

# Youth Matters: a study of youth education, training, employment and unemployment in Western Australia

Developing sustainable training and  
employment opportunities for our youth



Department of Training  
and Workforce Development



2013

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENT

This report could not have been written without the work undertaken by Business Group Australia. We especially thank Jim Syrmas and Gary Collins for their work towards this project.

We thank the following organisations for kindly providing us with information, assistance and advice to support the preparation of this report:

- Bridging the Gap
- Challenger Institute of Technology
- Chamber of Commerce and Industry of Western Australia
- Commissioner for Children and Young People
- Construction Training Council
- Department of Communities
- Department of Corrective Services
- Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations
- Department of Education
- Department of Education – South Metropolitan Education Region
- Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Master Builders Association
- SMYL Community Services
- UnionsWA
- West Australian Aboriginal Education and Training Council
- West Australian Police and Community Youth Centres (PCYC)
- Youth Futures WA Inc.

## FOREWORD

On behalf of the State Training Board it is a pleasure to introduce ***Youth Matters: a study of youth education, training, employment and unemployment in Western Australia.***

***Youth Matters***, commissioned by the State Training Board, is based on research and consultations undertaken by Business Group Australia and the State Training Board's Youth Unemployment Steering Committee. It is provided as an introduction to the challenges associated with the transition from secondary education and training to the workplace. It focuses on when young people fail to make a successful transition and the complexities of youth unemployment. It is not intended to provide all the answers but rather to generate discussion and action on this important workforce development issue.

It must be clear from the outset that this paper is not about blame or pointing at a failure of our current system to support our young people. Our research shows that our system works well for the majority of young people with around 75 per cent making the transition from school to further education, training or work with little difficulty and go on to establish a permanent place in the labour market.

***Youth Matters*** explores the challenges of disadvantaged and unemployed youth. It is intended as an opportunity to further strengthen and develop sustainable whole-of-community responses to effectively tackle youth unemployment. The advice received from agencies and service providers working with unemployed youth people supports the positions and directions presented throughout this paper. The actions required to move the most disadvantaged young people into sustainable employment are intensive, long-term, targeted and expensive. The service provision is multi-faceted and requires cooperation across organisations, coordination and a collaborative approach.

The work doesn't stop here. The State Training Board proposes to develop a Strategic Youth Workforce Development Plan for Western Australia. The Youth Workforce Development Plan will be developed through further examination of the issues through greater consultation.

The Steering Committee proposes to consult with youth on their experiences and challenges as a way of ensuring services and programs target their needs. The Committee also proposes to share these findings with providers, employers and government in the development of a fully collaborative community based program to promote cooperative and 'joined up' services or 'wrap around' action to maximise the impact of government interventions at the local level. It will build on the work already undertaken by the State Government and promote and build partnerships with local communities. Local initiatives work best when all the available resources and capabilities are applied at the problem.

Whilst this paper focuses on the Perth metropolitan area it is intended that further research will be undertaken to examine youth unemployment and participation rates in regional Western Australia.

The State Training Board expresses its gratitude to those who took part in the consultations in the development of this paper and particularly to the members of the steering committee including industry training councils, UnionsWA and the Departments of Education and Training and Workforce Development.

We are confident that this report will assist in forging a youth workforce development strategy for Western Australia.



**Mrs Audrey Jackson, AM**  
**CHAIR, YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT STEERING**  
**COMMITTEE**



**Mr Keith Spence**  
**CHAIR, STATE TRAINING BOARD**

## EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Western Australia continues to benefit from a strong resources sector and the overall outlook for the State's economy remains positive. The demand for the State's resource commodities means that employment growth in Western Australia remains strong.

Creating jobs, training and education opportunities is a major goal of any government. Western Australia has seen continued economic growth over most of the past decade and the need for skilled workers remains a priority for the State. To develop the workforce needed by the State's industries, it is imperative that all Western Australians are provided with the opportunity to obtain the relevant skills and competencies.

The prospects of young people are therefore of vital concern and the vocational education and training sector continues to play a crucial role in linking young people's competencies with industry needs. However, the transition for young people from school to work is often challenging and many young people face serious difficulties settling into the labour market.

## YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

The United Nations define 'youth' as persons aged between 15 and 24 years and generally defines the period of 'maturity' where young people transition from the dependency of childhood to the independence and responsibilities of adulthood<sup>1</sup>. Young people form a significant proportion of the Western Australian population. There were just over 307,000 youth recorded as living in Western Australia on 2011 Census night (13.7% of the total population)<sup>2</sup>. This is an 11% increase from the 276,000 recorded in the 2006 Census.

Despite Western Australia's current economic environment and the strong condition of the general labour market, youth are experiencing significantly higher rates of unemployment than people aged 25 to 64 years. On 2011 Census night there were 54,320 persons recorded in Western Australia as being unemployed and looking for work of which 19,887 (36.6%) were between the ages of 15 and 24 years<sup>3</sup>.

The State's unemployment rate for youth seeking full time work increased from an average of 16.3% in 2010-11 to 17.0% in 2011-12. Despite this increase, the rate remained well under the national average rate of 23.7% over 2011-12<sup>4</sup>. Figure 1 below shows the youth unemployment rate in Western Australia compared with national average. Since June 2004 the youth unemployment rate in Western Australia has been lower than the national average. It also shows an upward trend in 2008-09 following the global financial crisis. This upward trend is more a return

<sup>1</sup> United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organisation, [www.unesco.org](http://www.unesco.org)

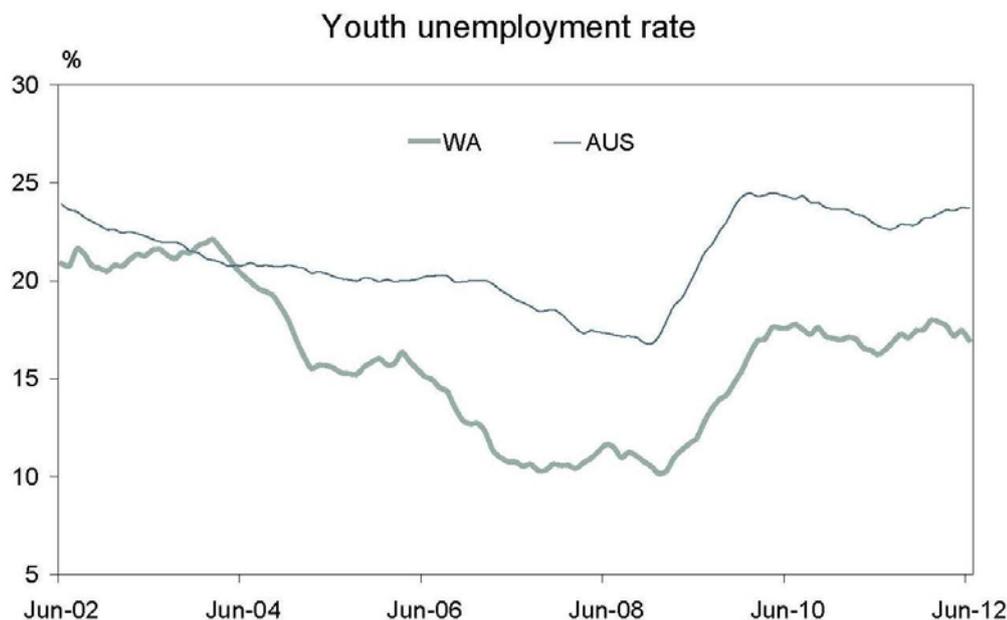
<sup>2</sup> ABS, 2011 Census of Population and Housing, Basic Community Profile, Western Australia

<sup>3</sup> *ibid*, Table B37

<sup>4</sup> Department of Training and Workforce Development, Western Australian labour market review 2011-12, October 2012

to more traditional levels following the 2004 to 2008 resources boom where youth unemployment rates in Western Australia fell to record low numbers.

Figure 1: Youth unemployment rate Western Australia compared with National Average (2002 to 2012)



Source: ABS cat.6202.0, June 2012; 12 month moving average; refers to youth looking for full time work

Young people are often the first casualties of a receding economy. The research shows that early school leavers are especially vulnerable in an uncertain labour market due largely to their age, poor literacy and numeracy, lack of skills, experience and/or knowledge and lack understanding of their rights in an employment market. Without adequate support they are more likely to face periods of unemployment or underemployment. Older workers with experience and skills are able to ride the bumps of a changing labour market and are more likely to either escape unemployment or find work more quickly.

It is reasonable to expect higher unemployment rates in youth than the general working population. After leaving school young people are more likely to mix labour market participation with study and are more likely to trial several employment options. Australian Bureau of Statistics data show that around 20 per cent of young people change their labour force status every month. An even greater number of youth, almost half of teenagers (15 to 19 years) and a third of young adults (aged 20-24 years) combine periods in and out of work over the course of a year<sup>5</sup>. Young people need this opportunity to 'try out' different employment and training options in real workplaces and adult education facilities. A spell of unemployment or underemployment is quite normal and is generally short lived.

<sup>5</sup> Insight, eNewsletter from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Issue 41, March 2011

Any period of unemployment can increase the chance of subsequent and ongoing unemployment. Long-term unemployment can lead to 'scarring' where unemployed people lose employability skills or are stigmatised by potential employers<sup>6</sup>.

Some young people are at greater risk of long-term unemployment or entrenched underemployment. Kelly and Lewis (2000)<sup>7</sup> highlighted that youth who are identified by certain regions or socioeconomic characteristics are more likely to be over-represented in the pool of young unemployed. These young people are more likely to have additional barriers to their labour market participation such as literacy and numeracy issues, low educational attainment, transport, housing or accommodation issues, language or cultural barriers. Many of these areas feature intergenerational unemployment and most will lack the support mechanisms needed to make a successful transition.

Youth unemployment is not evenly distributed across regions. In March 2012 some labour market regions had teenage unemployment rates well over 20 per cent including the South West Metropolitan region where the rate was 25.7 per cent and East Metropolitan region with a rate of 23.1 per cent.

## YOUTH UNDEREMPLOYMENT

Since the 1970s there has been significant change in both the structure and operation of the Australian labour market. In particular there has been an increase in casual, part-time and non-standard working arrangements throughout the labour market. This has the potential to increase the underemployment rate in Western Australia.

Underemployment is comprised of part-time workers who would prefer more hours and are available to work and full-time workers who, for economic reasons, worked part-time hours during the ABS' Labour Force survey period. Accordingly, underemployment is a key measure of spare capacity in the labour market above and beyond unemployment<sup>8</sup>.

In relation to youth there are three significant developments that have influenced labour market participation. Firstly, there has been a marked increase in participation in education with the retention of young people to year 12 a key focus and measure for all Australian governments. Secondly, with the rise in education participation young people are more likely to seek part-time employment. Finally there has been an increase in casual employment, where higher hourly rates are paid in lieu of paid leave entitlements.

Part-time and casual employment helps offset the costs of post-compulsory education and provides some financial independence to a young person. Part-time and casual employment is increasingly becoming the standard entry point to the

<sup>6</sup> NCVET, Insight eNewsletter Issue 41, March 2011, retrieved 18 April 2013.

<sup>7</sup> Kelly, Ross and Lewis, Phillip E.T. (2000) The Impact of Intergenerational effects and Geography on Youth Employment Outcomes: A study of the Perth metropolitan region, Australasian Journal of Regional Studies, Vol 6, No. 1 of 2000

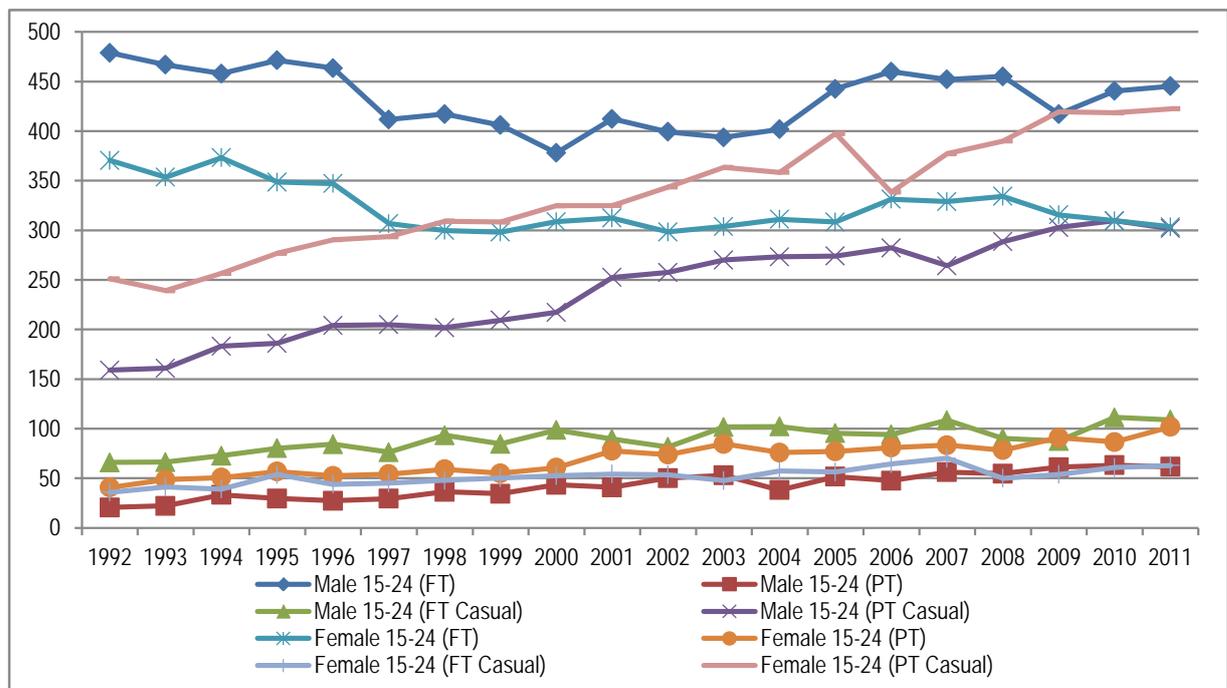
<sup>8</sup> For a more detailed discussion on underemployment and related concepts, see the *Underemployment* section of ABS catalogue number 4102.0 – Australian Social Trends, June 2010.

workforce with many young people encouraged to take a casual or part-time job during the final high school years. By 2011, approximately 30 per cent of all work for young people was part-time. This applied to those in full-time education as well as those who were no longer engaged in education or training.

Casual employment is attractive to young people as they are not 'locked in' to an employment contract. The 'casual loading' means that young people earn more money for the hours they work. In most cases casual workers are not guaranteed a certain amount of hours of work per week but can work regular hours.

Casual employment by industry also varies considerably. Casual employment is particularly prevalent in the retail and hospitality industries where a large proportion of young people are employed. The data shows that since 1992 there has been a steady rise in part-time casual employment for the 15-24 year age cohort.

Figure 2: Employment type by Sex for Persons Aged 15-24 (1992 to 2012) (Australia)



Source: ABS, Australian Labour Market Statistics, Employment Type, Employed Person by Sex, Fulltime, Part-time ('000s) (6105.0, July 2012)

In the ten years to 2012, full-time employment for young people aged 15 to 19 years in Western Australia has declined and casual and part-time employment has significantly increased. There are 4,800 less young people in this age group currently working in full time jobs than there was a decade ago.

In October 2011, over 30,200 young people in Western Australia aged 15 to 24 years were not engaged in full-time work or full-time education and training and

were not active in the labour force<sup>9</sup>. This figure comprises 3.6 per cent of the State's young people aged 15 to 19 years and 11.7 per cent of young people aged 20 to 24 years.

## YOUTH TRANSITION – EDUCATION TO EMPLOYMENT

Education and training are essential for young people to enter the labour market successfully as they increase their productivity and employability. Youth unemployment is often a direct consequence of an unsuccessful transition from school to further education, training or work.

In most advanced economies the transition phase is regarded as the period when young people are able to work legally in a full-time capacity. This phase also typically marks the end of compulsory education and a movement to further education and training determined by personal choice. Transition is also marked by a shift in the social and economic situation of young people with progression towards economic independence and social and emotional maturity.

The initial measure of a successful transition is the completion of the compulsory education requirements. The completion of Year 12 or a vocational Certificate II or above qualification is the expected measure in Australia.

In 2009, all governments in Australia agreed to raise the Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate from 83.5 per cent to 90 per cent by 2015. The 90 per cent target allows for the completion of Year 12 equivalent qualifications beyond the standard school leaving age. This provides increased employment opportunities to young people and a more skilled workforce to Australian businesses.

Given this, the measure of success is the proportion of young people aged 20 to 24 years who have attained Year 12 or a vocational Certificate II or higher qualification. In 2011, approximately 83 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds in Western Australia had either completed Year 12 at school or attained a post-school vocational education and training qualification at Certificate III or higher<sup>10</sup>.

Young people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Western Australia have the lowest rates of attainment of post-school qualifications.

Youth unemployment is not evenly distributed across regions. In March 2012 some labour market regions had teenage unemployment rates well over 20 per cent including the South West Metropolitan region where the rate was 25.7 per cent and East Metropolitan region with a rate of 23.1 per cent<sup>11</sup>.

Transition patterns vary according to school completion. Those early school leavers who do not complete Year 12 are more often unemployed or not participating in the labour force six years after leaving school. This pattern of disengagement and non-participation extends beyond that.

<sup>9</sup> ABS, Labour Force Australia, 2011

<sup>10</sup> Ibid

<sup>11</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Labour market information portal

The influence of school completion on attainment is ongoing - the qualification gap between Year 12 school completers and early school leavers widens in the post-school years. School completers more often go on to gain further qualifications while early school leavers are less likely to obtain any formal qualifications.

School completion and the level of educational attainment are strongly linked with labour market performance and the ability of a person to respond appropriately to changing economic circumstances. Regions with relatively low levels of school completion and educational attainment tend, on average, to be less able to respond to economic adjustments and as a consequence face greater labour market difficulties.

## SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

The experiences of young people in transition vary in difficulty and complexity depending on their personal challenges and circumstances. Based on the research undertaken by Business Group Australia the figures show, most young people manage the transition to economic independence and workforce participation by the time they have reached their early twenties.

Around 75 per cent of young people make the transition from school to further education, training or work with little difficulty and go on to establish a permanent place in the labour market. This group of young people may be described as being *fully engaged* or *actively engaging*. They navigate the school system and access the resources they need to support their further education or employment decisions.

Around 15 per cent of young people will need to access additional services and support to overcome difficulties and problems during their school years. This group are best described as experiencing *limited participation*. They require more intensive assistance to progress from school to further education or work, but will eventually make the transition to sustainable employment and will be active participants in the labour market.

Around 10 per cent of young people will find the transition from school a very difficult process and will often move directly from school to unemployment. This group may be described as being *disengaged and marginalised*. This group will require intensive, long-term support and services that go well beyond the normal transition requirements. Young people in this group often reside in areas with general high unemployment rates where there are also deeper economic and social disadvantage. Those young people who experience these types of difficulties in transition are mostly the same people who go on to experience regular periods of unemployment and find it difficult to engage appropriately in the labour market in their adult life.

Based on the above findings, an application of a '75:15:10' rule of thumb provides a simple measure which this paper will consider the issue of youth unemployment.

While there are students in the disengaged and marginalised group in schools in all regions of the state, the data clearly shows an over-representation in some Perth metropolitan regions. In 2008, Kwinana and Rockingham accounted for 41.8 per cent of all 15 year old students at-risk of disengaging from school.

Any meaningful reduction in the State's youth unemployment rate and a lowering of the high rates in some specific locations will only occur if there is a focus on the disengaged and marginalised.

## THE CHALLENGES OF YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT

Key factors contributing to young people failing to effectively transition to the labour market include:

- Poor literacy and numeracy;
- Low educational expectations;
- Drug and alcohol use;
- Dysfunctional family life;
- Lack of secure housing or homelessness;
- Health issues, including mental health problems;
- Poor understanding of education and career pathways;
- Inadequate alternative education programs; and
- Current welfare dependency.

At the same time that many young people are disengaging from education, training and employment there is a general labour shortage in Western Australia.

The Salvation Army's youTHINK: Your Say event provided a powerful insight into the different perceptions and realities of today's labour market. Young people living in disadvantaged circumstances and experiencing a range of difficulties in their lives were further impacted by the global financial crisis. Whilst these young people recognised the importance of education and training many questioned the value of training for training's sake and whether there are real jobs available once training is completed. Many young people are unable to pursue vocational education and training places in occupational areas where they believe there are real job outcomes because they do not have the financial capacity to cover TAFE fees and are unable to access government support<sup>12</sup>.

Data examined for this paper shows that many employers in the Perth metropolitan region report significant numbers of unfilled and unsatisfactorily filled vacancies across a wide range of occupational categories. The data shows that 24 per cent of all vacancies were filled by a person who did not have the exact skills or capabilities that the employer required and 10 per cent of all vacancies remained unfilled<sup>13</sup>.

<sup>12</sup> Business Group Australia (2009) youTHINK: Your Say: A partnership between the Australian Government and The Salvation Army, November 2009

<sup>13</sup> Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Labour market information portal

The capacity of the most disadvantaged young people to present as credible candidates for the many employment vacancies that exist in the local labour market is almost entirely dependent on improvements in transition and attainment.

## EFFECTIVE RESPONSES FOR DISADVANTAGED AND UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

Failure to address the disengagement of young people from education, particularly in the high youth unemployment areas in the south west corridor of the Perth metropolitan area, will guarantee the exclusion of these young people from meaningful employment.

There is a need for improved access to intensive long-term support that focuses on the needs of the individual young person at risk of disengagement. Many of the service providers consulted for this paper provide the case management, advocacy, mentoring, counselling and mediation services that are required to support a successful transition for marginalised young people, but more needs to be done.

Many of the young people who struggle with transition would benefit from access to models of alternative education and training that provide a flexible and tailored approach to learning. Although these services are available they are insufficient to deal with the demand and more support is needed in this area.

Similarly, alternative models to actively engage at-risk young people in vocational training that leads to formal vocational and career pathways is required. There are excellent examples of these alternative arrangements such as the 'Weld to Life' initiative established by Challenger Institute and the Rockingham PCYC.

There is a problem associated with the coordination and collaboration of youth unemployment services that needs to be addressed. There are a range of services funded by national and State governments that need more formal integration arrangements.

A number of stakeholders have emphasised the importance of a whole-of-community response to effectively tackle youth unemployment. Given the complex mix of issues confronting disadvantaged young people today, greater coordination between schools, training providers, business and industry and youth services is needed.

While there is some strength in the current arrangements there are weaknesses that impact on the capability of the overall system to support young people during transition. These weaknesses include:

- Fragmentation between institutions and services;
- Gaps in local service provision;
- Lack of responsiveness within services;
- Lack of accountability for explicit outcomes;
- Lack of information about the services; and

- Failures to monitor the progress of young people through the system.

The consultations have identified the need for greater investment in broad cross-sectoral partnerships that promote cooperative and 'joined-up' or 'wrap around' action to maximise the impact of government interventions at the local level. This includes the development of local models that seek to recognise the connectedness of disadvantaged young people's problems and experiences.

Recent career development reforms in Western Australia have enhanced career services for school students and ensured a more consistent approach to career development delivery. These initiatives have enhanced the provision of general advice and support at those key transition points when guidance on career and educational issues is necessary to help young people make decisions that affect their future. However, it has been identified that there is a need to provide more targeted career advice support to at-risk young people.

The information provided within this discussion paper is not necessarily new or significantly different from information that is already available from a range of sources. However, the data and feedback from consultations from Western Australian agencies and service providers reinforces the arguments for supporting stronger action in relation to youth unemployment.

The research also demonstrates a worrying trend that suggests the number of disengaged and marginalised young people is growing during a period of strong economic activity. Typically, youth unemployment regardless of the socio-economic circumstances of young people falls during periods of strong economic and labour market activity. When times are good the assumption is that everybody benefits. Unfortunately, the evidence shows that the number of young people failing to make a successful transition from school appears to be increasing during a period of strong labour market activity. This is an issue that requires further analysis.

## THE WAY FORWARD

The advice received from agencies and service providers working with unemployed young people supports the positions and directions presented throughout this paper. The actions required to move the most disadvantaged young people into sustainable employment are intensive, long-term, targeted and expensive. The service provision is multi-faceted and requires cooperation across organisations, coordination and a collaborative approach.

There is an almost overwhelming amount of information and material available to young people to assist them with their career decisions and planning. The volume or quality of material is not in question. The issue for many young people is the appropriateness of the platforms used to present information and the services provided to support these. The research has indicated that the disengaged and marginalised young people that require the most intensive support need personal, direct and specific career advice linked directly to other support services.

This paper illustrates that the major youth unemployment challenge facing Western Australia is how to improve the engagement and participation of those disadvantaged young people that reside in those identified labour market areas with high unemployment rates.

Dealing effectively with this challenge will have a significant impact on the State's youth unemployment problem and will produce solutions, services and approaches that may be applied across the State.

The findings of the paper show that for many young people in the State, the transition into unemployment directly from school is the inevitable consequence of a broader range of social and economic factors.

For many of the unemployed young people in Western Australia, the research indicates that the transition to the workforce is simply another difficult process that just follows on from difficulties at school. In addition, the paper illustrates that progression into standard vocational training pathways or employment based training directly from school is almost impossible for these young people.

As a consequence of the research conducted for this paper, the application of a '75:15:10' rule of thumb provides a simple measure from which to consider the issue of youth unemployment in Western Australia.

#### **STRATEGIC YOUTH WORKFORCE DEVELOPMENT PLAN**

It is envisaged this discussion paper will inform the development of a strategic plan aimed at improving youth employment outcomes, in particular for those disengaged and marginalised youth. In order to progress the development of this strategy in Western Australia it is proposed that the following issues are considered further:

- A need to consider the way education and training services for young people at risk of becoming disengaged and marginalised are funded, coordinated and integrated. Where the system works now, it does so because of the passion, efforts and goodwill of the individuals involved. There is a need for some leadership in this area.
- There is a requirement for stronger and more formal networks to ensure the effective provision of all the necessary services. The broader range of services required to support at-risk young people through the transition process are supplied through a mix of agencies and service providers who work independently of each other. As with the education and training efforts, where these organisations provide the young people with the services and support they require, it is mostly because of the work of individuals in the organisations who establish and maintain informal networks.
- There is a need to trial a fully collaborative process to assess how much success complete local involvement will bring. Local initiatives work best when all the available resources and capabilities are applied at the problem. There are local areas where education and training providers are working hard with

other agencies to assist young people through transition without the support of local industry, local government and others who should be involved.

- The development of a model for the funding, integration and coordination of alternative education and training programs for young people at risk of disengagement that recognises the:
  - value of partnerships;
  - importance of foundation and employability skills;
  - need for industry support and involvement;
  - requirement for broader support services;
  - necessity for local community input; and
  - need for clear education and employment pathways.
- Examine the feasibility of establishing Transition Support Networks in high youth unemployment regions to ensure disadvantaged young people have access to a range of holistic services that address the barriers they face. The network arrangements should be used to strengthen the connections and working relations between education and training institutions, local enterprise, youth services and local councils.
- Support the establishment of a series of community trials designed to improve service provision at the community level to ensure that:
  - disadvantaged young people are engaged in 'earning or learning';
  - community resources are applied appropriately to the needs of young people;
  - service delivery capacity is enhanced and improved; and
  - a coordinated localised youth service system is established.



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## INTRODUCTION

Although periods of unemployment at any age can be difficult and distressing, the situation of the young unemployed evokes a strong reaction. When young people are out of work it suggests a waste of potential and of lost opportunities to develop the young and to contribute to the future skills base. The reaction to youth unemployment is even stronger when there are general labour shortages, complaints from employers that they cannot find good quality employees and large numbers of jobs being filled by people relocating from overseas.

The obvious question is why are there young people without work when there appears to be a general shortage of people to fill the available vacancies?

The purpose of this paper is to present a snapshot of youth unemployment in Western Australia and the challenges associate with youth employment. In addition, it will highlight the elements that are critical to the successful transition of young people into employment. It is not intended to provide all the answers but rather evoke discussion about this important issue.

The paper focuses on the Perth metropolitan and surrounding area with later work needed to extend to regional Western Australia. Specifically the discussion paper considers the following issues:

- the frequency of unemployment and underemployment in males and females aged between 15 and 24 years in Western Australia;
- preparing young people for further education, training and employment including factors that contribute to a successful transition from secondary education to further education/training and/or employment;
- identifying the factors contributing to the disengagement of young people and investigating as to whether the current system is working to minimise the barriers faced by these young people; and
- examining effective responses for disadvantaged and unemployed young people including factors underpinning successful transitions.



## EDUCATIONAL AND EMPLOYMENT 'SNAPSHOT' OF YOUNG PEOPLE

The employment, education and social pathways of young people have changed significantly during the past twenty years. These changes include patterns of full and part time work, educational retention rates and a later start to establishing homes of their own. The consequence of these and other changes is a complex landscape that has resulted in a shift away from the predictable pathways, the secure foundations of the past and an additional requirement for careful navigation by young people.

The acquisition of skills and qualifications is a key contributor to individual economic well-being. Research shows that increasing the number of years of schooling and maintaining effective participation in ongoing and further study has a significant effect on the earnings, employability and productivity of individuals.

For this discussion paper, the information that follows provides a 'snapshot' of the educational and employment status of young people aged 15 to 24 years in Western Australia.

### LABOUR FORCE STATUS OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15-24 YEARS

In February 2012, over 40 per cent of unemployed West Australians were under the age of 25. Young people aged 15 to 24 years comprised approximately 18.4 per cent of the total labour force but accounted for 40.7 per cent of those who were unemployed. The current share of unemployment for young people is slightly higher than it was at the height of the 1992 recession when it was 40.3 per cent<sup>14</sup>.

Table 1 shows that, as at February 2012, some 72 per cent of teenagers aged 15 to 19 years were either studying full-time or working full-time. Of this total, 61.2 per cent were in full-time education either at school or in post-school study programs, while a further 10.9 per cent of teenagers were in full-time work. The remaining 28 per cent of 15-19 years-olds were neither engaged in full-time work nor full-time education. This group was either unemployed, working part-time or was recorded as not being in the labour force.

Table 1: Labour market status, young people Western Australia (%)

	In full-time education*					Not in full-time education				
	Full time work	Part time work	Looking for work	Not in labour force	Subtotal	Full time work	Part time work	Looking for work	Not in labour force	Subtotal
<b>15-19 years</b>	1.6	17.6	19.2	22.8	61.2	10.9	22.7	1.6	3.6	38.8
<b>20-24 years</b>	1.0	14.3	1.4	9.1	25.8	47.1	10.3	5.2	11.6	74.2

Source: ABS, Labour Force Australia, 2011

<sup>14</sup> ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

\*Full time equivalent student is a full-time student who undertakes a workload equivalent to, or greater than, that prescribed for a full-time student of that year level. This may vary between states and territories and from year to year.

Table 1 also shows that among young people aged 20 to 24 years, 47 per cent were working full-time and 26 per cent were in full-time education.

Whereas the majority of teenagers are engaged in full-time education there is an obvious shift away from full-time education and towards the workforce for young adults aged 20 to 24 years. As Table 1 shows, less than 30 per cent of young adults remained in full-time study while over 45 per cent were no longer studying but working full-time.

In February 2012, some 6.2 per cent or 20,800 of Western Australia's young people (aged 15 to 24) were unemployed. More than half of this total, 4,700 people aged 15 to 19 years and 8,900 people aged 20 to 24 years, were not in full time secondary or tertiary education<sup>15</sup>.

As shown in Table 2, in March 2012 the full-time unemployment rate in Western Australia for 15 to 19 years was 17.8 per cent which was well below the national average of 24.3 per cent.

Table 2: Comparison of Labour Force Status for General and Youth (%)

	Western Australia	Australia
Employment rate (15-64 years) <sup>16</sup>	75.3	72.1
Unemployment rate (15 years plus) <sup>17</sup>	4.1	5.2
Participation rate (15 years plus) <sup>18</sup>	68.9	65.4
Unemployment rate (15-19 years)	17.8	24.3
Full-time unemployment to population ratio (15-19 years)	4.3	4.5

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

As illustrated in Figure 3, in the period from 2004 to 2008 the rate of unemployment among teenagers in Western Australia fell from almost 20 per cent to 7 per cent. In the four years since 2008, the unemployment rate has continued to rise to its current level of close to 18 per cent<sup>19</sup>.

<sup>15</sup> Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

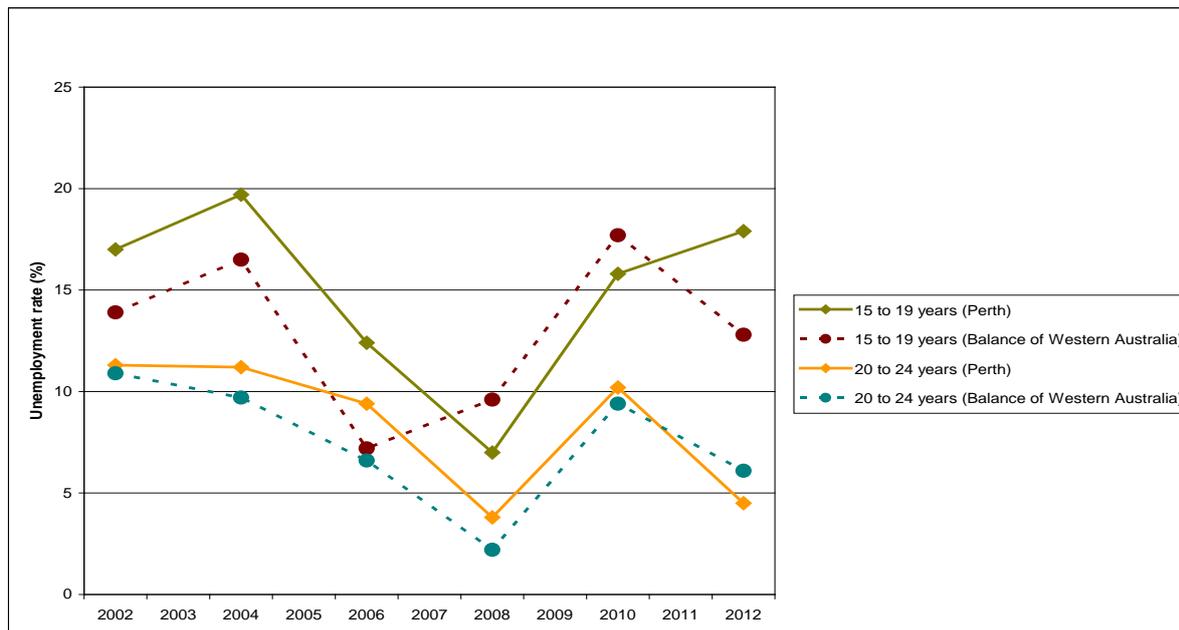
<sup>16</sup> For any group, the number of employed persons expressed as a percentage of the civilian population in the same group.

<sup>17</sup> For any group, the number of unemployed persons expressed as a percentage of the labour force in the same group.

<sup>18</sup> For any group, the labour force expressed as a percentage of the civilian population aged 15 years and over in the same group.

<sup>19</sup> Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

Figure 3: Trends in Unemployment Rates for Young People – Perth and Balance of Western Australia



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

Table 3 below provides an overview of the trend of those young people not fully engaged. The table records the proportions of young people aged 15 to 19 years not engaged in full-time work or full-time education in each year over the last decade. The improvement in the education and employment circumstances of teenagers that had been occurring in the earlier years of the past decade are now being reversed.

Between 2008 and 2012, the number of young people aged 15 to 19 years not fully engaged has significantly increased. The percentage of teenagers not fully engaged increased from 9.3 per cent in 2005 to 19.5 per cent in 2011.

The proportion of 15 to 19 year-olds in Western Australia neither in full-time work nor in full-time education is the highest figure since the economic recession of the early 1990s.

Table 3: 15 to 19 year olds not in full-time education or full-time work, Western Australia

	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008	2009	2010	2011
15 – 19 years population (000)	4.2	4.0	5.2	5.5	4.9	6.5	4.1	4.5	8.3	6.7	9.7
15 -19 years unemployment rate (%)	15.8	10.5	14.6	12.8	15.1	8.7	8.6	7.9	8.8	12.3	11.7
15 -19 years participation rate (%)	91.8	90.9	89.9	89.2	90.7	87.5	92.6	91.7	84.4	87.4	80.5

Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

## ACTIVITIES OF PERSONS AGED 15 TO 24 YEARS NOT IN THE LABOUR FORCE

According to the international standards<sup>20</sup>, the population not currently economically active (that is, not in the labour force) comprises all people not currently employed or unemployed, irrespective of age. Not all people who are classified as not in the labour force are voluntarily economically inactive; some want to work but are classified as not in the labour force because they do not satisfy the criteria for unemployment (active job search and availability to start work)<sup>21</sup>. Those not in the labour force includes people who are:

- retired or voluntarily inactive;
- performing home duties or caring for children;
- attending an education institution;
- experiencing a long-term health condition or disability;
- experiencing a short-term illness or injury;
- looking after an ill or disabled person;
- on a travel, holiday or leisure activity;
- working in an unpaid voluntary job;
- in institutions (hospitals, jails, sanatoriums, etc.)
- permanently unable to work; and
- members of contemplative religious orders.

As at October 2011, over 30,200 young people aged 15 to 24 years in Western Australia were neither engaged in full-time work nor full-time education and were not active in the labour force. The activities of those 15-24 years olds are illustrated in Figure 4 below.

A significant proportion of these young people were not seeking employment because they had carers' responsibilities, were sick or specified other personal reasons for being outside the labour force. These personal circumstances will always exist for a proportion of young people in Western Australia and we do not propose to address these issues in this paper.

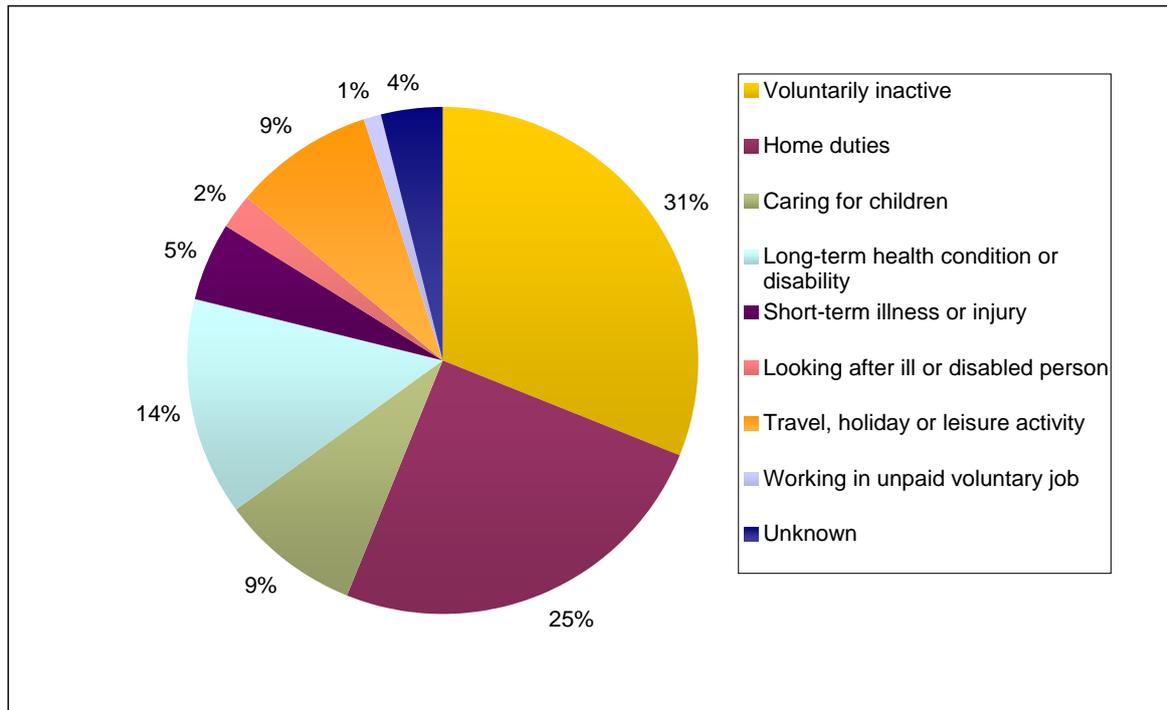
Concerning is the proportion of teenagers not in full-time education or full-time employment, or who had a part-time job and were not in ongoing education, showed a substantial increase between the ages of 17 and 18. This suggests that the period immediately after leaving Year 12 is critically important in determining young people's transition to full-time employment.

Getting a good start after leaving school either through employment or further education and training seems to be particularly important in minimising the risks of long periods of future unemployment.

<sup>20</sup> Thirteenth International Conference of Labour Statisticians 1982

<sup>21</sup> ABS 6102.0.55.001 - Labour Statistics: Concepts, Sources and Methods, April 2007

Figure 4: Activities of 15 to 24 year olds not in the labour force, Australia, 2011 (%)



Source: ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

## EDUCATIONAL ATTAINMENT OF YOUNG PEOPLE AGED 15 TO 24 YEARS

A key element in future employability is educational attainment. This section considers the level of educational attainment of young West Australians and examines the acquisition of initial qualifications related to Year 12 completion or equivalent.

Information is also presented on the attainment of further qualifications which are defined here as those obtained by young people after leaving school and up to the age of 24 years. Further qualifications are sometimes referred to as post-school or non-school qualifications because they are obtained after young people have left school. However, people who acquire non-school qualifications can include early school leavers who later gain what are regarded as equivalent to end of school qualifications.

An accepted yardstick by which to measure educational attainment is the proportion of young people that have completed Year 12 or a qualification at Certificate III or higher. Such a measure allows several comparisons to be made including changes over time, and differences between States and Territories, between groups of young people within Australia and with other countries.

There is a strong relationship between educational attainment and employment outcomes. There are considerable benefits in pursuing post-school education and training. Available evidence suggests that individuals with further qualifications are able to maintain sustainable employment, have the capacity to increase the potential for higher earnings and are also less exposed to periods of unemployment.

The available evidence shows that beyond the age of 25 years educational attainment has a significant effect on employment.

In 2011, approximately 83 per cent of 20 to 24 year olds had either completed Year 12 at school or attained a post-school vocational education and training (VET) qualification at Certificate III or higher<sup>22</sup>.

The proportion of young people currently participating in formal education or training at Certificate III level or above is 27.7 per cent for young people aged 15 to 19 years and 33.5 per cent for young people aged 20 to 24 years.

Based on 2006 census data, approximately 60 per cent of Australians attain a post-school qualification by age 24 years. About 28 per cent of people attain a university graduate degree or higher and 31 per cent a VET qualification. In the VET sector around 23 per cent of people attain a Certificate level qualification and 8 per cent a Diploma qualification or higher.

Young people living in the most disadvantaged areas of Western Australia have the lowest rates of attainment of post-school qualifications.

In the age group 25 to 34 years, unemployment rates for those that do not complete Year 12 is around 7.4 per cent. Year 12 completers have an unemployment rate less than half of non-completers at 3.2 per cent. Beyond the initial attainment levels, the unemployment rates improve significantly. Attainment at the VET Certificate III or Certificate IV level reduces the unemployment rate to 2.6 per cent. The attainment of an initial graduate degree lowers the rate to 1.2 per cent.

## LONGITUDINAL SURVEY

Analyses of survey data from the Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY) may also be used to calculate educational attainment. The LSAY can be used to track young people as they move from school into further study, work and other destinations. The survey uses large, nationally representative samples of young people to collect information about education and training, work and social development. Survey participants, collectively known as a 'cohort', enter the study when they turn 15 years or, as was the case in earlier studies, when they were in Year 9. Individuals are contacted once a year for 10 years. Studies began in 1995 with the Y95 cohort and have continued in 1998 (Y98 cohort), 2003 (Y03 cohort), 2006 (Y06 cohort) and the most recent in 2009 (Y09 cohort).

The Y06 cohort reports summarise the activities of a group of young Australians who were aged on average 15.7 years in 2006 and 19.7 in 2010. The Y03 cohort report summarises the activities of a group of young Australians who were aged on average 15.7 years in 2003 and 22.7 in 2010. Table 4 presents the outcomes of young Western Australians who were involved in the survey. The Y06 cohort comprised of 1484 young Western Australians while the Y03 cohort involved 1482 Western Australian respondents.

<sup>22</sup> ABS Labour Force Australia, 2011

Table 4: Highest School Level Completed of a sample group of young Western Australians - derived from 2003 and 2006 cohort of LSAY

	2006 Cohort (%)	2003 Cohort (%)
<b>Highest school level completed</b>		
Year 12	81.1	84.4
Year 11	13.0	11.5
Year 10	5.7	4.1
Year 9 or below	0.1	0.0
Completed Year 12 or certificate II or higher	89.0	91.8
Completed Year 12 or certificate III or higher	87.2	89.3

Source: LSAY Cohort Reports, 2003, 2006

Table 5: Current study – qualification level of a sample group of young Western Australians - derived from 2003 and 2006 cohort of LSAY

	2006 Cohort (%)	2003 Cohort (%)
<b>Current study – qualification level</b>		
Certificate I	1.9	1.1
Certificate II	0.7	1.3
Certificate III	7.9	1.1
Certificate IV	2.7	2.8
Certificate - level unknown	3.9	0.4
Advanced diploma/diploma (incl. associate degree)	4.8	1.2
Bachelor degree	36.4	15.6
Graduate diploma/graduate certificate	0.6	0.5
Postgraduate degree (PhD/Masters)	0.0	3.1
Not studying for a qualification	41.0	72.9

Source: LSAY Cohort Reports, 2003, 2006

The figures in Table 4 highlight that for West Australian participants:

- At least 81 per cent of Y06s and Y03s had completed Year 12 or Certificate III;
- For Y06s, over 35 per cent were studying a bachelor degree or higher, over 21 per cent were currently studying a VET qualification and some 41 per cent were not studying any qualification; and
- For Y03s, over 15 per cent were studying a bachelor degree or higher, over 7 per cent were studying a VET qualification, whilst some 73% were not studying any qualification at the time.

## VET IN SCHOOLS

In Western Australia, VET in Schools is designed to help students as they transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways, including apprenticeships and traineeships. Students who complete the requirements of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF) are issued with either a full certificate qualification

or a statement of attainment for individual Units of Competency by a Registered Training Organisation. This achievement is also used as credit towards their Western Australia Certificate of Education (WACE).

An examination of the LSAY data suggests that that VET in School programs provide some successful outcomes for their participants. 'Success' in the school context has been defined as retention to Year 12. Outside school it is considered in terms of full-time engagement with employment or learning, or part-time employment combined with part-time study.

The results from research on VET in Schools are mixed including the notion that participation in school vocational programs can influence students' post-school plans. However it must be noted that VET in Schools has not necessarily led to higher Year 12 retention.

Data has shown that some students who had intended to get a job straight after leaving school changed their post-school plans to include further VET studies or an apprenticeship or traineeship after participating in school VET programs. Schools offering VET subjects can provide students with a wider choice of subjects, but there are also implications for the school curriculum, with some studies indicating mixed results with the influence of VET in Schools programs on school retention.

Further, when comparing students of similar ages, that data shows different types of vocational education and training studied in and outside the school environment. For many students, there is a poor alignment between the types of VET programs studied at school and the requirements of the world of work or further study.

There needs to be further consideration whether VET in School programs should be better aligned with the world of work or, alternatively, concentrate on broad pre-vocational skills. In summary, the research found that:

- VET in Schools has provided increased choice and opportunities to meet diverse student needs and interests;
- nearly a quarter of those students who completed Year 12 have undertaken VET in Schools subjects;
- VET in Schools programs attract participation by students with lower academic results, but have value for all students in preparing them for the transition from school to the workplace or further education and training;
- there is an important role for VET programs beyond the school, in providing pathways for young people who do not complete Year 12; and
- young people who are in areas of high unemployment and those who are the least job-ready in terms of educational attainment are least likely to participate in VET.

It has also been important to identify activities after Year 12 to gather evidence that VET in Schools programs are a means of improving student outcomes, rather than simply a way of managing a diverse student population.

The examination of the LSAY data suggests that young people who spend an extended period of time in part-time work, unemployment or out of the labour force immediately after leaving school are likely to experience greater difficulties in finding

full-time employment in their mid-20s. These findings suggest that one important criterion for judging the impact of VET in Schools is the extent to which that experience is associated with being in full-time work and/or formal education or training in the years immediately after completing Year 12.

In examining the outcomes in the first two years after completing secondary school and pathways between the main post-school activities for separate groups of students, some of the key findings include:

- Unemployment rates were similar for the VET in Schools group and for the non-VET in Schools group;
- Participation in VET in Schools appears more likely to be a pathway to the labour force than to further education or training. This appears to be more so for males than for females. For young females, participation in further education is at a much higher rate than for young males;
- For those in the lowest achievement quartile at Year 9, VET in Schools appears to improve the pathway to employment, but not to tertiary education. Participation in two years of VET in Schools appears to facilitate the achievement of positive labour and educational outcomes, particularly for young males; and
- There is some evidence that VET in Schools is associated with a pathway either into a recognised form of post-secondary vocational education or training or work.

The results of this study underline the importance of monitoring participation and outcomes of VET in Schools. Offering students a range of options and pathways in their post-compulsory schooling which is adaptable to differing interests and needs of young people encourages a higher proportion to remain in education and training.

It is proposed that any further research in this area may include the following:

- the links between VET in Schools and improved outcomes for young people in terms of post-school pathways into further study, training or work;
- the appeal and outcomes of VET programs for specific groups, such as males and females, students with lower levels of achievement, and those at risk of not completing Year 12;
- on-going monitoring of the experience and outcomes – during their school studies and in their activities beyond Year 12 – for those students who do not participate in VET in Schools, as well as those who undertake either a small or large amount of VET, in order that comparisons can be made;
- the relationship between the amount of VET undertaken by students and the impact on their future activities;
- the relationship between initial post-school activities and longer-term outcomes;
- participation and non-participation in post-school VET by students who do not complete Year 12;
- the links between VET in Schools and VET post-school, and their impact in terms of improved outcomes for young people as they make the transition to the workforce; and

- the identification of the needs of young people living in high unemployment areas to improve their participation in VET.

## KEY REGION CHARACTERISTICS

The teenage full-time unemployment rate is based on young people aged 15 to 19 years who are searching for full-time employment.

As of March 2012, the teenage full-time unemployment rate for the Perth Labour Force Region (LFR)<sup>23</sup> was 20.5 per cent. This was higher than the rate for Western Australia at 17.8 per cent but lower than the national rate of 24.3 per cent.

The Perth LFR can be broken down into the four Employment Service Areas (ESAs) which include Central and West Metro ESA, East Metro ESA, North Metro ESA and Dale ESA. Major suburbs or towns within these Employment Service Areas are outlined in Table 6 below.

Table 6: Major centres within DEEWR's Employment Service Areas (ESA)

Central and West Metro ESA (Central LFR & South West LFR)	East Metro ESA (South East LFR)	North Metro ESA (North LFR & East LFR)	Dale ESA
<b>Major Suburbs and Towns in these Areas</b>			
<i>Kwinana Rockingham Fremantle Subiaco</i>	<i>Armadale</i>	<i>Wanneroo</i>	<i>Mandurah</i>

As shown in Table 7, the teenage full-time unemployment to population ratio in South East Metropolitan at 4.4 per cent was slightly higher than Western Australia and Australia at 4.3 per cent and 4.5 per cent respectively.

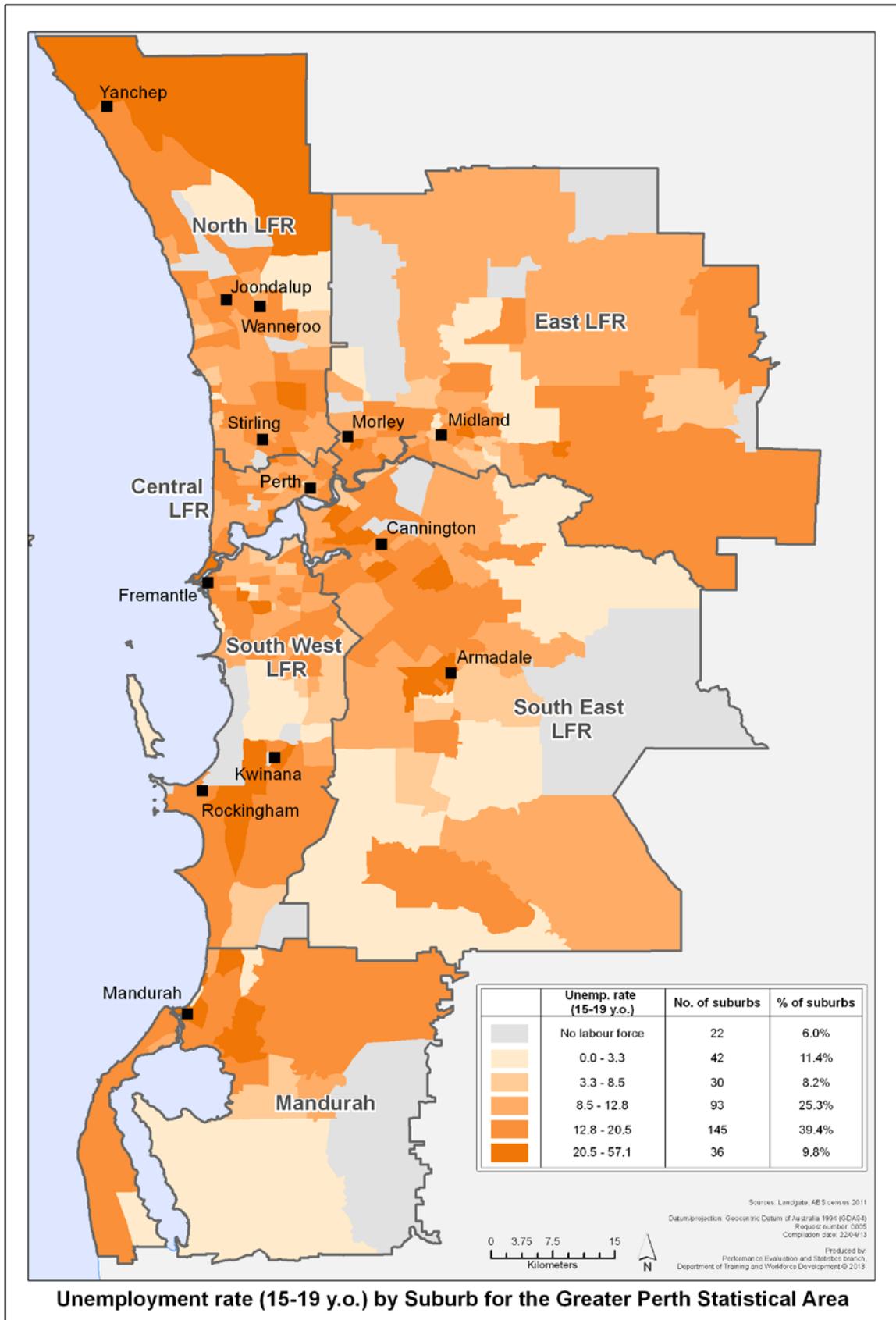
Table 7: Unemployment rates by Labour Force Region (LFR)

	Teenage Unemployment (15-19)	Full-Time Rate	Teenage Unemployment to Population (15-19)	Full-Time to Ratio
Central Metropolitan	19.7%		1.6%	
East Metropolitan	23.1%		5.1%	
South East Metropolitan	21.1%		4.4%	
North Metropolitan	14.9%		3.5%	
South West Metropolitan	25.7%		6.2%	

Source: Labour Market Information Portal, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

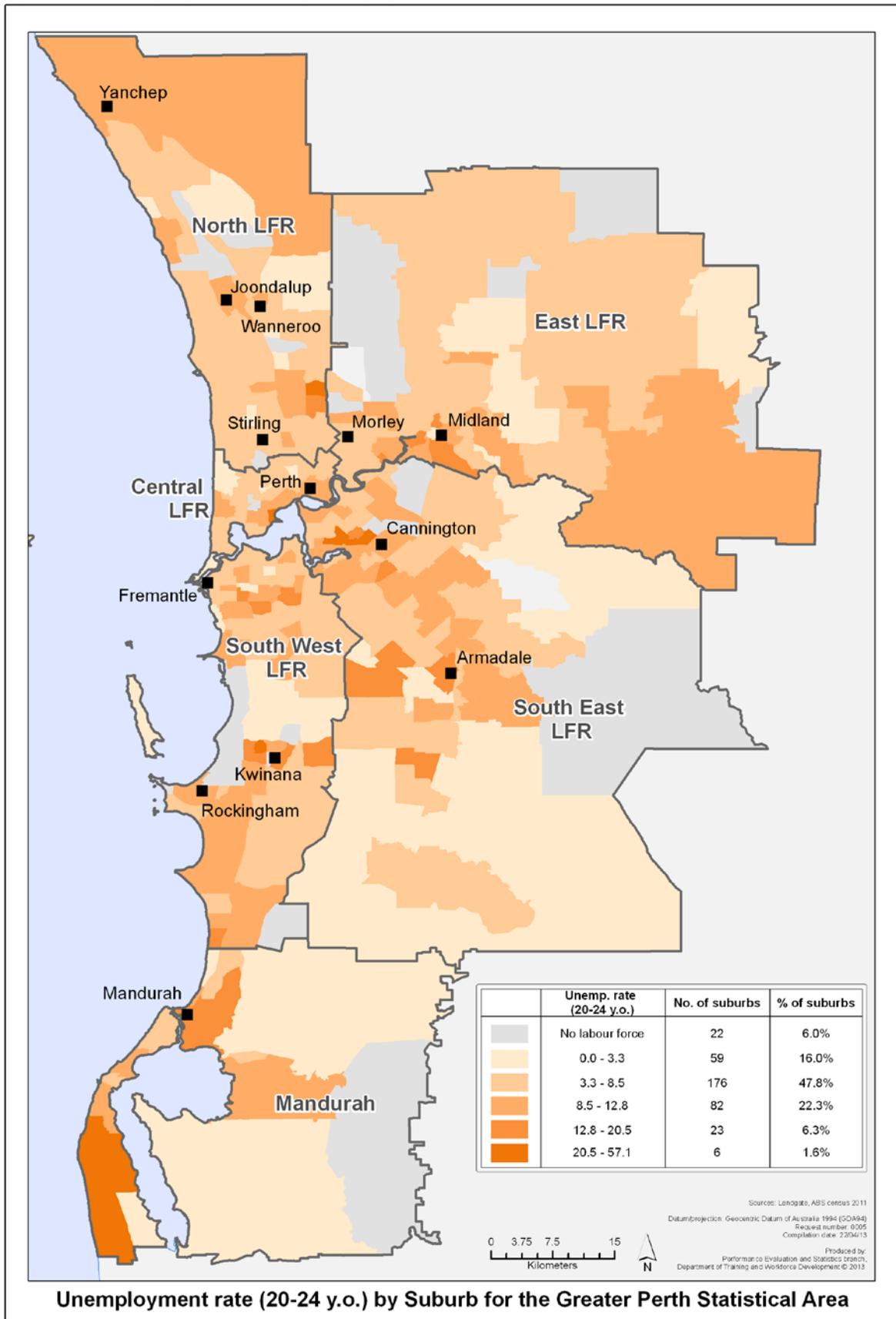
<sup>23</sup> LFR provide employment data and are contiguous regions composed of geographical areas defined in the ASGC statistical region structure current at the time of a Census of Population and Housing.

Figure 5: Unemployment rate (15-19) by Suburb for Greater Perth Statistical Area



Source: Landgate, ABS Census 2011, produced by Department of Training and Workforce Development

Figure 6: Unemployment rate (20-24) by Suburb for Greater Perth Statistical Area



Source: Landgate, ABS Census 2011, produced by Department of Training and Workforce Development

Figures 5 and 6 provide a visual representation of the youth unemployment rates across the Perth metropolitan area based on the 2011 Census. It clearly shows that high youth unemployment is not evenly distributed across the Perth metropolitan region.

Figure 5 shows that for the 15-19 year cohort, being those people born between 1992 and 1996, there are higher concentrations of youth unemployment in certain areas. In particular, the map shows 36 suburbs (around 10 per cent of all suburbs) with teenage unemployment rates of greater than 20.5 per cent (depicted in dark orange) in the Northern Corridor around Yanchep, pockets in the south around Kwinana, Rockingham and Mandurah and in the east around Armadale and Cannington. A total of 181 suburbs have a teenage unemployment rate of greater than 12.8 per cent.

Figure 6 shows that for the 20-24 year cohort, being those people born between 1987 and 1991, higher concentrations of youth unemployment exist in certain areas. Unemployment rates of greater than 20.5 per cent for the 20-24 year cohort exist in six suburbs including south of Mandurah, Kwinana, Cannington and a small pocket in the Northern suburbs. A total of 29 suburbs (around 8 per cent of all suburbs) have youth unemployment (20-24 years) rates of greater than 12.8 per cent.

Table 8 provides data on the working population by age within the Perth Labour Market Regions (LMR) and illustrates that just over 29 per cent of the total working population was made up of 15-24 year olds.

Table 8: Working Population by Age within Perth LMR

Age Group (Working Population)	PERTH	Central and West Metro	North Metro	East Metro	Dale
15-19 years	48,689	16,730	19,240	10,697	2,022
20-24 years	68,072	31,598	20,211	14,568	1,655
25-29 years	62,725	31,428	16,800	13,095	1,402
30-34 years	66,213	31,947	18,550	14,036	1,680
35-39 years	72,525	33,619	21,798	15,044	2,064
40-44 years	76,647	33,929	23,874	16,292	2,552
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>394,841</b>	<b>179,251</b>	<b>120,473</b>	<b>83,732</b>	<b>11,385</b>

Source: Labour Market Information Portal, Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations

## INCOME SUPPORT

Adequate and timely income support is pivotal for a significant group of young people in supporting their transition from school to further education, training or employment. While income support is provided to around one-quarter of all young people aged 16 to 24 years, it is targeted to young people from low-income families and those who have little on-going financial support from their families. Therefore, it is a critical form of assistance to a large group of young people who require a greater

level of transition support. Disconnection from income support often precedes a more general disconnection from the community and must be examined seriously.

Young unemployed people on income support (Youth Allowance or Newstart Allowance) are a different group to the majority of fulltime students on Youth Allowance. They come from more socially disadvantaged backgrounds. Unlike most tertiary students whose main barrier to employment is a lack of time, most young unemployed people on Youth Allowance and Newstart Allowance are out of work because they don't have the skills and work experience employers want.

Research<sup>24</sup> has shown that the number of young people on income support included:

- 8.5 per cent of young people in Central and West Metro ESA;
- 10 per cent of young people in East Metro ESA;
- 11.2 per cent of young people in North Metro ESA; and
- 2.1 per cent of young people in Dale ESA.

In addition, within the Perth Region there are a higher proportion of young job seekers on the Job Services Australia (JSA) caseload in a range of the disadvantaged groups:

- Homeless – 11 per cent compared with 9 per cent for Australia;
- Ex-offender – 14 per cent compared with 11 per cent for Australia;
- Non English speaking background – 21 per cent compared with 17 per cent for Australia; and
- Refugee – 7 per cent compared with 4 per cent for Australia.

## LEVELS OF DISENGAGEMENT AND ATTAINMENT

A key indicator of teenage disadvantage is the proportion of teenagers who are neither working nor studying. The proportion of teenagers who were neither working nor studying varies among in the Perth ESA's region with 5.5 per cent of teenagers in Perth overall were neither working nor studying, compared with 7 per cent for Australia. This figure included:

- 5.1 per cent of teenagers in the Central Metro ESA were neither working nor studying;
- 6.6 per cent of teenagers in East Metro ESA were neither working nor studying; and
- 5.2 per cent of teenagers in North Metro ESA were neither working nor studying.

While there are students at-risk of disengaging from school in all areas some areas are over represented such as Kwinana and Rockingham which together accounted for 26.1 per cent of the total population in the region but in 2008 accounted for 41.8 per cent of the 15 year old students at-risk of disengaging from school.

## LEVEL OF DISADVANTAGE

Research for this paper has shown the following regions within Perth LMR that have the highest level of disadvantage. These include the Small Area Labour Markets of:

<sup>24</sup> Data sourced from Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relation, Labour Market Information Portal

- Kwinana in Central and Western Metro ESA;
- Armadale in East metro ESA; and
- Wanneroo North West in North Metro ESA.

Table 9 provides an overview of the abovementioned Small Area Labour Markets (SALM).

**Table 9: Characteristics of targeted Small Area Labour Markets (SALM) (%)**

	<b>Kwinana</b>	<b>Armadale</b>	<b>Wanneroo</b>	<b>Perth</b>
Unemployment Rate (SALM)	10	7	7	4
Percentage of families with children where no parent is working	23	20	15	16
Percentage of population aged 25 to 34 years that completed Year 12	45	47	55	68
Percentage of population aged 15 to 64 years on a Centrelink allowance	18	17	13	12
Percentage of Year 9 Government school students below minimum standard for reading	33	25	18	8
Percentage of Year 9 Government school students below minimum standard for numeracy	17	14	18	18

Source: Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations, Labour Market Information Portal



## PREPARING YOUNG PEOPLE FOR A SUCCESSFUL TRANSITION

For many unemployed young people, the transition to the workforce is simply another difficult process that just follows on from difficulties at school. Progression into standard vocational training pathways directly from school is almost impossible and securing an employment based training position even more so.

As with the general unemployment rate, the youth unemployment rate in Western Australia is well below the national average. However, there are still relatively large numbers of young people aged 15 to 24 years who are disengaged from education, training and employment in a state where there is a strong and growing demand for labour.

The research shows that the majority of these disengaged, unemployed young people reside in locations where there are broader social and economic challenges. This paper identifies what needs to be considered to significantly reduce the levels of youth unemployment in these high rating locations and as a consequence lower the State's overall rate.

For most of the young unemployed people represented by the data presented in this paper, the vocational education and training and industry skills development policies, strategies and programs designed to support young people as they move into the workforce are mostly irrelevant. The young people represented by the high level youth unemployment statistics operate at the margins of the labour market and standard institutional training programs, apprenticeships and traineeships are mostly beyond their reach. Without access to intensive, personal support and customised pre-employment programs and services, the young people that are the primary focus of this paper have little chance of making a successful transition from school to further education, training or work.

As an outcome of the research for this paper, a '75:15:10' rule of thumb will be applied as a simple measure from which to consider the issue of youth unemployment for Western Australia.

It appears that some 75 per cent of young people make the transition from school to further education, training or work in a mostly seamless and simple way. This *fully engaged* or *actively engaging* group navigate the school system with little difficulty, access the necessary resources to support their further education or employment decisions and find themselves on a post-school pathway to future, sustainable employment.

Around 15 per cent of young people require some additional support to overcome difficulties and problems during their school years. This *limited participation* group requires broader services and assistance to progress from school to further education or work, but will eventually make the transition to sustainable employment without high levels of intervention.

The final 10 per cent of young people are those who struggle to make the transition from school and often move directly from school to unemployment. The *disengaged and marginalised* group are predominant in those areas with high youth unemployment rates where there are also deeper economic and social disadvantage. This group requires access to intensive, long-term support and services to overcome problems that have been a long time in the making.

#### THE '75:15:10' RULE

The experiences of young people in transition vary in difficulty or complexity depending on the personal strengths, challenges and circumstances they face. Most young people manage the transition to economic participation well, although they may do so by taking circuitous routes.

Those young people who are *Fully Engaged* or *Actively Engaging* (75%) are able to successfully navigate their pathways with the support and guidance of their families and peers. These young people are sometimes assisted by information and services from schools, government and non-government providers. For this group by the time they reach their mid-twenties the vast majority have developed solid foundations for social and economic participation. They have a range of options and achievable aspirations.

Those young people with *Limited Participation* (15%) are those who are vulnerable and experience periods of stress in their lives. They and their families are likely to require peer and professional support and additional measures to assist them in their transitions. As many as a quarter experience a period of 'disengagement' at some point between the ages of 15 and 24 years — when they are neither in full-time employment nor study — but this is not permanent, with most going on to full-time work or tertiary education. Beyond their initial difficulties the young people in this group make a sustainable shift into a normal pattern of social and economic participation.

#### DISENGAGED AND MARGINALISED YOUTH (10%)

Those young people who are disengaged and marginalised, the 10 per cent are more likely to have those who have become disconnected from their families, schools and communities and require a higher level of support. Many of these young people currently fall into gaps between services, or do not make a connection with anyone who can help them. They need more comprehensive support from a range of services over a longer period. Their foundations for adulthood are shaky and their capacity to actively shape their future is extremely limited.

Minor interventions and extra time will have little impact on improving their outcomes. Unlike their contemporaries, they are a long way from social and economic participation and are at risk of long term exclusion. For this group, targeted early interventions to help them re-engage with study or part-time work may assist in making this a transitory state rather than permanent disengagement from the labour force and society.

Any meaningful reduction in the State's youth unemployment rate and a lowering of the high rates in some specific locations will occur only if there is a focus on the disengaged and marginalised – the 10 per cent in the '75:15:10' model.

There is no single determinant that places a young person at risk of long-term unemployment. Rather, a complex mix of factors affects their transition years from school to further study or employment. The following tables<sup>25</sup> have been developed to present the transition factors against each of the defined groups.

Table 10: Factors influencing a successful transition (15-19 years)

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS	Fully engaged	Actively engaged	Limited participation	Disengaged	Marginalised
	75%		15%	10%	
Employability Skills	Well organised and self-managing Very good/excellent communication skills Capacity to work co-operatively in a team Capacity to resolve problems Technology skills including formal qualifications and school based experience		Requires direction and management Some communication difficulties Can work in a team May have difficulty resolving conflict or problems Some technology skills	Reacts poorly to real/perceived pressure Requires intensive support and direction Has difficulty communicating May have difficulty working in a team May have difficulty resolving conflict or problems No formal technology skills qualifications, but may have informally acquired skills	
Education and Training Attainment	Year 12	Year 12 or equivalent Tertiary/further education and training	Early school leaver Below average literacy or numeracy skills Short term plans May be considering further education/training	Early school leaver and not in education/training No clear plans Basic or below literacy and numeracy	Below Year 9 standard Persistent low achievement and academic failure
Rewarding and secure employment	Combining work/study	Combining work /study Secure full time employment Advanced service work, trades Apprenticeship or traineeship	Some difficulty finding work Periodic unemployment Casual work and/or intermittent part-time work	Unable to establish themselves in labour market Unemployed 6 – 12 months Significant skill deficits including literacy, communication and personal	Unemployed 12 months plus No steady work history Not job ready and long way from active labour market participation

<sup>25</sup> Tables adapted from Youth Employment Participation Continuum, Mission Australia, 2006

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS	Fully engaged	Actively engaged	Limited participation	Disengaged	Marginalised
	75%		15%	10%	
Career and transition support	World of work awareness Labour market knowledge Occupational information Values clarification and personal understanding Career planning and decision making Job search techniques		Engaged in programs that combine education, employment and training  Linked to appropriate learning and work opportunities	Supported through mentoring, brokering or other appropriate assistance	Facing substantial, multiple disadvantages preventing them from engaging in education and training  Integrated specialist support  Access to a range of specialists services to overcome barriers
Income support	Family financial support May have some income		Family dependent, some government support	Government allowance	Government allowance  May have no income at all
Affordable and secure housing	Living at home		Living at home but in some cases would prefer independent living	Transient  Living with other family members, friends  Periodically at home  Experience of child pretention or being in care	Homeless, living rough or in supported accommodation  Transient  In or exiting juvenile justice, child protection  Experience of being in care
Health and well-being	Good health Ready access to appropriate treatment Some level of anxiety or stress		Minor/periodic health issues  Reasonable access to treatment but not necessarily early intervention	Untreated health problems  Emerging risk taking behaviour Depression Substance abuse	Poor physical health and neglect Substance addiction Depression and/or self-harming Anti-social behaviour

Table 11: Factors influencing a successful transition (20-24 years)

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS	Fully engaged	Actively engaged	Limited participation	Disengaged	Marginalised
	75%		15%	10%	
Employability Skills	Well organised and self-managing Very good/excellent communication skills Capacity to work co-operatively in a team Capacity to resolve problems Technology skills including formal qualifications and school based experience		Requires direction and management Some communication difficulties Can work in a team May have difficulty resolving conflict or problems Some technology skills	Reacts poorly to real/perceived pressure Requires intensive support and direction Has difficulty communicating May have difficulty working in a team May have difficulty resolving conflict or problems No formal technology skills qualifications, but may have informally acquired skills	
Education and Training Attainment	Tertiary/post graduate study	Tertiary/further education qualification	May be considering further education/training	Not studying	Disengaged from education and training
Rewarding and secure employment	Combining work/study May have commenced high skilled, well paid work In high demand	Available for work Secure full time employment Advanced service, work trades	Full time work – may be low skilled, low paid, insecure May need intensive course or training to get them job ready	Unable to establish themselves in labour market Unemployed 6 – 12 months Significant skill deficits including literacy, communication and personal	Unemployed 12 months plus No steady work history Not job ready and long way from active labour market participation
Career and transition support	World of work awareness Labour market knowledge Occupational information Values clarification and personal understanding Career planning and decision making Job search techniques		Engaged in programs that combine education, employment and training Linked to appropriate learning and work opportunities	Supported through mentoring, brokering or other appropriate assistance	Facing substantial, multiple disadvantages preventing them from engaging in education and training Integrated specialist support Access to a range of specialists services to overcome barriers
Income Support	Family financial support May have part-time income In or on track for high skill, full-time employment		Low income/minimal wage Some government assistance No savings Some debt	Intermittent income Government allowance or pension	Government allowance or pension May have no income Significant debts or fines

FACTORS INFLUENCING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS	Fully engaged	Actively engaged	Limited participation	Disengaged	Marginalised
	75%		15%	10%	
Affordable and secure housing	Possibly still living at home Secure and affordable independent or shared accommodation		Living at home due to finances  Independent or shared accommodation but periodic returns to home due to cost, insecure renting	Living with other family members, friends  Seeking to establish separate housing but not yet successful  Government/agency housing  Some contact with police/courts	In or exiting prison  Homeless, living rough or in supported accommodation  Intensive treatment facility
Health and well being	Good health  Ready access to appropriate treatment  Some level of anxiety or stress		Minor/periodic health issues  Reasonable access to treatment but not necessarily early intervention	Untreated health problems  Emerging risk taking behaviour  Depression  Substance abuse	Poor physical health and neglect  Substance addiction  Depression and/or self-harming  Anti-social behaviour

## WHAT ARE THE CHALLENGES FOR DISENGAGED YOUTH?

Any significant reduction in the youth unemployment rate in Western Australia will only be possible by focusing on services to support those disadvantaged young people we categorise as disengaged and marginalised. Young people in this group typically live in circumstances which prevent them from actively participating in community activities or accessing opportunities which will assist their personal development. Young people in this group may be homeless, suffering mental illness, drug or alcohol dependent or exposed to other social stresses. Many young people in this group are early school leavers.

### POOR EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES

The educational experiences of these marginalised and disconnected young people have generally been negative. School has been a site of past failures and although they have high learning needs their successful participation in formal education settings is highly unlikely. Many young people with high support needs have been unable to achieve a level of education necessary for employment, further education or active participation in their communities. Poor literacy and numeracy skills contribute to long-term difficulty in finding employment. These skills shortfalls were often the consequence of a history of poor school results and attendance often in conjunction with family issues and other social problems.

Various policies and tools have been developed to provide an individualised focus on education pathways and to pay attention to the needs of particular young people. Consistent policy themes across State and Territory education systems include:

- *Keeping disadvantaged young people at school* – Support is being provided to schools to keep vulnerable young people engaged in education and training. Secondary schools have been encouraged to explore and implement new strategies to maintain student engagement, and to reduce early school leaving. The work of school participation staff in Western Australia and the support provided by Youth Connections service providers assists with this.
- *Early identification and early intervention* – Education systems are making efforts to strengthen the role of school health and welfare specialist staff to improve identification and early intervention. Drawing on the skills of school student support officers, school nurses and student wellbeing staff, the capability of teachers to identify students with risk factors and emerging vulnerabilities is being developed. Early identification of health or wellbeing issues emerging in adolescence will enable schools and families to respond quickly. When a student is identified as being at risk of disengaging, schools will intervene quickly and ensure that appropriate supports are put in place, taking advantage of school student support officers, school nurses and student wellbeing staff and of wider health and community services.

- *Individualised plans for 'at-risk' students* – Schools are developing individualised plans for highly vulnerable students with schools and other agencies working together to develop individual education and pathway plans

For many of these young people though, completing secondary school is simply not an option. They are more likely to engage in education programs that address their real issues, affirm their tacit knowledge and intuitive life skills, but also progressively strengthen foundation skills such as literacy and numeracy. They need to engage in education which is delivered where they feel comfortable and supported by workers that they trust. Learning delivered in community settings, provided by a partnership involving education and community providers provides the best possible opportunity for engaging disconnected young people in appropriate education. There are examples of these community schooling models in place in Western Australia such as the Rockingham based program established by SMYL Community Services.

For those disengaged and marginalised young people the focus should be on:

- Improving literacy and numeracy;
- Improving employability skills;
- Improving information technology competencies;
- living skills;
- raising personal awareness and self-esteem; and
- communication skills.

This focus is required before any formal vocational skills program is introduced.

There is also considerable evidence to show that this type of education and training reconnects young people to their community. It is essential to develop a broader range of educational opportunities for disadvantaged young people than is currently available. Very few marginalised young people will access education which is not connected to those agencies where they feel comfortable and safe. Broad cross-sectoral partnerships involving the education, community and business sectors are instrumental in building education and training pathways for disconnected young people.

#### LACK OF INDIVIDUAL SUPPORT

Young people who are disengaged need immediate practical assistance and access to long-term support. Providers need to have available a range of holistic services that address the barriers facing this target group typically including brokerage, counselling, mediation support, mentoring, links into education, training and work opportunities, and post-placement support. Effective strategies for an individualised approach need to include:

- establishing links with other local youth services;
- the professional assessment of barriers that are preventing a young person from participating in education;
- pre-vocational or vocational training or gaining and maintaining employment and taking part in further employment-related training that will improve their

chances of finding work once general education and skill needs are addressed;

- developing an individual program plan realistically based on an assessment of current life and work skill levels;
- arranging assistance which is designed to address those barriers associated with family breakdown and poor life skills which are identified by the assessment;
- providing appropriate support for educators, employers and trainers;
- the development of links with local employers of young people, which result in employment projects and their employment; and
- linking program participants with opportunities to complete their education and training.

## LOCATION

The proportion of young people at risk of long-term unemployment varies significantly across communities. Outer metropolitan regions and rural and regional towns may provide limited job opportunities and support services and have poor transport options. This highlights the need for support and assistance to be targeted at these 'hot spots' to ensure those in most need are helped.

## ACCESS TO DIVERSE VOCATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES

Structured workplace learning, as well as vocational education and training, can provide positive outcomes for disconnected young people in terms of motivation, general learning, school retention and post-school destinations. Many young people who are disconnected are unlikely to engage in current structured workplace and vocational education and training programs. There is a need for innovative alternatives.

Appropriately resourced and supported structured workplace settings can provide opportunities to reconnect young people to education, training and the world of work. Such approaches improve the young person's longer-term employability and may lead to re-engagement with the formal education and training sector. However, as previously stated the introduction of vocational skills programs needs to be carefully planned to ensure that the pre-employment and preparatory skills base is sufficient to cope with workplace requirements.

## ACCESS TO EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES AND PROGRAMS

Accessing and maintaining employment is a daunting challenge for young people disconnected from community support systems. Young people who have left school early and are not engaged in their community still value work but feel unable to compete in a job market which emphasises the need for a portfolio of skills and the ability to promote those skills. A range of issues need to be addressed including:

- education levels which are too low to access apprenticeships or traineeships;
- inappropriate behaviours which often prevent them from accessing other training and support programs;

- poor self-esteem and low levels of confidence in their ability to cope with education, training or work environments;
- little or no understanding of employers' expectations; and
- personal circumstances, such as homelessness or drug and alcohol dependency, which inhibit their capacity to function socially.

Generally this target group find the Job Services Australia (JSA) network difficult to access and too complex to negotiate. Advice received through consultations indicate that the JSA network is often poorly connected to local community processes and youth service networks. There appears to be little recognition from some JSA providers that the services required to prepare young people are different to those required for adults. There are also too few preparatory opportunities for these young people to acquire the skills necessary to compete for skills training and employment positions.

The entry level requirements for apprenticeships and traineeships are too high for young people who have been out of school for some time and consequently have low literacy and numeracy skills. These young people rarely access apprenticeships or traineeships because of poor educational records although they may well have the aptitude and skills in practical work related areas that would suit many of these employment-based training positions.

#### PARTICIPATION IN LABOUR MARKET PROGRAMS

In relation to participation in labour market programs, two points need to be made. Firstly, it needs to be recognised that the nature of the labour market for young people has changed to one that is very much based on an initial workforce entry through casual and part-time employment. It is critical that training opportunities be maximised for young people in these types of employment arrangements. Secondly, it is important that if full-time employment is not possible, attempts are made to link a set of fragmented employment experiences into a more coherent whole.

There are a range of Australian programs that have been successful in assisting those young job seekers considered to be 'most disadvantaged' achieve one or more of the specific objectives associated with employment. These objectives include job placement, job readiness, vocational training, pre-vocational training and personal development. These programs generally fall into three broad classes or types and include:

1. coordinating the efforts of local learning and training providers and local employers; promoting consistency in service provision among community services agencies; and using a case management strategy to assist participants in 'negotiating the maze' of employment assistance opportunities.
2. assisting disadvantaged job seekers in accessing the training and work experience they require to compete in the job market. These programs reduce the risk to employers of people who are disadvantaged by advocacy, wage subsidy and provision of needed support to participants.

3. Job Creation Programs that aim to identify and establish new enterprises and train job seekers for positions within them

## EMPLOYMENT SUPPORT SERVICES

Navigating complex income and employer support services can also cause some young unemployed people to disengage completely. Feedback from young people themselves suggests that mainstream employment services are not able to effectively engage or provide them with individualised services that are responsive to their unique circumstances.

Many young people find employment services difficult to access and too complex to negotiate highlighting the poor connection of these services to local community networks. Young people, particularly those who have been disconnected from education, need foundation education interventions as well as considerable vocational training support and career guidance. This support is not effectively provided in existing mainstream employment support options.

There is a need to be able to offer options addressing the transition needs of all young people within the context of current 'earn or learn' policy approaches that are capable of addressing engagement, learning and employment issues. We were advised that the current JSA model is not delivering effective transition outcomes for young people.

It appears that there are limited opportunities via the current JSA arrangements for young people to build foundation skills to allow them to compete for apprenticeship and traineeship positions.

There are a range of issues that need to be addressed in relation to JSA support and services which include:

- the ability for young people to access and negotiate support from JSA agencies;
- the capacity of JSAs to enhance education levels which are too low to access apprenticeships;
- poor self-esteem and low levels of confidence in their ability to cope with education, training or work environments;
- little or no understanding of employers' expectations; and
- personal circumstances, which inhibit their capacity to function socially.

## INCOME SUPPORT

Some young unemployed people can rely on their parents to support them financially. But those whose parents are on low incomes, such as income support or a low wage struggle financially. Some young unemployed people are no longer able to live with their parents or guardians due to family conflict.

Young people with these backgrounds are more vulnerable to unemployment in the first place because they are more likely to have low qualifications and to live in areas where unemployment is high.

Young unemployed people on income support (Youth Allowance or Newstart Allowance) are a different group to the majority of fulltime students on Youth Allowance. Unlike most tertiary students whose main barrier to employment is a lack of time, most young unemployed people on Youth Allowance and Newstart Allowance are out of work because they don't have the skills and work experience employers want.

Adequate and timely income support is pivotal for a significant group of young people in supporting their transitions from school to further education, training or employment. While income support is provided to around one-quarter of all young people aged 15 to 24 years, it is targeted to young people from low-income families and those who have little on-going financial support from their families. Therefore, it is a critical form of assistance to a large group of young people who require a greater level of transition support.

Disconnection from income support often precedes a more general disconnection from the community and must be examined seriously. Young people themselves are concerned about the level of, and requirements for, access to income support. They tend to drop out from what they view as an onerous and unhelpful system.

## AN OVERVIEW OF EXISTING POLICY AND PROGRAMS

A broad range of policy initiatives have been agreed between all levels of government in Australia in relation to youth unemployment and transitions from school to further study and work.

To gain an understanding of the preparation young people receive during the senior secondary years that enable a successful transition to further education, training or employment it is useful to gain an overview of relevant State and national policy. In the past few years, the Australian, State and Territory governments have changed the requirements around compulsory schooling and participation for young people, and have established policies relating to the provision of educational pathways.

### NATIONAL POLICY

The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions was negotiated between the Australian and the State and Territory governments through the Council of Australian Governments (COAG) in 2009. As part of this partnership all governments agreed to a target to raise the Year 12 (or equivalent) attainment rate from 83.5 per cent in 2009 to 90 per cent by 2015. The relevant *performance benchmark* clarifies the 90 per cent target as ‘the proportion of young people aged 20-24 who have attained Year 12 or a Certificate II or above’.

To achieve this major new target, three related policies have been agreed to:

1. A new minimum requirement for young people to complete junior secondary school (Year 10, usually at age 15 or 16). The new agreement involves a shift from a simple age-based requirement to a combination of attainment and age.
2. A ‘learn or earn’ policy, which requires young people to be in full-time schooling, recognised training or paid employment (or a mix of these) until they turn 17.
3. Restrictions on access to welfare benefits for young people under age 21, if they have not yet attained a Year 12 or equivalent qualification.

In summary the National Partnership strategies have been established to:

- achieve a national Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate of 90 per cent by 2015;
- provide an education or training entitlement to young people aged 15 to 24 years;
- better engage young people in education and training;
- assist young people aged 15 to 24 years to make a successful transition from schooling into further education, training or employment; and
- better align Commonwealth, State and Territory programs and services related to youth, careers and transitions.

It is worth noting that although one of the key policy initiatives is for a 'participation' requirement, the common public perception is that it is now compulsory to stay in school until the age of 17 years.

The Australian government refers to this set of policies as a *Compact with young Australians*. In return for the Year 10 completion requirement, 'learn or earn' participation requirement and welfare benefit restrictions outlined above, the Australian government has pledged "an entitlement to an education or training place". In practice, this means is that the *Compact* promises young people a government-subsidised study or training place as long as a place is available and subject to admission requirements.

For the majority of young people who had already completed Year 12 or an equivalent - almost 84 per cent of the age cohort – these Compact arrangements may not matter very much. The remaining minority of young people, who traditionally have left formal education 'early', for whatever reason, will put the COAG target and associated policies to the test. This is a sound strategy to reduce youth unemployment as training can make the difference between being stuck on a merry go round of casual jobs and income support and landing a secure job. However, young people who struggled at school also struggle with vocational training. There are gaps in the compact, including the need for a guarantee of case management and mentoring for all those with 'learn or earn' requirements to guide them through their training, for training to be in a format suited to disadvantaged young people (preferably linked to paid work), more help with the financial costs of study, and a paid work experience program for long term unemployed people.

As part of the Australian Government's contribution to this National Partnership, the existing suite of youth, career and transition programs were consolidated into two streamlined programs. These are:

- *The Youth Connections* program - to provide a safety net for young people at risk, either through personalised individual support or by providing services that recognise the role that family and community play in a young person's well-being and development. The program has been implemented in Western Australia in collaboration with the Department of Training and Workforce Development and the Department of Education. Young people at risk of leaving school or disengaged from education and training aged 13 to 19 years, will be able to access a continuum of services to re-engage them in education or training, working towards the attainment of Year 12 or equivalent. Providers have been contracted across the education regions to meet specified targets.
- School Business Community Partnership Brokers - for providers to broker strategic, sustainable partnerships between schools and the community – including, business, industry, community organisations, parents and families - to improve educational outcomes and support young people to stay engaged in learning. This program has been implemented in Western Australia in

conjunction with new Career Development Centres to deliver the service across the State.

## STATE POLICY

Western Australia implemented the Compact with Young Australians on 1 July 2009 for 15 to 19 year olds and for 15 to 24 year olds from 1 January 2010. The agreed outcomes under the National Partnership are being implemented within the context of strategic direction and reforms the State had already been progressing through its cross sectoral partnerships.

Western Australia requires young people to participate in full time secondary education until the end of their 17th year. The Acts Amendment (Higher School Leaving Age and Related Provisions) Act 2005 came into effect on 1 January 2006, increasing the school leaving age from 15 to 16 years of age. A further increase from age 16 until the end of the year in which a student turns 17 years of age became effective on 1 January 2008. From 1 January 2014, the compulsory education period will be to the end of the year in which a student turns 17 years and 6 months of age.

This legislation does not dictate that 16 and 17 year old students must stay at school, but rather requires them to participate in education, training and approved employment or combinations of these options until the end of the year in which they turn 17.

An outcome of this initiative has been significant improvements in the levels of participation by this cohort, from approximately 87 per cent prior to the introduction of the legislation in 2006 to just fewer than 96 per cent in 2010.

Participation Coordinators are located in education regional offices and work across the State with primary responsibility for supporting students in Year 11 and 12 to participate full-time in the approved options.

In relation to the *Training Entitlement for 15-24 Year Olds* the State has progressed reforms under this Compact by:

- Ensuring that all young people aged 16 and 17 years of age have access and support to participate in education and training;
- Course fee exemptions for unemployed people;
- Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) Course Fee Concessions;
- Development of initial Productivity Places Program (PPP) list through validation of occupations in priority areas;
- Determination of WA's skills shortage list;
- Formalisation of program processes and dissemination of information to key stakeholders;
- Production and distribution of fact sheets which comprise an overview of PPP; and
- Increased and ongoing communication with Participation Coordinators regarding youth and school student access to the PPP.

Publicly-funded registered training organisations are required to give priority access to a training place for anyone eligible under the Compact, subject to availability of training places and courses.

All publicly-funded qualifications delivered by registered training organisations in Western Australia are course fee exempt for eligible unemployed people across all Australian Qualification Framework levels and industry areas. This Course Fee Exemption for the Unemployed initiative provides further incentive for a young Western Australian to develop skills essential for entry into the workforce or to achieve a higher level qualification.

The initiative, which commenced on 1 July 2009 and ceased on 30 June 2012 enables eligible unemployed people to undertake one publicly-funded training qualification, with the course fee exemption applying for up to twelve months from the commencement of the qualification. This is subject to the availability of training places, and applicants demonstrating their eligibility, meeting training provider application processes and entrance requirements for the qualifications and, where applicable, selection criteria.

The State Government's focus on the training and development of Western Australia's workforce is reflected through the Department of Training and Workforce Development (DTWD) which manages publicly funded training in Western Australia. Key initiatives include:

- *Skilling WA – A workforce development plan for Western Australia* which is an integrated workforce planning and development process for Western Australia which is a response to the increasing demand for skills and labour and aims to build, attract and retain a skilled workforce to meet the economic needs of the State.
- Training together - working together: Aboriginal workforce development strategy. This strategy aims to achieve training and employment outcomes for Aboriginal people that are meaningful, culturally appropriate and long-lasting.
- *Training WA: Planning for the future 2009-2018* – outlines the direction for the State training system to maximise the development of skills, training and employment outcomes for all Western Australians.

In 2010-2011, DTWD administered \$593.43 million of grants and subsidies and in 2009-2010 received an additional WA State budget commitment of \$47.4 million for training programs and services. VET in Schools programs, School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeship Programs and training places for 15-24 year olds are an important element of this commitment.

## AN OVERVIEW OF STATE INITIATIVES

The size of the State and the differences between regional areas requires a multiple range of education and training responses to meet the needs of individuals, communities and industry.

Addressing these needs and improving the attainment, participation and transition of young people has been a key priority for the State government. Significant system-

wide reform and program redevelopment have been steadily introduced in Western Australia since 2005.

As with other jurisdictions, Western Australia has a suite of strategic policy and program arrangements to address the issue of youth attainment and transition including Participation Coordinators, Education and Training Participation Plans, a broad range of VET in Schools programs including Pre- Apprenticeships in Schools, School Based Apprenticeships, Traineeships and Aboriginal School Based Training.

Schools have been developing a number of initiatives and policies which align closely with the imperatives and priorities in the National Partnership Agreement. These include:

- *Establishing strong industry and community partnerships*  
As part of developing employment competencies, transition plans and VET opportunities, schools have been systematically working with local and regional employers, employer groups and peak bodies, community groups and a range of other employment brokers and skills groups
- *Encouraging completion of Year 12 or equivalent*  
Schools have developed specialised programs, support services, training programs and access to School Based Traineeships and Apprenticeships to encourage students to complete Year 12 and achieve a Western Australian Certificate of Education (WACE) and often a training qualification, typically to Certificate II level or higher
- *Focussed VET programs, school based traineeships and apprenticeships*  
Schools have substantially increased VET offerings in terms of numbers of students, hours, full completion of qualifications including at higher levels and a focus on emerging skills shortage areas. They have also increased access to School Based Traineeships and Apprenticeships to engage students in education. Through this focus it is anticipated the VET programs will give more choice to students to match employment opportunities.
- *Providing support for transition and developing career planning services*  
A strong focus on career planning has been implemented, from early years of school and developing transitional plans to effect smooth movement to post-secondary options. Career development has been embedded within the curriculum in the form of career education programs, with a strong experiential component such as work experience and work integrated learning.
- *Providing support for special cohort schools*  
A number of schools with disengaged students including those within remote areas provide support for students with special needs.
- *More on-the-job training possibilities*  
Workplace learning has been a feature of schools for some time with students involved in a variety of industry placements and mixing more generic employment-related competencies with integrated Training Package

competencies. A student in Year 10-12 can achieve unit equivalence towards their WACE, with every 55 hours completed in the work place equating to one unit.

The DTWD has implemented policies which are also designed to support the development of young people. These include:

- Funding of fourteen Workforce Development Centres across the State to ensure all Western Australians have greater access to professional careers advice and training information to assist them in making informed choices about future education and employment options.
- Establishment of the Career Centre in Murray Street, Perth.
- Establishment of 5 Aboriginal Workforce Development Projects throughout the State to achieve sustainable employment outcomes for Aboriginal people.
- The annual School Leaver Destination Survey administered through the Workforce Development Centres which tracks unplaced school leavers and offers ongoing career support and referral to specialised services.
- *Career Development Reforms*: Enhancement of the State government's career development services to ensure all Western Australians have greater access to professional careers advice and training information to assist them in making informed choices about future education and employment options.
- *Course Fee Exemptions for Unemployed People*: This initiative which ceased on 30 June 2012 provided course fee exemptions for eligible unemployed people to undertake one vocational education and training qualification. Course exemptions apply for up to 12 months from the commencement of the qualification.
- *RPL Course Fee Concessions*: Provision of course fee concessions to encourage Western Australians who have obtained skills, but have no formal qualification to have their skills formally recognised (concessions ceased as at 30 June 2012).
- *Additional Foundation Skills Qualifications*: To assist people disadvantaged in the labour market to gain foundation skills as a pathway to further VET training and employment. Foundation skills places enable additional training to be provided to clients belonging to equity target groups to improve participation and attainment outcomes.

A broad range of other services and support includes the following:

- *A Professional Development Network and Information Sharing Program* to bring the key stakeholders together at local levels throughout the state following awarding of contracts for the *School Business Community Partnership Brokers* and the *Youth Connections* programs. This strategy is seen as critical to build local capacity, achieve stronger outcomes enabling schools, service providers, businesses, community, training organisations and parents to better understand and engage with the services and program providers\*;
- Increasing the number of qualified trainers in schools and the juvenile justice system to increase the system's capacity for VET delivery\*;

\* Funding provided under the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions

- A refocused VET in School funding model to achieve more full certificate completions in key priority industry areas\*;
- VET Training and Skills Recognition Services for young people aged 16 and 17 years in full time employment - to provide an opportunity for these young people to access training and skills recognition, existing worker training and/or skills recognition arrangements or a traineeship\*;
- Funding a range of training initiatives including apprenticeships and traineeships, Aboriginal School Based Training Program, Pre-Apprenticeships in Schools Link, School Based Traineeships, Group Training Organisations, Access Program initiatives (specifically targeted at equity groups, including youth), and At Risk School-Aged Students program;
- A Career Development program has been established to contract service providers in each of the eight education districts. These services in collaboration with the Commonwealth funded School Business Community Partnership Brokers and the Youth Connections providers will significantly support the career support needs of the 15 to 24 year old cohort. The career development reforms include the introduction of pilot programs between selected schools and career centres to establish enhanced career services for school students. Following evaluation of the pilots, new services will be implemented bringing a more consistent approach to career development delivery. These services will provide standardised lifelong training information and career services to: school students and those members of the community who are not participating in the workforce refocus;
- Updating the provision of engagement and transition support services in WA schools through the participation team in each education region;
- Work undertaken by the Western Australian Office of Youth to encourage mentor programs to register their work on the Youth Mentor Network (YMN) website, raise awareness and quality standards of mentoring programs and explore the opportunities and challenges in the development of a WA Strategic Framework for Youth Mentoring; and
- The establishment of Transition Brokerage and the engagement of Participation Coordinators providing intensive, individualised support for young people at risk of not participating through the participation teams in the regions who are responsible for the provision of services and support for all young people in their 16th and 17th years. The focus of this work is on improving participation through case co-ordination and a cross sector, multi-agency approach to achieve strong outcomes.

## NOTICE OF ARRANGEMENTS

The concept of a vocational equivalent to completing a senior school certificate has been a feature of recent government policy. Increased Year 12 completion is being targeted because it is recognised that completion of senior secondary schooling leads to better labour market outcomes than non-completion. However, it is also recognised that an academic path is not for everyone and this has led to a realisation that there should be alternatives to Year 12 completion.

In Western Australia a *Notice of Arrangements* means any young person at any time during the year they turn 16 or 17 years, can engage in an option other than full time schooling if they wish. This requirement follows the enactment of legislation effective from 1 January 2006 to implement the participation requirement to the end of the year in which a young person turns 17 years. If they want to participate in a full time option other than full time school, they can be involved in:

- study at a State Training Provider;
- study at a private Registered Training Organisation (RTO);
- an apprenticeship/traineeship;
- university/higher education study;
- an approved Community Based Course (CBC);
- employment; or
- a combination of activities.

Direct data on young West Australians engaged in '*Notice of Arrangements*' options was not accessible, however for the purpose of this project an analysis of data regarding long-term outcomes of students who remain in school against those enrolled in vocational education and training programs was conducted.

Data from the LSAY was analysed which follows the individual pathways of young West Australians until they reach the age of 25 years. This study examined their achievement subsequent to their studies, specifically, employment outcomes, the undertaking of further study, their occupational status (measured using the Australian National University's scales of occupational prestige) and earnings.

Young people who choose to participate in a full time option other than full time school through a *Notice of Arrangement* generally have characteristics different from those completing Year 12. To ensure an appropriate comparison, an analysis was made on the pathways of Year 12 completers with a TER score (now ATAR) in the bottom 50 per cent or who did not have a TER (now ATAR) score at all.

The reasoning behind this approach is that vocational alternatives have little relevance to highly academic students and therefore it would be unreasonable to compare their outcomes with those students undertaking vocational certificates. The outcomes of this group of Year 12 completers against the outcomes of young people who had completed Year 11 or below and/or undertook a range of pathways such as Certificate I-III, Certificate IV or higher, an apprenticeship or traineeship or a non-award course.

In relation to full-time employment, full-time engagement and earnings for full-time workers for all the pathways produced similar outcomes to completing Year 12 for males. In relation to further study, completing Year 12 was identified as the strongest pathway for undertaking further study at Diploma or higher level (Year 12 completion typically provides entry to this level of further study).

With regard to occupational status, the occupational prestige of those working full-time who completed a certificate III is significantly poorer than those who completed Year 12.

In relation to the wages of full-time workers it was identified that Year 11 plus an apprenticeship leads to higher wages (at age 25) than completing Year 12 (remembering that our comparative Year 12 group consists of those who had a TER in the bottom 50 per cent or no TER).

For females, the vocational equivalent pathway has similar outcomes to Year 12 completion in relation to occupational status, gross weekly wage, and undertaking further study. However, the probability of being full-time employed or fully engaged through the vocational pathway increases for those who complete a Certificate III or higher. For both of these outcomes, completion of a Certificate II or no further qualifications produces outcomes that are worse than those obtained for completing Year 12.

The employment and further study outcomes also depend on the level of VET undertaken. Participants who undertook VET courses such as Certificate I and II typically did not obtain their desired job after six months of training. Certificate I and II level courses usually provide a longer pathway to work with a considerable number of young people embarking on further study immediately after completion of the lower level course. The findings are summarised in the table below.

Table 12: Employment outcomes by level of VET for young people

AQF level	Key Findings
<b>Certificate I and Certificate II</b>	Most young people are going into Certificate I and II level courses for employment-related reasons. However, for many, this level of VET is providing a pathway to further study.
<b>Certificate III</b>	A high proportion of Certificate III graduates are employed six months after training. This is largely attributed to apprenticeships and traineeships, as many Certificate III graduates are apprentices and trainees undertaking the training as part of their contracted training arrangement and are, by definition, already employed.  Apprenticeships and traineeships and other VET programs linked to the workplace are providing the most rapid and successful transitions.
<b>Certificate IV</b>	Many Certificate IV graduates report already being employed prior to training. Therefore, Certificate IV qualifications are typically being used by young people as a method of up-skilling to gain a promotion or a better job. However, they are also used as a pathway to further study.
<b>Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas</b>	Young people enrolled in Diplomas and Advanced Diplomas mainly consist of Year 12 completers, entering tertiary education for the first time.  Diplomas and advanced diplomas are leading to the first full-time job for many young graduates. However, the majority are initially employed at a level below that intended by the course (below associate professional level). Around a third of graduates alternatively use the course to go onto university studies. More graduates are employed at associate professional level or higher by two-and-a-half years after training, probably due to those going onto further study.

Source: NCVET, *Which paths work for which young people?* August, 2011.

To get a broader perspective of the outcomes of young people who undertake a vocational equivalent pathway the *NCVER - Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics Student Outcomes 2011* was examined. This publication presents

information about the outcomes of students who completed their vocational education and training during 2010. The findings relate to students who were awarded a qualification (graduates), or who successfully completed part of a course and then left the VET system (module completers) and presents information on employment outcomes, reasons for not continuing with the training (where applicable), satisfaction with vocational education and training and further study patterns. Table 13 provides the key findings of the study.

Table 13: Australian VET Statistics Student Outcomes 2011

Status	Outcomes
<b>Graduates</b>	77 per cent of graduates were employed after training
	44 per cent of graduates not employed before training were employed after
	16.7 per cent of graduates were employed in their first full-time job after training
	Graduates working full-time after training earned \$53 500 per year on average
	Graduates completing courses at or above Certificate III had better employment outcomes after training (80.8 per cent for Certificate III) compared with those completing lower level qualifications (66.9 per cent for Certificate II)
<b>Module Completers</b>	73.6 per cent of module completers were employed after training
	28.7 per cent of module completers not employed before training were employed after, completion of training
	15.2 per cent of module completers were in their first full-time job after training,
	Module completers completing modules at Certificate I or II level had poorer employment outcomes after training (42.4 per cent employed for Certificate I and 54.9 per cent for Certificate II) compared with those who completed modules at all other levels (ranging from 66.1 per cent to 86 per cent).
<b>Apprentices &amp; Trainees</b>	86.7 per cent of graduates who undertook training as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship were employed after training
	93.5 per cent of graduates who undertook training as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship in a trade occupation course were employed after training
	84.1 per cent of graduates who undertook training as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship in a non-trade occupation course were employed after training
	68.3 per cent of module completers who undertook training as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship were employed after training
<b>Intended occupation</b>	28.5 per cent of graduates were employed in the same occupation group as their training course. A further 33.9 per cent were employed in a different occupation but found the training relevant to their current job
	75.5 per cent of graduates who undertook the training as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship in a trade occupation course were employed in the same occupation as their training course
	33.8 per cent of graduates who undertook the training as part of an apprenticeship or traineeship in a non-trade occupation course were employed in the same occupation as their training course
<b>Satisfaction &amp; training relevance</b>	89.3 per cent of graduates were satisfied with the overall quality of their training
	82.1 per cent of module completers were satisfied with the overall quality of their training
	85.7 per cent of graduates and 80.0 per cent of module completers reported that they had fully or partly achieved their main reason for training
	78.2 per cent of graduates employed after training reported the training was relevant to their current job
	65.0 per cent of module completers employed after training found the training was relevant to their current job

Source: NCVET, Australian Vocational Education and Training Statistics Student Outcomes, 2011.

A distinctive characteristic of young people on a *Notice of Arrangements* is the proportion of students working part-time. Data from the LSAY Y06 cohort was examined to identify whether working part-time assisted or hindered academic performance and whether it assisted transition to the labour market. We found that:

- Combining school and work has a modest negative impact on school and post-school study outcomes when hours are long (in excess of 15 to 20 hours a week). Females are better able to balance school and work, with the magnitude of these negative effects generally being less than for males.
- Working for relatively few hours a week (around five hours per week) has a positive impact on post-school full-time employment, compared with not working at all.
- It appears that students who are working lengthy hours in part-time employment are signalling an orientation towards employment and away from formal education.



## IS THE SYSTEM WORKING FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUTH?

The measures and programs outlined previously are absolutely necessary and will, over time, make a major difference in young people's lives. What is often unrecognised, however, is that the wide range of education, income support, housing, health, employment and judicial services which disadvantaged young people encounter in their transition journey are from the perspective of young people, not appreciated as a coherent or responsive system.

While each institution and service strives to assist young people in the context of its mandate, young people are often just as affected by the gaps, the overlaps and inconsistencies between different parts of the transition system as they are by the positive services provided.

A major issue is that the institutions and services young people need along the way often do not recognise themselves as part of a coherent youth transitions system. Instead of focusing on young people's broad needs these institutions often focus on providing their specific service without necessarily taking account of wider linkages.

Consultations conducted as part of this project have confirmed that it is the failure of the services in the system to work together as part of a co-ordinated whole which is at the core of the systemic weaknesses pointed to by many other reports on youth services. However, this failure does not derive solely from the ways that agencies choose to work. It is due in part to the ways that programs are designed, funded and implemented to address specific issues or particular groups of young people.

In addition, tendering and contracting arrangements can inhibit collaboration between community organisations and providers and reduce their ability to address in an integrated way the problems facing young people. While there are strengths in current arrangements, research has shown that there are weaknesses which are described below.

### FRAGMENTATION BETWEEN INSTITUTIONS AND SERVICES

The research conducted for this paper identified a number of different programs dealing with disadvantaged youth. Even in a country town there can be 20 or more different institutions, organisations and programs concerned with meeting young people's needs. While such diversity could be seen to be providing flexible and individualised responses to young people's needs, this was generally not the case.

Almost universally the response was that the current provision for disadvantaged young people is so fragmented that conflicting objectives are being pursued, resources are being wasted and, most importantly of all, many young people are receiving only partial support and some are slipping through the cracks altogether.

This lack of a broader vision about the joined up nature of the problems and experiences of disadvantaged young people has led to poor linkages between

programs, different and even competing accountability requirements and haphazard exchange of best practice. This is evidenced not only in the lack of co-ordination between services, but also by the failure of youth services and schools to engage with the families of young people or with each other.

#### GAPS IN LOCAL SERVICE PROVISION

Feedback from consultations consistently referred to service gaps particular to their local community and expressed concern about the lack of coherent planning at the local level to address the support needs of young people.

#### LACK OF RESPONSIVENESS WITHIN SERVICES

While many of the programs and institutions serving young people are providing quality services, their lack of engagement with wider community systems involving young people has limited their capacity to be completely responsive. This is evident when:

- Services fail to view young people and their families as ‘clients’ or ‘consumers’ of their services, with the information and signposting that consumers have come to expect in most spheres of their lives. This is often caused by services assuming that their clients are as knowledgeable as they are about the complex range of choices and options on offer; and
- The lack of systematic early intervention has meant that problems are often unrecognised until they have reached crisis point.

#### LACK OF ACCOUNTABILITY FOR BROADER OUTCOMES

Many schools focus on the outcomes for young people in relation to accessing post-secondary education, but often do not have the resources to deal effectively with young people who leave early and are ill-equipped to consider the services and support required for disadvantaged young people after they leave school.

Youth services may also not see themselves as part of a larger system. Many providers are unable to extend their vision beyond the point where the young person leaves their particular program. While it would be unreasonable to hold community institutions accountable in a narrow sense for outcomes beyond their immediate control, it would be desirable to track their effectiveness and approaches over time. This would, however, be dependent on an ability to track young people’s pathways through the system.

#### LACK OF INFORMATION ABOUT THE SERVICE SYSTEM FOR YOUTH

Governments and communities find it very difficult to piece together pathways and outcomes because information is as fragmented as the system it derives from. Education and community services often cannot co-ordinate with each other because they are unaware of what each other offers, and there are few systemic incentives to bring about better co-ordination.

## THE NEED FOR LOCAL YOUTH PLANNING

Despite the investment from three levels of government there is a lack of consistency with respect to youth service provision at the local level. Services and programs across Western Australia exist in a range of forms and are provided by a range of organisations. The current youth system tends to be characterised by lack of systematic coordination and little data-sharing to help inform comprehensive service delivery. For many disadvantaged young people it is a difficult system to navigate.

Many youth services are constrained by funding agreements that influence eligibility criteria. Service targets and strategies are generally single issue focused. A service response may not be available until a problem is significant. Waiting times for services vary, as does the amount of time available for service delivery. There is often no clear point of entry for a young person or a family experiencing problem in any given locality. These constraints may lead to young people feeling rejected by the system.

## SUMMARY

The consultations have identified the need for greater investment in broad cross-sectoral partnerships that promote cooperative and “joined” action to maximise the impact of government interventions at the local level. The development of local models should seek to:

- recognise the joined up nature of disadvantaged young peoples’ problems and experiences;
- enhance the links and co-ordination between institutions, services, and programs that are currently fragmented or non-existent;
- ensure services provide adequate information and signposting to guide young people and their families through the choices they will have to make;
- recognise problems before they have reached crisis point;
- ensure services are responsive to the future needs of young people, and are accountable for broader outcomes;
- ensure there is enough accurate information about how young people progress along pathways;
- ensure young people engage with a transition support system which makes information and guidance available to them as they make important decisions about their futures and choose appropriate pathways to achieving their ambitions;
- bring together support services in local communities to develop integrated responses that ensure young people have access to a continuum of support in their local community which offers early intervention, crisis and appropriate long-term assistance; and
- encourage all programs and services to be transparent and accountable, share good practice and learn from evidence-based research.

The exceptional efforts of many community based organisations and agencies must be acknowledged here. These organisations are succeeding in providing good

quality services to their clients despite the difficulties they face in a crowded and confusing service environment.

It is through the collective efforts of many individuals that the system actually works. Through the establishment of informal networks and the maintenance of key personal cross-agency and cross-organisation relationships, the service providers are able to deliver services and support to young people that is essential to their future welfare and eventual employability.

## EFFECTIVE RESPONSES FOR DISADVANTAGED AND UNEMPLOYED YOUTH

The common view is that youth unemployment should fall during periods of strong economic activity and that the transition of young people from school to post-school activity should be easier when times are good. This is certainly the situation for most young people in Western Australia currently as research has identified a significant number of young people are not making a successful transition despite the strong labour market conditions.

Regardless of the economic or labour market situation there are other influences that impact on transition and the most significant of these is socio-economic status. There is a direct correlation between the measures associated with a successful shift from school to further education, training or work such as upper secondary completion, learning engagement, participation rates and general educational attainment and socio-economic status.

Although the best way to improve the situation of those young people disadvantaged in the labour market by their personal circumstances is to improve their social and economic position, this is obviously a challenge well beyond the vocational training and skills development process. However, there are responses, approaches and models that should be applied in relation to education, training and employment that will better support disadvantaged young people through the transition process. This section of the report provides a detailed explanation of responses to youth unemployment that have been shown to be effective in dealing with the issue.

### THE DEFINITION OF A SUCCESSFUL YOUTH TRANSITION

A significant amount of work is being undertaken through the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions to define successful transitions and to examine the factors and conditions that influence the transition process.

For this discussion paper the general description of a successful transition is accepted as reducing dependence on parents, increasing economic independence, firming up career and occupational preferences and developing personal and emotional maturity.

In line with this general definition, the capacity to secure full-time employment or to continue with further education or training is the traditional indicator of a young person's successful transition. In this context, it is acknowledged that achieving the milestones listed below offers young people the best chance of a successful transition.

- *At the age of 15* - just before entering the senior secondary years, young people need to be engaged in learning and have the literacy and numeracy skills to successfully complete senior secondary or initial vocational qualifications. They need to have sound knowledge of the career options and education and training pathways open to them.

- *At the age of 19* - young people should have attained or be in the process of attaining an initial qualification that enables them to become successful learners, confident and creative individuals, active and informed citizens.
- *By the age of 24* - young people should be establishing strong career paths and have attained higher level vocational education and training (VET) or higher education qualifications. Those who did not complete an initial qualification at the age of 19 should have re-engaged with education and training.

In defining success, we also need to consider the quality of a young person's employment. Quality measures may include earnings, job status and security, the nature of employment (permanent or casual), flexibility, training and promotional opportunities, and job satisfaction. Being employed is not the only measure of success in youth transitions. Social outcomes and personal attributes are also important and good mental and physical health; the ability to easily interact and communicate and the capacity to engage in lifelong learning are other quality measures.

## FACTORS UNDERPINNING SUCCESSFUL TRANSITIONS

There are a range of factors that have been identified that impact on young people and their capacity to move to meaningful further education, training or employment and are described below.

### APPROPRIATE EDUCATION AND TRAINING

Full-time participation in education or training is critical to ensure young people are equipped for a successful transition to secure work and independence. Despite this, some young people continue to leave school early. They leave for a range of reasons including:

- they had or wanted a job;
- there were schooling problems associated with achievement and motivation;
- there were personal, family or other reasons; or
- they felt staying would not improve their job prospects.

Young people may leave school early to take up an apprenticeship or traineeship. However, others have difficulty finding or maintaining employment or lack the confidence, motivation or support to get into work. All the evidence shows that completing school has become an economic necessity for most young people.

The statistics are unequivocal, young people who do not complete school will more often find themselves unemployed and when in work have a lower earning capacity. Successful entry into what has become a very competitive labour market is strongly dependent on the acquisition of the appropriate mix of academic credentials, training and employability skills.

Employment projections suggest that the fastest job growth will occur in industries and occupations with relatively high skill demands. Those young people who do not

obtain the necessary qualifications through education and training will have trouble competing for high-skill work.

### **EMPLOYABILITY SKILLS**

There is broad agreement that all young people need a set of personal attributes and skills that prepare them for both employment and further learning. These include the ability to: communicate, work in a team, problem solve, plan and organise, continue to learn, initiate and be enterprising, self-manage, and embrace technology.

Most young people will be at different stages of developing these skills. They will develop them further through interaction with family, friends and community, participation in school and further education and employment. However, young people who are disconnected from family and education are at risk of failing to develop these skills to an appropriate level. They struggle in their day to day interactions and face significant barriers to employment and general wellbeing.

### **REWARDING AND SECURE EMPLOYMENT**

Secure and rewarding employment brings economic and social benefits for the individual and society generally. Unemployment and under-employment, especially when they become entrenched, place a young person at risk of disengagement and marginalisation. The effects of unemployment include lost social networks, poverty, poor health and anti-social behaviours.

The past two decades has seen a sharp increase in the number of young people in part-time work while during the same time full-time employment has declined. Casual or part-time employment is likely to impact on the strength of the relationship with the employer and hinders career path planning.

### **WORK READINESS**

Young people experience a range of challenges when getting started in the labour market, which vary in their intensity and duration. Specialised services are required for some young people to help develop skills, knowledge and confidence that more experienced job seekers possess. Some young people require further support and assistance to develop 'the fundamentals' for succeeding in employment.

### **CAREER AND TRANSITION SUPPORT**

To make effective transitions young people require access to information and suitably qualified people to assist them in making key decisions about jobs, courses and career paths, including access to careers advice which is informed by current labour market trends. Young people require access to a service or support system that:

- Provides general advice and support at those key transition points when guidance on career and educational issues is necessary to help them make decisions that affect their future;
- Provides them with opportunities to develop career planning skills, enabling them to effectively manage their pathways beyond school;

- Provides comprehensive careers advice connected to job opportunities (including local opportunities) supported by information technology systems accessible at the local level;
- Follows them up as they move through school into post-school destinations;
- Links them to appropriate learning and work opportunities;
- Supports them through mentoring, brokering or other appropriate assistance;
- Provides in-depth support for those at risk of not participating effectively in education and training;
- Provides integrated specialist support for those facing substantial, multiple disadvantages preventing them from engaging in education and training and provide them with access to a range of specialist services to overcome barriers;
- Connects those who have left school to education/training, career and employment information and opportunities; and
- Acknowledges options that extend beyond school years and offers support for programs that combine education, employment and training.

### **INCOME SUPPORT**

Financial security is a critical element of independence and adulthood. It influences choices and plans and affects when/if a person can borrow for a home, have children and engage socially. For those without financial security, choices become extremely limited as life is more circumspect and about day to day survival. A lack of income support for young people reduces their choices and opportunities in life and leads to a range of interconnecting problems including poor housing, limited access to health services, reduced social participation, poorer educational outcomes and reduced employment opportunities.

Young people without financial security will not be able to engage in all aspects of society and risk missing out on the opportunity to plan their future with confidence.

### **AFFORDABLE AND SECURE HOUSING**

When access to housing is unstable or restricted, all aspects of life are negatively affected and young people in particular are exposed to multiple risks. On any given night in Australia, around 100,000 people are homeless and one quarter of these are young people.

Young people who are no longer living at home and are unable to afford or access secure housing have limited options. If they are eligible for public housing, they may be subject to long waiting lists. Supported accommodation is available for those in need of emergency accommodation and has no age restrictions, but is generally short term and demand far outstrips supply. As a result, young people can become transient, staying with friends or acquaintances ('couch surfing') or sleeping rough and forced to shelter in squats, cars or public places, and part of the 'hidden' homeless.

The relatively high mobility rates among the young can make it more difficult to target assistance to those in greatest need. Although young people who are homeless

have much in common with other particularly disadvantaged job seekers, they experience specific problems, which derive from their homelessness. These include:

- A lack of secure housing - the launching pad for finding and maintaining a job;
- A lack of the stability and support generally associated with a “home” and necessary to make and sustain a work commitment; and
- Multiple, multi-layered barriers, which are both the cause and consequence of homelessness, and which make it difficult to train or work, i.e. instability of relationships, health problems, problematic drug and alcohol use, inability to use available services, a general lack of control over one’s life.

## HEALTH AND WELLBEING

Young people are one of the healthiest groups of Australians as two-thirds of them report their own physical and emotional health as excellent or very good. However a recent Australian Institute of Health and Welfare survey found almost one in ten young people rated their health as either poor or fair.

This group of young people has higher rates of early school leaving and unemployment. They are also more likely to measure their quality of life as ‘mostly dissatisfied/unhappy/terrible’.

## WHAT CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE?

Providing appropriate support and assistance to young people at risk of long-term unemployment can help enormously. This section looks at what can make a difference for young people, especially those with multiple issues.

## INTENSIVE LONG-TERM INDIVIDUALISED SUPPORT

Highly disadvantaged young people need access to intensive long-term support where case management, mobile services, referral and advocacy are seen as important components of this support. The types of service will typically include brokerage, counselling, mediation support, mentoring, links into education, training and work opportunities and post-placement support.

## IMPROVING EDUCATIONAL OUTCOMES - ALTERNATIVE EDUCATION AND NEW APPROACHES TO LEARNING FOR DISADVANTAGED YOUNG PEOPLE

There is considerable evidence that education and training reconnects young people to their community. It is essential that a broader range of educational opportunities for disadvantaged young people than is currently available is developed. Very few marginalised young people will access education which is not connected to those agencies where they feel comfortable and safe.

Alternative educational settings which provide a flexible and applied approach to learning are seen as important for young people dealing with a range of issues. Learning needs to involve accredited studies and be complemented by counselling, advocacy and referral to other services such as mental health and housing where

required. It also needs to offer personal support to address life issues and a modular approach to learning.

Broad cross-sectoral partnerships involving the education, community and business sectors will be instrumental in building education and training pathways for disconnected young people. There are a number of organisations in different parts of Australia that offer alternative educational options to young people at risk. They generally employ a 'staged approach' to the provision of services that assist disadvantaged young people including innovative delivery of literacy and numeracy skills; access to support to overcome financial hardship; and improved assessment of behavioural problems that impact on learning.

This allows for the delivery of ongoing support, in some cases over several years, as participants move in and out of jobs, education and training while slowly but steadily building the portfolio of skills that will enable them to participate independently in mainstream labour markets. The learning environment tends to be informal with qualified educators working alongside skilled youth workers. A basic premise for working with this group is an acceptance that life issues affect learning. The primary role of non-teaching staff is to attend to these issues. These programs tend to concentrate on building positive education experiences which progressively introduce accredited learning.

Alternative education and training programs generally offer another alternative education option, delivering a variety of universal and or targeted programs and services, with operational models ranging from co-location to integration. As place-based approaches they tend to address the needs of young people in a community setting while working in partnership with schools, training providers, employers and community organisations. They also provided a fresh venue away from schools where young people can access social, recreational and educational activities as well as broad support services as part of a prevention strategy. Unlike school-centred approaches, they are accessible by non-school attendees, and can provide flexible, vocational and community-based options to ensure that disengagement from school does not equate to disengagement from learning.

## NEW EMPLOYMENT AND LABOUR MARKET SERVICE MODELS

Given the apparent problems that JSAs have in engaging young people, a separate stream of support needs to be considered to respond to the needs of disadvantaged young people.

In identifying an appropriate service model, research indicates that the following elements would need to be considered:

- *Integration of mandatory elements* - personal support, housing and employment assistance;
- *Flexibility* - Individualised support will be provided across program components and participants will be able to extend or modify program components to fit their particular needs. Participants will be able to defer involvement during times of personal crisis without jeopardising future participation;

- *Continuity* - There will be continuity between program elements and opportunities for further education, employment assistance and jobs, external to the program;
- *Relationship-based assistance* - Participants will have a primary worker who will function as the centre of a network of integrated resources. Relationship-based strategies will be used within program components;
- *Local Sensitivity* - Employment assistance will be aligned with opportunities in the local labour market and the availability of sustainable housing, wherever possible building on pre-existing community links ;
- *Adequate income* - Costs of participation in the program and the workforce will be offset and financial disincentive to full participation addressed;
- *Deliver outcomes valued by participants* - The program will deliver recognised certificates or accreditation for training linked to job opportunities; and
- *Clarity about what constitutes a 'successful outcome'* rather merely than an 'output' or 'process'. This involves identifying outcomes and milestones, which can be linked within an overall case management plan

The list of service elements presented in the following table is also considered essential for effective employment assistance to the most disadvantaged. This service model should be regarded as a progressive stepped approach to support disadvantaged young people from a crisis state through to ultimately finding sustainable employment.

Table 14: Key service elements underpinning effective employment assistance

<b>Stage 1 Engagement</b>	Building trust and developing respectful relationships with each individual job seeker.
<b>Stage 2 Developing social competencies</b>	Personal skill development - building confidence, respect for self and respect for others. Developing career aspirations and employment goals.
<b>Stage 3 Developing vocational skills</b>	This should include foundation education skills and accredited training. It is critical that young people attain at least a Certificate 2 level (ideally higher).
<b>Stage 4 On the job work experience</b>	Vocational training and work should be available particularly for very long term unemployed young people who need a supportive work place as they develop work behaviours and make the transition to the labour market.
<b>Stage 6 Referral to employment</b>	When young people are perceived to be job ready, referrals should be made to the open labour market or to JSA for ongoing job referral and placement services.
<b>Stage 7 Post Placement Support</b>	Face to face post placement support should be available for up to 6 months, to assist both the young person and the employer in dealing with any issues which may arise in the early transition to employment.

Source: Draft Report to Prime Minister's Council on Homelessness: Youth and Education, Employment Services (2011)

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## **IMPROVING ACCESS TO DIVERSE VOCATIONAL LEARNING EXPERIENCES**

Once the core foundation and preparatory issues are dealt with there are benefits for disconnected young people from vocational education and training that can include improving their longer-term employability and leading to re-engagement with the formal education and training sector. However, there is still a lack of real opportunities for these young people in this area.

There is a need to consider approaches that ensure that young people not connected to formal education and training or employment have the opportunities to develop their understanding of work culture and have access to vocational experiences in supportive and well-supervised work settings. In addition, there is a need to provide opportunities to participate in structured workplace learning models and obtain employability skills including competence in up-to-date information technology usage.

## **IMPROVING ACCESS TO APPRENTICESHIPS AND TRAINEESHIPS**

There is need to extend the range of programs which support young people in their search for appropriate employment and training opportunities. New programs may need to be developed or a range of more effective options created within existing programs. Essentially, disadvantaged young people need a ladder approach to help them into work. The ladder for some may be needed for several years as they move in and out of jobs, education and training in an effort to build a portfolio of skills.

To ensure that young people with high support needs can access apprenticeship and traineeship places there needs to be:

- adequate pre-placement preparation and post-placement support of young people;
- on-going mentoring;
- careful selection, training and support for host employers;
- a staged induction process developed in consultation with young people; and
- recognition and assessment of prior learning and a creative approach to structured workplace learning.

## **A WHOLE-OF-COMMUNITY RESPONSE**

When undertaking research for this paper, a number of organisations have emphasised the importance of a whole-of-community response to effectively tackle youth unemployment. Given the complex mix of issues confronting some young people today, greater coordination between schools, training providers, business and industry and youth services is needed. Communities with high unemployment are frequently characterised by disadvantage across a range of measures. In these communities, the attempt to address unemployment in isolation appears bound to fail.

## **SUMMARY**

In considering the range of advice provided during the consultations there are a number of key points that need to be made. These include:

- It is the responsibility of all stakeholders in the community to work in partnership to support young people in making decisions about their futures and in their transitions from dependency to active participation in the community;
- Local solutions to locally identified community problems are more effective because they can be designed to meet specific issues and circumstances within the local context. Local ownership attracts participation and commitment to addressing community issues;
- Community partnerships work best if they have clearly stated, shared and agreed goals, strategies, outcomes and accountability requirements. All stakeholders must work together to achieve common objectives; and
- Top-down directives do not bring about change in local communities. However, flexible guidelines and parameters in government-funded programs can support and facilitate community-initiated strategies.

In addition, community partnerships need to be supported to prioritise those tasks that need to be addressed at the local level. These will allow for the building of solid transition pathways for disadvantaged young people, which will include:

- guaranteeing all young people access to 12 years of schooling or its vocational equivalent;
- increasing their participation in the workforce;
- developing life and employability skills;
- encouraging their active participation in the community;
- promoting access to relevant advocacy systems;
- implementing early intervention and prevention strategies;
- bringing together support services in local communities to develop integrated responses;
- encouraging all programs and services to be transparent and accountable, share good practice and learn from evidence-based research; and
- ensuring that youth leave education/training with the skills required in the local labour market.

## GOOD PRACTICE TO SUPPORT TRANSITIONS

The overall objective of the project has been to identify the key features which make for successful transitional support services and programs for young people, especially those at risk.

Research for this paper has identified initiatives that:

- support early school leavers;
- involve partnerships and community-based approaches;
- deliver alternative education and second-chance education models; and
- provide for early identification and support of at risk youth.

A best practice approach establishes a plan or strategy tailored to suit the individual that will provide the best chance of a successful transition.

In identifying good practice associated with the transition from school to further study or work it is evident that the primary focus should be on those disengaged young people who struggle with transition.

As stated elsewhere throughout this paper, most young West Australians complete secondary schooling and with the appropriate support are able to navigate their way through the various further study and employment options. As previously described, up to 90 per cent of young people eventually make their way to sustainable employment so that by the time they reach the age of 25 years they are mostly in full-time jobs.

The 10 per cent that do not make a successful transition from school struggle to find full-time work, endure regular periods of unemployment, often become welfare dependent and experience ongoing social and economic disadvantage.

As identified, the problems for this minority group are visible well before they reach the end of secondary school and the difficult transition they experience is simply a consequence of the broader difficulties they face.

In considering best practice, the following questions were asked:

- What are the things that make a difference to these disengaged young people? and
- How are these things being applied?

For those service providers and programs that were examined for this paper, the following common themes were identified:

- links to the local market and the local needs;
- providing ladders to further education and training;
- recognising other areas of disadvantage (and their interactions) young people experience and make it a priority to address these needs;
- involving co-ordination and collaboration with all relevant stakeholders; and
- providing a one-on-one approach (for example, case management) to preparing young people for the labour market.

In all cases the requirements and needs of the individual young person are examined, considered and respected and factored into what has been termed a *personal transition plan*.

All the service providers and programs that were examined required young people to be accountable, understand that there are consequences to their actions and to respect the processes and protocols of the education, training or work system they are engaging in.

Although programs to support disengaged and marginalised young people may look different to other youth development programs and are delivered away from the mainstream in alternative venues with a more relaxed approach, this does not mean they lack focus. It is clear that best practice programs are designed to change negative behaviours, encourage young people to accept responsibility and produce

focused and motivated young people who will be able to secure and maintain employment.

One of the most difficult issues for service providers supporting young people at risk is the capacity to link programs and services to the workplace. Some providers such as SMYL Community Services have spent many years developing a network of employers who understand the issues associated with work placements for disadvantaged young people and accept the difficulties of this process.

However, for most community service providers the establishment of 'real' connections to the workplace is a challenge. The obvious downside of this lack of connection is that it is hard to convince disengaged young people about the value and benefits of work when you are unable to expose them to a range of workplaces.

In addition to the specific and intensive approaches previously described, it is being increasingly recognised that there is a need to assist not only at risk students in their transitions but also mainstream students most particularly in relation to occupational choice and workplace experience.

Mainstream young people can have difficulty making the transition from school into further education and training or stable full-time employment. This is often due to a lack of adequate career education and guidance. Also, it is often the case that the links between schools and industry are such that they do not facilitate young people's transitions between the two. Research has indicated that the major factors negatively affecting school-to-work transitions are the weak links between school and work and poor information flow in both directions.

Good practice programs in relation to mainstream students are those that successfully embraced VET, career guidance and fostered strong links with industry.

Core elements of successful programs include:

- having strong collaborative leadership and management;
- developing strong partnerships between school, business and the community;
- using the expertise of stakeholders in the area;
- linking programs to the local market and local needs;
- developing specific programmes for individual businesses involved with schools;
- engaging in high level networking activities;
- giving high priority to the authenticity and real-world aspect of the world of work;
- matching student's skills and interests with appropriate work placement;
- allocating specific resources to co-ordinating individual student's exit from school to work or further education and training;
- providing bridges to accreditation and qualifications by ensuring that every student engages in activities that are accredited or can contribute to a qualification;
- utilising, where appropriate, non-teaching staff for transitional programmes and/or staff with excellent links with the community/business;

- ensuring programmes assist young people to become ‘work ready’; and
- supporting systemic frameworks and adequate on-going resourcing.

## CAREER ADVICE

Recent career development reforms in Western Australia have included the enhancement of the State Government's career development services to ensure greater access to professional careers advice and training information to assist in making informed choices about future education and employment options.

This reform aims to provide high quality and enhanced career information to students, parents, carers and teachers. A Career Development program has also been established to contract service providers in each of the education districts.

These services in collaboration with the commonwealth funded School Business Community Partnership Brokers and the Youth Connections providers aim to enhance the career support needs of young people aged 15 to 24 years. This includes the introduction of programs between selected schools and career centres to establish enhanced career services for school students and a more consistent approach to career development delivery.

These initiatives have enhanced the provision of general advice and support at those key transition points when guidance on career and educational issues is necessary to help young people make decisions that affect their future. This includes providing them with opportunities to develop career planning skills, enabling them to effectively manage their pathways beyond school and comprehensive careers advice connected to job opportunities (including local opportunities).

Qualified career practitioners can work with young people on an individual basis to help them:

- find relevant training and education information;
- explore occupational, industry and labour market information;
- discover their career interests;
- clarify their skills and values;
- look at their options and help you to make good choices; and
- create a plan for action.

Although there appears to be a significant effort and resources being applied to career advice, feedback from consultations indicated that there is still a need to provide additional and more effective career and support services for the disengaged and marginalised group of young people aged 15 to 19 years who experience severe difficulty in effecting a successful transition to secure employment.

It is clear from all the data and information collected during the project that these young people leave their initial education without an adequate understanding of the labour market and without sufficient knowledge about employment and related vocational education and training opportunities. Even when information is available, those who most need to access it are least equipped to do so. Most of this disengaged and marginalised group are early school leavers who leave their institution without a coherent plan for their transition.

Outside the school system there exists a quite complex array of post-school pathways and options, income support and community support services that are difficult to navigate and hard to understand. These services are delivered by different levels of government and by a wide diversity of departments, not-for-profit community groups and for-profit agencies. Although each service may have an internal coherence and is being delivered in goodwill to various client groups it appears that insufficient attention has been given to the overall congruence of the services. More needs to be done to assist disadvantaged young people to negotiate their pathway through this maze.

The scope and breadth of career information in Western Australia is extensive and the quality and availability of material is sufficient. However, the processes for dealing with those disengaged and marginalised young people that are the focus of much of this paper need to be examined.

Additional and more effective career and support services are needed to ensure that the proportion of young people 'at risk' is reduced and to ensure that all young people enjoy equitable opportunities to effect a transition to secure employment through approaches that:

- Link them to appropriate learning and work opportunities;
- Support them through mentoring, brokering or other appropriate assistance;
- Provide integrated specialist support for those facing substantial, multiple disadvantages preventing them from engaging in education and training and provide them with access to a range of specialist services to overcome barriers;
- Connect those who have left school to education/training, career and employment information and opportunities; and
- Acknowledge options that extend beyond school years and offer support for programs that combine education, employment and training.

There are a number of program and service elements that need to be considered for this group of young people. These elements are described below and have been or are currently present in various forms in schools and community service agencies.

## TRACKING

Tracking is the recording of the paths and destinations of school leavers. The purposes of tracking currently varies from merely recording destinations for accountability to ensuring ongoing contact with early school leavers and providing a basis for additional services such as case management, mentoring or brokering assistance. Tracking should be seen as a means of ensuring continuity of contact between all young people and mainstream institutions with a focus on:

- securing the reintegration of early leavers into school;
- securing young people's transition to a vocational education program, employment assistance and/or employment; and
- providing support to young people through the initial phases of employment.

## MENTORING

Quality mentoring programs can be useful tools in providing support to young people. Structured and trusting relationships with caring individuals who offer guidance, support and encouragement can lead to:

- improved academic performance;
- better relationships with teachers, family and the broader community;
- decreased involvement in criminal activity, drug taking and alcohol abuse; and
- increased participation in school, training and/or employment.

In Western Australia there are a significant number of well-developed mentoring programs aimed at young people, many designed to support specific groups of young people including some for cultural groups and those with special needs.

Work has been undertaken with the Western Australian Office of Youth on the development of a *Strategic Framework for Youth Mentoring* with the focus on the development of an appropriate model. The State specific approach is focused on reflecting the need for long term successful mentoring arrangements, through integrated and collaborative partnerships with business, schools, philanthropy and all levels of government to improve levels of mentoring for young people.

## BROKERING

Brokering of education, training, health, welfare, accommodation and employment services should commence before a young person leaves school to reduce the time in which they are unsupported. The objective is to ensure a smoother transition from school to further education and training or employment. School and service agency personnel have highlighted the need for effective brokering services to be provided while young people are still at school. For a stable transition to be made, services and agencies need to be contacted prior to the departure from school and arrangements made for appropriate post-school education, training, employment, or other appropriate activity.

In many schools where teachers take on the task of brokering, they have insufficient time and resources available to meet demand and in many schools brokering arrangements are not in place. At present there are no formal processes to establish the necessary connections between schools and service agencies to establish brokering support for young people. While it holds considerable potential, the effectiveness of brokering will be limited if local education and training, community and employment services are not co-ordinated.

## CASE MANAGEMENT

There is a requirement for more intensive case management for young people in need of additional and more intensive counselling, support, guidance and advocacy. Closer co-operation and co-ordination between schools and external agencies should be fostered to better support young people in transition, reduce overlap between service providers and fill existing gaps in service provision.

Case management is necessary to eliminate fragmentation and improve social and educational outcomes and identify a full array of integrated services for deeply disadvantaged and troubled young people, including:

- assessment and counselling;
- vocational training and work experience;
- remedial education and employability skill development;
- health care and accommodation support;
- small group and individual mentoring;
- advocacy;
- job search support and back-up support during the initial period of employment; and
- life skills development.

In delivering the above service elements there is a need to examine the feasibility of establishing or enhancing *Transition Support Networks* in high unemployment regions to ensure disadvantaged young people have access to a range of holistic services that address the barriers they face. *Transition Support Networks* could be tasked with the responsibility for:

- ensuring students negotiate a school-to-work or further study transition plan especially if they plan to or are considered likely to leave school early;
- ensuring that young people have access to information and support throughout the period of transition from school to further education and employment;
- tracking early school leavers;
- the brokering of placements and other services for early school leavers;
- case management where necessary;
- school-based mentoring arrangements; and
- transferring responsibility for support to appropriate people located in other agencies to ensure continuity of connection.

## THE WAY FORWARD

This discussion paper has been developed by the State Training Board to present research on youth unemployment in Western Australia.

The findings of the paper show that for many young people in the State, the transition into unemployment directly from school is the inevitable consequence of a broader range of social and economic factors.

For many of the unemployed young people in Western Australia, the research indicates that the transition to the workforce is simply another difficult process that just follows on from difficulties at school. In addition, the paper illustrates that progression into standard vocational training pathways or employment based training directly from school is almost impossible for these young people.

As a consequence of the research conducted for this paper, the application of a '75:15:10' rule of thumb provides a simple measure from which to consider the issue of youth unemployment in Western Australia.

Any meaningful reduction in the State's youth unemployment rate and a lowering of the high rates in some specific locations may only occur if there is a focus on the disengaged and marginalised 10 per cent component of the '75:15:10' model.

The information presented by West Australian agencies and service providers for the purposes of the paper reinforces the argument for supporting stronger action in relation to youth unemployment.

It is envisaged this discussion paper will inform the development of a strategic plan aimed at improving youth unemployment, in particular for those disengaged and marginalised youth in Western Australia.

In order to progress the development of this strategy in Western Australia is it proposed that the following issues are considered:

- A need to consider the way education and training services for young people at risk of becoming disengaged and marginalised are funded, coordinated and integrated. Where the system works now, it does so because of the passion, efforts and goodwill of the individuals involved. There is a need for some leadership in this area.
- There is a requirement for stronger and more formal networks to ensure the effective provision of all the necessary services. The broader range of services required to support at-risk young people through the transition process are supplied through a mix of agencies and service providers who work independently of each other. As with the education and training efforts, where these organisations provide the young people with the services and support they require it is mostly because of the work of individuals in the organisations who establish and maintain informal networks.

- There is a need to trial a fully collaborative process to assess how much success complete local involvement will bring. Local initiatives work best when all the available resources and capabilities are applied at the problem. There are local areas where education and training providers are working hard with other agencies to assist young people through transition without the support of local industry, local government and others who should be involved. It is envisaged that such a trial would be conducted in a regional community.
- The development of a model for the funding, integration and coordination of alternative education and training programs for young people at risk of disengagement that recognises the:
  - value of partnerships;
  - importance of foundation and employability skills;
  - need for industry support and involvement;
  - requirement for broader support services;
  - necessity for local community input; and
  - need for clear education and employment pathways.
- Examine the feasibility of establishing *Transition Support Networks* in high youth unemployment regions to ensure disadvantaged young people have access to a range of holistic services that address the barriers they face. The network arrangements should be used to strengthen the connections and working relations between education and training institutions, local enterprise, youth services and local councils.
- Support the establishment of a series of community trials designed to improve service provision at the community level to ensure that:
  - disadvantaged young people are engaged in ‘earning or learning’;
  - community resources are applied appropriately to the needs of young people;
  - service delivery capacity is enhanced and improved; and
  - a coordinated localised youth service system is established.

## YOUTH UNEMPLOYMENT STEERING COMMITTEE

The State Training Board established the Youth Unemployment Committee in March 2012. This committee will investigate and report on the following issues:

**Youth Unemployment Demographics:** The Steering Committee aims to examine the youth unemployment statistics to develop a statistical picture of young people's transition to employment and further education. This will include research and analysis of youth unemployment factors including employability skills, education and training attainment, work readiness, rewarding and secure employment, career and transition support and income support.

**Preparation of Young People:** The Steering Committee will consult with relevant stakeholders to identify activities, programs and training that provide for a successful transition from secondary education to further education, training and employment. It will also examine young people who are no longer in secondary education and examine the long-term outcomes of young people who are on a 'notice of arrangement'. Finally, this phase of the project will explore strategies to re-engage young unemployed people in education, training and/or employment and the role that the vocational education and training sector has in this important activity.

**Expectations and Career Advice – Employer, Young Person and Parent:** The Steering Committee will consult with targeted agencies providing career development services in schools, tertiary institutions, industry and other community advisory bodies to examine the role, source and quality of advice provided to young people and their parents/guardians on career choices. The Steering Committee will also gather the views and expectations of industry bodies, employers, schools and training providers to focus on identifying the scale and scope of the challenges facing the acquisition and transfer of workplace skills by young people to the workplace.

The membership of the Youth Unemployment Steering Committee is:

- Audrey Jackson, Chair
- Vanessa Davies, State Training Board member
- Tim Dymond, UnionsWA
- Allan Jones, Chief Executive Officer, Financial Administrative and Professional Services Training Council
- Mal Gammon, Chief Executive Officer, FutureNow: Creative and Leisure Industries Training Council
- Jillian Dielesen, Chief Executive Officer, Logistics Training Council
- Norma Roberts, Chief Executive Officer, Retail and Personal Services Training Council
- Kay Gerard, Chief Executive Officer, Food, Fibre and Timber Industries Training Council (on leave)
- Juanita Healy, Executive Director Statewide Services, Department of Education
- Yvonne Herft, Senior Policy Officer, Department of Training and Workforce Development
- Kathy Hoare, Director, Office of the State Training Board

The Committee was assisted by Business Group Australia consultants Mr Gary Collins and Mr Jim Syrmas.

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