socio-economic factors, language difficulties, learning problems, and disabilities.

The approach draws on an understanding of differences in the costs of providing effective schooling to different types of learners, with weighted allocations to high-need students to underwrite targeted and strategic support. Principles of weighted funding acknowledge the different intensity of support required to bring different individuals to an agreed outcome.

For meeting the needs of high- and additional-needs students, the allocations vary depending on the type of learner. For learners in schools serving disadvantaged communities, schools receive a per student supplement that is weighted by the socio-economic (SES) profile of the family backgrounds of students in the school. The measure used to do this is Student Family Occupation (SFO) which is an index weighted by the concentrations of children from families where the parents are unemployed or in low-skilled jobs. This is funding to address learner needs based on the characteristics of the learners at the school.

Other types of SRP funding are allocated based on the individual learner rather than school characteristics. This includes resources for students with disabilities (based on an assessment of each individual), for students with English as a Second Language (ESL) needs, and for Indigenous students. Schools receive additional funds depending on the number of learners with these characteristics and their levels of assessed need.

A variation of this model is to set the supplementary amount per student funding to the price of research-assessed effective intervention programs. This type of approach is used in several jurisdictions in the United States. As an example, Wyoming allocates resources based on enrolment-linked base school funds and supplementary funding linked to student needs, with loadings calculated on the basis of the costs of effective programs, identified through research, and the resources required for implementing those programs in specific school settings.

This approach is based on the view that the costs of effective education differ according to student needs, curriculum, and school and district circumstances (size and location). Accordingly, the Wyoming funding model incorporates adjustments for above-average concentrations of at-risk students, small schools, small districts, vocational education programs, and regional cost differences. Extra funds are calculated on the basis of program needs that address target groups identified as at risk. Schools receive additional per student funds assessed on the basis of the costs of the best programs to address learner needs. This approach allows for more transparent connections to be made between separate interventions and lines of funding, according to school size and student profile. The approach emphasises targeted and research-

informed interventions that reflect the needs of at-risk learners for smaller class groups, specific learning support, extra learning hours and higher levels of counselling and guidance to address barriers to learning. The specificity of this approach supports accurate estimates for interventions based on staff costs. The funding is still delivered in the form of supplementary needs-based allocations linked to the characteristics of schools and students, in common with the Victorian SRP.

A further example of needs-based funding linked more directly to older learners is provided by the 16- to 18-year-old and adult learner funding models developed in the United Kingdom (UK). The UK funding model for 16- to 18-year-olds is applied across all sectors regardless of whether they are studying in school or other provider settings and aims to "place learners at the centre". It uses a core and supplementary per student allocation method, with supplementary funding weighted according to the characteristics and needs of learners, an approach not dissimilar to the Victorian SRP funding model. It builds in a base rate, a provider rate recognising specific costs of delivery pertaining to the sector including pupil mix and an additional learning support weighting based on students' prior learning achievement. This last element acknowledges that students with below average GCSE scores will need additional support to achieve their full potential. The funding formula also includes a success rate factor that increases the funding allocation for above-average success rates, building incentives for providers to both improve retention and promote student success.

Needs-based funding model for Victoria

Low-skill, disengaged learners require a range of intensive supports for effective engagement in education and training programs. The add-ins regarded as most important for this group would include consistent learner advice, guidance and support, the provision of supportive and locally accessible learning settings, access to small group learning and targeted curricula presented in learner centred mode, and the provision of managed pathway support. These more intensive supports require additional funding for education and training providers in order for them to implement and maintain effective programs and improve outcomes. But the additional funding needs to be targeted appropriately so that it reaches providers who deal with larger numbers of disengaged adult learners. Approaches involving needs-based resource allocation via formula funding provide an appropriate mechanism for achieving this, and potentially offer considerable benefits to the education and training sector in terms of increased levels of equity, efficiency, effectiveness, transparency and accountability.

A learner-sensitive needs-based approach provides a model which would embody agreed educational values and policy for the education and training sector, while allocating resources in a way that is grounded in available research, and accessible to all providers. Recently, Skills Victoria and DEECD have agreed on a set of funding principles that need to underpin resource allocation in Victorian education and training. The principles demand that funding should:

1. Target identified learning and development outcomes
   - maximise achievement of skills, development, knowledge and qualifications for all Victorians, including disadvantaged groups
   - address the required breadth of learning and development outcomes
2. Support effective, high quality and efficient services
   - funding is directed to high-quality and effective learning and development services.
   - arrangements make the best and most effective use of scarce public resources.
3. Encourage partnerships between providers and pathways for clients
   - encourages partnerships between providers to the same client
   - supports client transitions from one service provider to another and to employment
4. Create equity and social inclusion
   - provides core services, for specified groups of people, free of charge to them, and removes barriers to accessing services
   - consistently addresses the needs of those facing disadvantage and higher needs in each age group
5. Support the clients' choice of providers
   - learners are informed in order to choose a service provider and to determine their private contributions to funding (if any).

- funding is seen to maintain competitive neutrality between providers and sectors.

Needs-based funding models operating in other sectors provide approaches which are consistent with these funding principles, and could be applied to the education and training sector. The key element is the recognition of high and additional needs of some learners through a weighted loading or supplementary amount allocated to providers who deliver services to disengaged learners. In the schools sector, this is achieved through a mix of provider-level funding supplements based on a student disadvantage index, such as the SFO, and learner-sensitive supplements based on individual learner characteristics, such as funds for students with disabilities.

Similar indexes and approaches are required to support education and training providers delivering services to high-need learners, particularly disengaged adult learners. While parental occupation, which is used to construct the SFO index in the schools sector, may not be the most appropriate for the VET sector, other indexes may be. One example is provided by the 16-to 18-year-old and adult learner funding model developed in the UK where providers gain additional support based on their learner profile. Additional funds are provided using an index weighted by the English and Maths skills of learners as measured by point scores on relevant tests. The index used by Job Services Australia to assess work-readiness of jobseekers—JSCI and JCA—may also be very useful, particularly in the case of disengaged adult learners.

As with any system that provides targeted resources using broad-level funding formulas there remains the need for accountability in the use of funds. Increased resources requires increased scrutiny, to ensure that learner-sensitive funds are actually used to deliver additional learner support, with providers, where appropriate, implementing the sorts of effective learner supports that have proven successful with disengaged adult learners.

In conclusion, needs-based formula funding would represent a break from the more piecemeal pattern of resource allocation in education that has traditionally operated for disengaged adult learners. In particular, it would, (1) be available to all education and training providers, (2) improve the targeting of resources to achieve better outcomes for all students by aligning resourcing to individual student learning needs, and (3) ensure fairness of treatment of providers, with those with the same mix of student learning needs receiving the same levels of funding, and those with a different mix of student learning needs receiving additional funding in a transparent and efficient way. The approach would enable the education and training sector to focus on satisfying agreed educational needs, rather than ignoring those characteristics of students, programs, and sites that generate genuine differential costs.

6 Returns on investment

In exploring value for money offered by programs that engage the disengaged in education and training, evaluators can use a range of different lenses to test "value".

Goal-based evaluations of re-engagement programs

Research and projections using a cost-benefit analysis based on both individual and social returns, are often premised on positive program outcomes; that is, links are made between enhanced consumption of education and training, the successful securing of qualifications and subsequent participation in productive pathways into employment and community engagement. However, individual reports and evaluations of single programs and interventions are not always able to provide definitive documentation of such outcomes. Sometimes this is because programs are short-lived and evaluations necessarily work with very limited available results; sometimes some outcomes may not be in evidence for some time given the nature of the intervention and the qualities of the disengaged learner, or effects may be diffused by a range of interventions. It must be acknowledged that assessment of cost effectiveness in interventions that take place in the complex and multilayered contexts of the disengaged learner "can be difficult as results of social investments usually take time to eventuate and are often the products of forces in addition to the activity under scrutiny" (Levin, 1983: 18). The complexity of the context of the disengaged learner is one reason, therefore, why some researchers note the lack of definitive analysis of cost effectiveness of programs, with evaluations inclining more for documenting of programs' limited short term "success" against a range of criteria spanning personal, social and diverse pathways outcomes (Hasluck and Green, 2007).

Evaluation of effectiveness is also recognised as presenting further challenges when programs deal with the very disengaged and disadvantaged, as do so many of the programs documented in this review. As Hasluck and Green (2007) have noted, effective interventions for this group would necessarily be very resource intensive. Canadian researchers, in developing a segmentation of low literacy learners, have conservatively estimated costs for the least engaged as around 20 times those of more "engaged" and able low-skill learners (Murray et al., 2009: 58). The high costs associated with highest-need groups, however, do not always yield intended results and outcomes are at best variable. As such, researchers have raised the question of the development of "appropriate metrics" to reflect diverse needs and capacities within target populations. For the most disengaged, or for those at life stages where employment or even securing of a qualification may not be a pressing or realistic goal, more appropriate targets may involve community participation, some level of further training or even greater stability in living circumstances allowing for more effective interaction with social support services (Hasluck and Green, 2007).

Efforts of researchers to address evaluation in ways that both acknowledge the actual contributions of the program to individual learners but also attempt to impose rigorous analyses of effectiveness are usefully illustrated in the Scottish review of the

Phase Two *Adult Literacies Pathfinder* Program (Scottish Government, 2008). The evaluation team noted three main perspectives for analysis of outcomes for these programs: (1) absolute; (2) in terms of achievement against stated objectives; and (3) in terms of cost-effectiveness when compared to similar programs.

In respect of 'absolute' outcomes, the evaluation team found that the diverse *Pathfinder* projects had "achieved much", undertaking project activity "that has left a worthwhile legacy locally and in doing so produced a variety of learning". In the most immediate and stand-alone sense the projects had been valuable within their immediate communities. In relation to defined objectives, the *Pathfinder* projects had "helped to encourage innovative and collaborative literacies practice" and "in all respects achieved the main objectives set for the program". But the evaluators found that in relation to cost effectiveness "there are no simple benchmarks" and it is difficult to measure benefits in simple economic terms. Given that projects had only recently concluded at the time of evaluation the evaluation was unable to assess costs and returns for programs designed to be 'demonstration' programs where success really hinged on the extent to which the pilot activity was sustained and built upon locally, where local learning was transferred or replicated elsewhere, or the activity resulted in new or improved literacy practice (Scottish Government, 2008).

Evaluations of other stand-alone programs echo the *Pathfinder* approach, building analysis of outcomes around "absolute" outcomes or performance against stated objectives. The Braybrook Maidstone Youth Partnership (BMYP) is a good example of this approach, where identification of the project's objectives and nominated deliverables serve as the primary yardstick against which outcomes are assessed. The evaluation reported on successful attainment of those targets and nominated key success factors including strong case management support and the marshalling of a network of project "partners" to ensure strong wraparound support of young people at all stages of the program from initial enlistment (outreach) through to customised teaching and learning environments and pathways. This evaluation did also refer to questions of value for money. First, it noted that the spread of roles and responsibilities in a coherent and cooperative set of partnerships focused around learners' needs allowed the program to be delivered "for a relatively small amount of resources". Second, it affirmed points made by Levin and others regarding significant long-term social and economic savings delivered by such programs—that ensuring that young people "don't become one of the long-term disenfranchised, disengaged and more importantly unemployed" saves the "much greater" costs to the community and to the social fabric (Broadbent, 2009).

Value for money assessments normally imply a degree of benchmarking and comparison with other programs, again problematic in contexts where uncontrolled differences may exist between jurisdictions, funding regimes, reporting arrangements and student selection or recruitment strategies. Those differences often affect evaluation methodology. Given significant differences across jurisdictions, for example, the evaluation of *Second Chance* schools in Europe, operating across a range of countries, chose to focus on two distinct measures of "value". First, immediate costs and outcomes were reviewed with evaluators concluding that the schools' strong performance in retaining students (over 90 per cent retention) represented a "good return on investment" despite the generally high per capita investment in pupils. Here the evaluation group highlighted in particular the factors that underpinned both the success and costliness of the program—the high number of staff and strong focus on quality ICT support. Second, the evaluation also recognised as "valuable", based again on outcomes, comparable initiatives in other European jurisdictions including the NewStart program in the UK, Danish production schools and the Irish Youthreach program. These programs, however, were documented as reporting higher rates of student attrition with comparable or even higher costs per student, supporting evaluators' claims of comparative "cost effectiveness" for the *Second Chance* program.

Clearly comparisons of "effectiveness" are challenging in these contexts. Diverse programs can draw on different cohorts and may involve different selection strategies that distort intakes and outcomes. In addition outcomes may be shown to be patchy, with programs performing well across some spheres, such as outreach and engagement strategies, and less well in others. The Irish *Youthreach* program, for example, was found by its own program evaluators

to be "for the most part maximising output from the input available", particularly effective in outreach activities and in attracting the target cohort of hard to reach learners into the program. Evidence was also presented to highlight the success of *Youthreach* in aspects of pedagogy such as developing learners' soft skills in areas such as self-confidence, personal awareness, and inter-personal skills. While student attrition was acknowledged as 'a concern' and learner certification and progression 'less effective', the evaluation noted a number of 'limiting factors' including the high overall level of learner needs and a very diverse learner cohort.

Programs described in this review as good practice have in the main been subject to external evaluations that commend their approaches and strategies through reference to longer term outcomes. We have attempted to highlight programs that demonstrate strong outcomes in four distinct fields of activity in working with disengaged learners – outreach, wellbeing, pedagogies and pathways. What has emerged as a strong theme in this review has been the powerful role of particular factors in binding these fields into holistic and effective provision—especially the role of individualised attention from the outset, and the ongoing learner management that allows for discussion and documentation of learning levels and aspirations, changing circumstances and milestones reached and exploration of pathways. In many of the programs reviewed this function served as the "glue" binding effective programs together. The case manager or key adviser anchored the program to build student connections and ongoing engagement with learning but also served as liaison with project partners to ensure best and most timely use of program networks. Investment in this role is one that underpins value for money.

Returns to investment across different groups of adult learners

Many studies point to the positive returns to training including for low-skill workers and those who are unemployed (for example, see Gleeson, 2005). The studies tend to look at workers or adult learners as a group, rather than separately, whereas the returns on investment may vary depending on factors such as age, work status and health. It is appropriate in this context to return briefly to the analysis of low-skill learners developed in Chapter 1. As researchers have noted in the UK and elsewhere not all disengaged learners seek or will measurably benefit from engagement, especially engagement measured in terms of accredited outcomes. Older learners in particular may see little benefit in accredited up-skilling and research tends to support their scepticism. Value for money considerations may well imply segmentation of the group under review into those for whom enhanced qualifications will materially affect life opportunities and wellbeing, and those whose engagement with education and training, if undertaken at all, will see more diffuse outcomes.

In purely economic terms, rates of return on investment are likely to vary with age, work status and health. A Canadian study of the costs and benefits of addressing low literacy skills in the adult population estimated the costs of raising skill levels above certain thresholds based on implementing a range of effective intervention programs and reported that the costs rose sharply for those without high school qualifications and for immigrant women with low attainment (Murray et al., 2009). In terms of returns on investment, the results of the study suggest that while the returns are very strong at an aggregate level across all ages, the costs start to outweigh the benefits as the age of the adults increases, particularly for those marginal to the workforce. This suggests that for older disengaged learners not in the labour force the costs of establishing education and training opportunities may not be offset by gains in attainment, employment, work advancement and reductions in dependence on income support and welfare. This does not deny the importance of the programs to individuals and to communities on other, non-economic grounds. Personal and social rewards as outcomes to investments in education and training are important considerations for government, even if economic returns (as measured by costs and offsets) start to diminish.

Macroeconomic evaluations of costs and benefits

An important approach taken by economists to estimating returns on investment involves estimating the cost of not intervening, taking as a reference point the social and economic costs attendant on low-skill acquisition, extended disengagement and non-

participation. In the US, it is estimated, for example, that each single high school dropout "costs the nation approximately $260,000 in lost earnings and productivity" (Amos, 2008: 2). But social fabric and community security are also adversely affected; similar projections involve health costs ($17 billion saved if current dropouts had diplomas) and community safety (increasing retention by just five per cent would reduce arrests and incarcerations with savings of around $8 billion each year) (Amos, 2008, Belfield and Levin, 2009). Levin and others have estimated that the benefit-cost ratio of dropout recovery programs is estimated to be three to one, that is, every one dollar invested in effective re-engagement programs should return $3.00 in economic benefits (Levin et al. 2007; Catterall, 2011).

Other researchers also point to savings accruing to government from increased participation in education and training, with specific focus on savings from social welfare, health and related budgets. The approach is particularly relevant in circumstances where the disengaged are young and where consequences of continuing disengagement are proportionately immense. In the UK, for example, research conducted for the *Total Place* Not in Employment, Education and Training (NEET) project in Coventry, Solihull and Warwickshire estimated that the public sector expenditure of 14.8 million pounds on approximately 2,000 16- to 18-year-old NEETs in those regions (a cost per head of 7,400 pounds) should be offset against a total cost to the area of not having these young people in education, employment or training, a cost of between 56 and 66 million pounds each year (LSIS, 2010).

In exploring costs and benefits of raising literacy levels of adult learners to a level considered necessary for full participation in globally competitive economies (a level comparable to secondary school completion), Canadian economists link literacy acquisition to macroeconomic performance. This draws on work demonstrating long term relationships between literacy levels and growth of GDP per capita (Murray et al., 2009; Coulombe, Tremblay & Marchand, 2004; Coulombe & Tremblay, 2006; Murray & McCracken, 2008). Nearly $6.5 billion is projected as a cost of providing literacy training and up-skilling of low-skill adult workers, encompassing large proportions of the adult population of Canada. However, benefits measured in terms of taxation revenue gains, and reductions in welfare, health and related costs, are estimated at roughly 251 per cent of that investment annually ($16.3 billion), based on productivity increases and savings on direct social expenditures such as assistance benefits (Murray et al., 2009).

This means, in simple terms, at an aggregate level for every dollar spent on intervention, there is a saving to government and community of approximately $2.50.

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Appendix 1: Consultations with key agencies

Eleven targeted consultations were conducted as part of this review. We are indebted to the individuals and organisations listed below, who generously made themselves available to share their experiences and extensive understanding of adult learning environments and the needs of disengaged adult learners. The consultations included the following agencies and individuals:

Consultations:

1. Sally Thompson, CEO, Adult Learning Australia
2. Linda Smart, Brotherhood of St Laurence, Line of Sight Program
3. Sharon Fisher and Steve Maillet, Melbourne City Mission
4. Gateways Team, VU College Gateways Program, Victoria University
5. Kerrie Bowtell, Outreach Coordinator, TAFE NSW
6. Regina Hill, Management Consultant
7. Jeanette Brown, CEO, and Judy Bissland, Operations and Client Services Manager, Sandybeach Centre
8. Brendan Murray, Co-Coordinator, The Pavilion School
9. Penelope Steuart, Manager, Social Inclusion & Major Redevelopments, Department of Human Services
10. Catherine McGrath, Project Manager, Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy, Department of Human Services
11. Lea Campbell, Jesuit Social Services

Appendix 2: Experience with disengaged learners in Victoria

The View from the Field

As part of the review, consultations were undertaken with selected agencies at the forefront of service delivery for disengaged adult learners, as well as with leaders in the fields of VET research and education and training program delivery. They included individuals or agencies drawn from human and community services, adult education, TAFE institutes, and skills and social policy advocates. The interviews focused on the distinct needs of the groups of disengaged adult learners and the implications of those needs for programs and effective delivery. This section presents a summary of responses and insights grouped around four key areas of engagement: (1) outreach, (2) student wellbeing, (3) program pedagogies and (4) pathways management.

1. Outreach

Consultations referred in the first instance to key characteristics of the learner group under review – that is their low levels of qualifications to date. Regardless of age or other characteristics this feature signals a shared history of limited success in education that has implications for any future interactions with education or training.

Outreach strategies should therefore take account of high levels of initial resistance and low levels of aspiration. Program providers should be aware that in initial phases few learners would be receptive to any pathways planning, given their low levels of success in the past. Consultations reinforced the point that trust-building and positive experiences in initial phases of outreach and contact would be necessary to the success of subsequent education experiences. That "front end" work may be protracted. Consultants involved with neighbourhood renewal programs for example insist on the need for a "long establishment timeframe" for many disengaged learners:

Get someone to the point that a person says, I can actually do this. It might take 2-3 years, but we have got some really good experience where people have started off and continued. (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011)

This is borne out by others involved in program delivery for highly disengaged young people or for residents on public housing estates; in one case for example providers of a several-year program identified as critical to program success the extended outreach and relationship building period at the commencement of their program:

In the first year we really focused on making ourselves known and building relationships. If they didn't know about us, they wouldn't enrol, so that was where the energy had to go. (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011)

Consultants agreed also on the significance of place in the undertaking of outreach. Some pointed out that disengaged adult learners may not want to engage in the first instance with an impersonal institution outside their neighbourhood, community or suburb. "In reach" activities in neighbourhood settings, undertaken in partnership with known and trusted partners, facilitate bridging and build confidence:

"how can you have that in reach to start the engagement and then help them transition to more mainstream places of education? A lot of the work that's happening involves things that start with community based events, community groups and how you can work with that connectivity where they might be engaging more on a personal level and using that as a pathway to other opportunities. That is an important part as well. (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011)

This community presence works on a number of levels to normalise and defuse the learning relationships – the learner undertakes initial engagement activity on home territory, subsequent pedagogical relationships are informed by that learner-focused location and ideally partners can connect with learners and each other within the same setting, building shared understandings of the learner, the engagement project and of their role in that project:

Having the other people outreaching into the same locations is very effective. Most renewal areas have a hub, those hubs provide a location for services to come into, not necessarily all the time, but actually to be able to come together with other services, you might be going into financial counselling, a play group – a range of things on offer. Non-stigmatised, you aren't doing obviously something particularly; there is a whole suite of things you could be going in there to do. You could just have a cup of tea. (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011)

This approach involves trust-building, generation of confidence and developing the critical momentum for the learner to "go through the gate". A delivery model based on these principles would be best described as involving an integrated model of delivery that streamlined case management as far as possible and allowed collaboration and alignment between support services (e.g. health, housing and community services) and key human capital systems (education, training and employment). In the first instance however there needs to be known and trusted people to provide information and build the networks and connections and demonstrate the links to positive outcomes so that learners can build aspiration and intention. This can be provided for example through the use of community members to liaise in outreach and information activities, and through the building of strategic partnerships to provide a context where clear connections may be made between participation, outcomes and pathways:

These journeys are never taken alone and have been achieved through the collaborative work of the Brotherhood staff and volunteers, government agencies and private businesses wanting to make a difference to people's lives. (BSL 2011a: 4)

2. Wellbeing

There is significant overlap between categories of outreach, wellbeing, pedagogy and pathways. The trust building and commitment involved in the outreach phase for example are underpinned by demonstrated recognition of the range of students' educational and non-educational needs for effective engagement. Student wellbeing is addressed through the range of supports provided that might address immediate barriers to effective engagement such as financial difficulties, medical conditions, disabilities and family commitments. Some programs incorporated student fees into their program costs as learners found themselves unable to pay even concession rates:

Money and finance was the other big issue. Even a program that has the concession price, such as our Cert III in Children's Services, even with the concession price, it will be around $180-$200, and the people we are dealing with absolutely can't pay this. Certainly not upfront, even on a payment plan some of them will struggle. That was a big barrier. (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011)

But student wellbeing can be supported in less direct ways – it is also addressed through appropriate pedagogies and framing of learning environments. Adoption of a learning "communities" environment rather than more conventional classroom contexts enables people to progress at their own pace and follow their own interests. This involves flexibility in curriculum design rather than a sequential set of classroom activities; learners are able to revisit themes and re-cap and to strike out on new explorations if that is appropriate to their interest. This builds learner confidence and independence, qualities necessary to successful engagement.

Linked to outreach but aligning with wellbeing factors is the dictum that "You need a soft entry point". "Soft entry" points are so called because they encourage learners to engage with learning in smaller, non-academic courses, with little pressure (Bowman 2007). They may not be overt in their

identification with training, with initial focus orientation on a disconnected social activity, or learning a specific new skill (such as computers or driving), or broadly focusing on labour market issues without zoning in on the particular and pre-empting people's decision making. Ideally the "soft" entry point also builds opportunities for enjoyment and success – in achieving learning goals, or in undertaking learning in a shared social setting.

A soft entry point is also one where start dates and points are permeable and negotiable. Again connections back to engagement needs are clear – ideally providers need to be able to work with learners when the learners are ready to engage. This may not happen at a precise point at the commencement of the academic year but allows learners to "catch the wave" when interest is sparked:

We always like to get things going quickly. Our first engagement program for young people is running as we speak – a digital music program. We are learning as we are going. Young people at risk can be hard to reach. They are not all located in one place, some of them are on the housing estate but they can be spread anywhere. (We) found a need for short engagement programs. We were working with a facilitator who had planned a program that was sequential, but have convinced them that it needs to be one that people can enter at any stage. These are short 5-6 week programs designed to engage hard to engage people – who only want to put a toe in the water (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011)

Reference has already been made to the community "hubbing" of services and activity to support student wellbeing needs in a single setting. There are educational or lifelong learning rationales for this linked-up approach in building learners' own competencies and ability to manage their own interactions with systems, as noted by one provider in relation to wellbeing and support extended to learners:

There is a tendency, in these environments, when you have disengaged people who have special needs and require additional support, there is the tendency to say we will help them as much as we can. (But) the most important thing for them is for the centre or place to know where we can send these learners to get the support or even bring the support in from other agencies. Knowing what resources are around in the area is so important. So we can send people off, or get the support in but not try to do everything ourselves. The wrap-around approach, we are trying to do that here. . It's about helping people address their barriers such as mental health issues and not having money. It's about knowing where we can refer people onto. (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011)

Practitioners and researchers were agreed on the fundamental importance of the maintenance of strong levels of connection with the individual learner over the duration of the program. Most learners would confront some level of challenge over the course of their participation and a high level of personal connection provides the elements of continuity, support and care that may be needed in sustaining attendance and engagement of the formerly disengaged:

The surveys that we did with participants and volunteers have all said they felt they were supported here, gained things here – that's the environment that is created in the classes. Because of the small class sizes, the ethos of the centre, that keeps people here. If someone goes missing, they get rung by our project officer, our education manager. It's always, don't worry about it, you can catch up. Some who didn't finish a program one year, we would offer to catch them up and plug them in the next year. A number have done this, some have slipped through. They would know that the door is always open and the support will be there. (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011)

3. Pedagogy

Learner-centred approaches to teaching and learning for low-skill and disengaged learners involve some adjustments to conventional program delivery; a number of consultations pointed to the value of modularisation, immediacy and relevance in program content and delivery:

The learning needs to be immediate, purposeful, practical and needs to solve an immediate problem. Anything that is short and easily accessible ticks those boxes. (Consultation, Sally Thompson, June 2011)

The place of adult literacy education principles in informing many of the programs for these groups was also highlighted: "adult literacy is a social practice and people develop their literacy with purposeful engagement with other literate people". In particular there is a concern that conventional classroom settings are in themselves disengaging

for mature learners, especially older learners, whose perceptions that education is primarily for the young are confirmed when encountering teacher-based pedagogies.

These observations, shared across a range of interviews, have specific implications for pedagogical practice and for program resourcing. Small group or one-on-one learning for example has been identified as suited to learning needs of this group but associated costs would be significant. In more general terms comments made in a number of interviews about the need for changes in pedagogical practice involve significant professional training and workforce development. Similarly consultations emphasised the need to begin with learners' own needs and learning levels; in many cases this would entail pre-accredited learning conducted in informal learning settings. However this mode and level of delivery may not be recognised as meeting skills objectives and funding arrangements do not currently allow for growth in this mode of delivery:

(Pre accredited learning) is well suited to later-life learners – the short immediate skills set that may or may not lead to a bigger qualification. It's the only part of the Victorian system that didn't grow under Skills Reform – everything else was uncapped, the one part of the system that was about spreading the net widely to engage disengaged groups wasn't uncapped. It really fights for its survival. We would see non-formal as an essential part of the mix. (Consultation, Sally Thompson, June 2011)

4. Pathways

While programs for disengaged learners can vary enormously in focus, duration and outcomes, the importance of realistic, meaningful and achievable outcomes is a given. However those outcomes may not involve attainment of qualifications; many programs reviewed are undertaken at a pre-employment or pre-accreditation level, focusing on preparing individuals for more effective engagement with employment or further learning. Providers make the point that if learners effectively engage with programs at this level their foundation for subsequent learning is enhanced through increased confidence and through a stronger understanding of education and training systems and of their own interests and capacities. As noted already the learning journey is a long one and "pathways" can be elastic. When necessary educational milestones are not yet reached there is an argument that achievement should be measured incrementally. When measurement against employment or labour market outcomes may not be the appropriate measure of success possibly "the good society" would be a better indicator so that social inclusion, civil participation, development of social capital and networks, may be alternative measures that indicate how far a person has come along the continuum preparatory to training.

In this respect the concept of "satisficing" was mentioned in one interview to suggest a necessary and sufficient competence achievement to reach employment in certain work – even if below the Cert III level. In this interview it was pointed out that segmentation by labour market may assist in developing appropriate indicators for success in engagement strategies – if higher levels of qualifications are not required for some areas of employability (such as some areas of hospitality) then employment outcomes that meet the learner's objectives provide strong alternative success measures. The position finds resonance in international literature that explores the value of lower level qualifications as currency in contemporary workplaces.

A range of programs explored in consultations demonstrated clear labour market connections and drew on these connections to focus training content and to build pathways. The BSL Line of Sight programs for example drew strongly on industry partnerships and incorporated up to six months of paid work placements in training. A key principle in the program is seamless delivery – recognising that disconnected services lack endurability to "hold" clients for the length of time necessary to generate results. Intermediate labour market programs are necessary and linked up labour market approaches and learner case management allows learners to see a seamless long-term strategy that links directly to their needs. Significantly, however, the process is regarded as long term-- a prolonged and staged strategy that can take up to five years for individuals.

Pathways are in some respects problematic for providers and for policy makers. The temptation to build "outcomes" to meet short term objectives (such as the need for achievable certification in the short term) may not work in the best interest of the learner or the labour market if

skills development is hastily conducted and without real "buy-in" on the part of the learner. A number of consultations raised the problem of perverse outcomes where learners' attempts to obtain qualifications resulted in securing of inappropriate or otherwise low-value qualifications that under PPP and VTG arrangements served merely to disqualify them from eligibility to undertake training that may be of use.

There were lots of shoddy providers who put kids through certificates quickly and they don't have any work experience and businesses don't trust this. Now those people are exempt. There's a myriad of things to tackle but providers do prey on these sorts of people and locations. (Consultation, Department of Human Services, June 2011)

In this regard "pathways" advice and support should be viewed as integral to engagement from the outset, part of the initial conversation around aspirations and interests and reviewed and renegotiated over the course of the partnership.

This last point may be viewed in terms of providers themselves, some of which have developed more coherent and longer term understandings of measures for effective engagement:

If we had funding for the first year of the project only, we would have had a great project report; we had amazing outcomes for that one year. We had 16 enrolments in our educational programs and about 25 altogether with some people coming in for one-off course activities, but that still exceeded our expectations. However if we only had one year we couldn't have sustained the initiative. It needed more time. (Consultation, Sandybeach Centre, June 2011)

Sustainability for this provider required a longer term view – as noted, short term outcomes, dependent on one-off funding – were measurable and in their way impressive but without longer term work on partnership building and sustained outreach activities the impacts on future learners and on the local employer groups interested in building connections with the provider would prove quite marginal.

Appendix 3: List of programs for disengaged learners

Program	Targeted Group	Funding/Resourcing Information	Estimated cost per student	Participants	Length of program/ Period program operational
Australia					
Tasmanian Adult Literacy Action Plan	Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills	$12, 046, 000 over 4 years, strong volunteer component		Increase proportion to 58.5% of 15-74 year olds by 2020 to be considered prose literacy and document literacy component	2010-2015
Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLEN)	Young People aged 10-19, disengaged, at risk	For example: Baw Baw Latrobe LLEN 2010 expenditure: $462,831, total income $558,443 - ($233,106 - Victorian Skills Grant, $164,132 DEEWR grant and 9 other income streams/grants)		28,000 young people across state	2009-2011
Centre for Work and Learning, BSL: running a variety of programs, social enterprise	Long-term unemployed, housing commission residents, young disengaged	For example: Community Contact Service social enterprise. $60,000 provided by BSL and DHS (establishment costs) & annual turnover of $900,000 (2010 to 2012). Project aims to break-even.		37 trainees in first 3 years	2005-2012
Pre-Community VCAL 'Taster' courses, or Community VCAL	Young disengaged learners, aged 15-21	Community VCAL - funding negotiated by the provider and school, drawing from SRP (highest rate in 2008, $6833 per student), 'Taster' course funding, dependent on organisations involved	$6833	586 Community VCAL Participants across state in 2008 16 participants in documented VCAL taster course (Myconos, 2010)	Taster' course 8 weeks Community VCAL course, 1-3 years
Given the Chance, the Ecumenical Migration Centre (EMC), BSL	Refugees/Migrants	6 partners involved - mentors are volunteers		220 refugees (2005-2007)	1 year
Swinburne Indigenous Youth Re-engagement Program	Indigenous Youth	The 2010 pilot project was funded by a Skills Victoria Access and Equity Grant of $60,000	$4615	13 participants	
The Changing Cultures Project	Young Refugees	8 partnerships involved - various funding arrangements coming in and out during project		232 average per semester	2001-2003
Student Engagement Worker - Eaglehawk Secondary College	Young People at risk from disengaging from school	Approx. $1000 per student	$1000	38 students in 2010	Funded until Dec 2010?
Mens Sheds	Older Men - unemployed, marginalised	Eg. Coolah Mens Shed: Total cost $40,000 + Tools and Equipment $10,000 - some mens sheds can cost up to a million 'If the men's shed is not going to engage in direct commercial activities, it still needs income to support it, to cover the operating expenses'		various	various
Wheels, run as part of Melbourne Citymission and JSA	Young people aged 15-22	Cost per head of $1,500 Funding has been from Philanthropic sources, presenting challenges for long-term program sustainability.	$1500	eight intakes per annum of up to 14 participants	2 days per week for 8 weeks

Program	Targeted Group	Funding/Resourcing Information	Estimated cost per student	Participants	Length of program/ Period program operational
Lighthouse Foundation	Young people aged 15-22	Victorian State Government has provided interest-free loans for the purchase/construction of Lighthouse homes. Many homes are provided rent-free by partners or benefactors. Each Lighthouse home has a voluntary local Community Committee responsible for raising $20,000 towards operating the home.		up to 28 young people living in nine Lighthouse homes	
The Pavilion	Young People	Approx. $8,000 per student, 95% normal SRP	$8000	this year 60, next year 80	School years - until transition
Jesuit Social Services Community Colleges	Young people, housing commission residents, recent migrants/refugees	Approx. $500,000 of state funds to found college		newly founded	dependent on course length
Youth Foyers	Young People - homeless	ACT paper identifies that having existing refurbished capital sites diminish costs - this will mean that income can be collected from renters to run the Foyer. As opposed to repaying a capital loan - as what happened in VIC. Precise VIC budget allocation unclear.		ACT: around 40 participants in one building, 28 in shared accommodation	
NSW TAFE Outreach	Disengaged Learners - All Ages	1500 teacher hours a year provided per Coordinator - to cover all activities, Approx. $123,000 per year - drawn from 3 sources, not tied to tenders		23,000 participants per year.	
Sliding Door Cafe - Reservoir	Disengaged Learners - All Ages				
Sandybeach Centre	Housing Commission Residents, all ages disengaged learners	Project received Community Learning Partnership funding, for 3 years from ACFE. Approx. $145,000 over 3 years		134 enrolments in all components of the initiative	2007-2010
Work Skills e-Portfolio for Jobseekers with a Disability Pilot	Disabled Youth aged 17-21	$58, 000 total ($29,000 from Australian Flexible Learning Framework + in-kind contribution from NMIT)	$7250	8 participants, 8 staff (six employment consultants and two job maintenance staff)	Piloted in 2009, rolled out in 2010
Gateway Program - Jesuit Social Services	Disengaged Young people - 17-28	Colonial Foundation granted $1m per year for five years (from 2002)			2002-2007 - funded for 5 years
Melbourne City Mission - Shopfront Services	Disengaged Learners - All Ages				
'One Stop Shop' – BSL	Disengaged Learners - All Ages				
Family Centred Employment Project	Disengaged Families	$500,000 per annum, for each location, over two years - DEEWR		voluntary participation of families	new pilot
Victoria University Community Gateways	Disengaged Learners - All Ages	NA			
East Reservoir Breakfast Club - Neighbourhood Renewal	Disengaged Learners - All Ages (single mums especially)	Funding provided by Melbourne CityMission and Reservoir East Primary School.		7 participants in 2007	ongoing

Program	Targeted Group	Funding/Resourcing Information	Estimated cost per student	Participants	Length of program/ Period program operational
Sliding Door Cafe - Reservoir - Social Enterprise	Disengaged Learners - All Ages	DHS Neighbourhood Renewal Strategy guided by Preston Reservoir Adult Community Education (PRACE) and Thornbury Women's Neighbourhood House			The course runs for 18 weeks (run in school hours so parents can still drop off and pick up children). Students spend 1 day per week in class, Mondays, and are then rostered for 1 day per week in the cafe.
Darebin City Council Partnerships within Neighbourhood Renewal	Disengaged Learners - All Ages				
UK					
New Deal for Communities	Socially Deprived Communities	Average spend on education theme per community 6.44 million (2007) - The Flexible New Deal Program (for jobseekers) - cost £31,284 for every job			
Vision 21	People with disabilities	€320,350 (European Social Fund) and €1,021,721 total budget	€12771	80 students (2000-2001)	2000-2001
The Bytes project	Disengaged Young People (aged 16-25)	€170,282 (European Social Fund) and €261,973 total budget Project picked upon funding once ESF ended from the Department of Education and the Department for Employment and Learning		140 students per week	2002-2004
Denmark					
Folk High Schools - informal, formal learning, short course/long course - all courses residential, except 15% of participants	Learners - All Ages	2010 government funding for folkehøjskoler totalled over Dkr 500 million. The state subsidy covers only about half of the average school's total budget, the rest comes from student fees and the schools' own revenue from hiring out their facilities.	DKR 10000	average annual participants 50,000	established since 1864

Program	Targeted Group	Funding/Resourcing Information	Estimated cost per student	Participants	Length of program/ Period program operational
US					
Job Corp	Disengaged Young People	$26,635.00 per person per year (Office of Job Corps 2011)	$26635	operates from over 100 centres across the United States, and enrols approximately 100 000 participants per year	since 1965
Scotland					
Big Plus Initiative	Adults with low literacy and numeracy skills				
Transform TV	Disengaged Young People	£130,000 per year		12 young people involved in training program - many more involved with outreach strategies	
Stramash, Oban, Argyll and Bute (Media Program)	Disengaged Young People	started in 2004 - funded initially as a Big Lottery project, then the council continued to fund if it could present itself as sustainable - it has since become a social enterprise. Initially it received £450,000 from Big Lottery, councils provided £50,000 and LEADER funding of £19,000 - now set up as a social enterprise with turnover £230,000		Since project began it has worked with over 5,000 young people - averages 35 users pre week	A range of day and residential courses.
Xplore	Disengaged Young People (aged 10-18)	Costs £750,000 a year (has run for 9 years)		Has received 2,605 referrals that it cannot meet	Varies - can be very intense case-management
Pupil Intervention Project (PIP)	Disengaged Young People (aged 13-14)	Funding for the pilot program of £9,940	£1,242.50	8 young people	10 week program, by 3 youth workers
Welcome Point	New migrants	Funding is from the mainstream Adult Learning Local Authority Budget - the cost for the year is approximately £2,500, which covers staff part-time plus additional funds for events		60-70 migrants per year	weekly drop in service
Edinburgh's Women's Training Course	Women returning to workforce, single mums	€301,812 Euro from ESF - and total funding €875,262	€29175.4	30 women per year	length of course and 10 week work placement
Core Connex	Disengaged Young People	Received €270,253 from European Social Funds over 2007-2010 as well as drawing on European Regional Development Funds			

Program	Targeted Group	Funding/Resourcing Information	Estimated cost per student	Participants	Length of program/ Period program operational
YWCA Roundabout Centre	Disadvantaged Black and Minority Ethnic Children and young women (especially targeting young mums under 30 on low incomes)	5 full time staff with volunteer support - Project always seeking funding opportunities. Recent years funding has come from BBC Children in Need, contribution of between £3000 and £18,000 - summer school also generates revenue from fees of £3,000 - £4,000		100 children and young women per year	3 weeks during the summer, 10.00AM - 3.00PM.
Challenge Dad, Aberdeen	Fathers and children	Full- time worker - male project worker important in engaging this group Sport a useful engagement strategy Texting and face to face supported connecting and retaining TIME needed in establishment of partnerships, admin/ clerical support needed, good referral systems essential		Aimed at 90 parents and up to 140 children Achieved over 90 parents registered and 47 consistent attendees (and children)	
Connection East End, Glasgow	Low educational attainment	Full time community learning coordinator Full time administrative officer		140 learners aimed at 280 learners recruited 26 peer educators	
Farm Plus	Remote and low skill rural workers	Project team of 4 staff (fractional) over seven months to establish infrastructure, technical and learning support High need for one on one support and complex technical support makes this an expensive delivery and program mode		Aiming at 25 homes to be digitally supported with literacies learning 17 sites recruited	
Healthcare Aberdeen	Low skill individuals connecting with healthcare services	Full time literacy worker PT admin support		92 learners involved in some way	
Homing in on Literacy	Homeless especially young people	Full time Service Community Learning Worker, Part time clerical support			
Links to Literacy	People involved with and serviced by voluntary agencies	Full time project coordinator and part time link workers in each local authority area (7) for 70 hours per year each area (490 hours = approx $14,700)		Aiming at up to 1800 across 7 regions through local recruitment	
Stirling Learning Curriculum	Adults with Learning Disabilities	Full time development worker PT clerical support		Aiming at up to 200 people identified as disengaged 100 reached in some form	

Program	Targeted Group	Funding/Resourcing Information	Estimated cost per student	Participants	Length of program/ Period program operational
The Welcoming, Edinburgh	Refugees, asylum seekers, minorities	Organiser 15 hrs pw; ESL support 5 hrs pw; Literacy support 5hrs pw; Outreach 30 hrs pw; Admin 9 hrs pw; Total 64 hrs pw		Aiming at up to 40 a week in programs	
Sweden					
Komvux - adult education	Adults over 20 - no upper limit set	42,300 SEK (basic level) - average per person, or 50,500SEK (upper level) - average per person. Roughly $6157 and $7352 respectively (converted to AUS dollars)	$7351-$6157 (AUS dollars)	The number of students in the school year 2002–03 was 40,010. Out of those participating 63% were women, while the percentage of students born outside Sweden was 73%	since 1968, tradition is much older though
Ireland					
Back to Education Initiative	Adults with low skill levels	Funding mechanism has a primary focus on delivery, with the coordination, pre-development, outreach and participant support costs built in. €38,000,000 per year, €14,400,000 ESF contribution	€1359	27,959 participants during 2010	flexible provision, typically adults take 2-4 components a year leading to a full award, 200 tuition hours per year
Spain					
Opening Pathways	Women, long-term unemployed	€839,113 from ESF - €1,198,733 total funding - over one year	€5708.25	210 participants	
Germany					
1000 Professions for you!	Young People, Migrants	€172,118.10 in 2009 received from ESF