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Inquiry into school to work transition
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training
Parliament of Australia
PO Box 6021
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Committee Members

Re: School to Work Transition Submission

Brimbank City Council is a Victorian city built upon diverse cultural heritage located between 11 and 23 km west and north-west of Melbourne GPO. It is a large and very diverse municipality, with over 200,000 residents and its socio-economic diversity is reflected in its 25 suburbs, with some suburbs facing great socio-economic disadvantage and challenges.¹

This submission by Brimbank City Council would like to comment on a number of issues both causing and perpetuating this disadvantage that are of relevance to the terms of reference of the committee; specifically how Brimbank students experience school education and training, and opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post school education and training.

Some current factors in school to work transitions in Brimbank

1. Young people in Brimbank unfairly experience the brunt of unemployment.

In 2016 parts of Brimbank, including Sunshine and St Albans, were identified by Brotherhood of St Laurence as amongst the top 20 "hotspots" nationally for youth unemployment (15-24 year olds.) Of even more concern is that the rates are increasing; from 13.6% in 2014 to 17.3% in 2016.²

2. Brimbank has significant areas of high need and long term, entrenched disadvantage.

Brimbank has significant areas with low socio-economic status and correspondingly more schools with low ICSEA values (Index of Community Soci-Educational Advantage). Family disadvantage and poverty have a great impact on student

¹ Brimbank Community Learning Strategy 2014-2017, p.10

² http://library.bsl.org.au/jspui/bitstream/1/9004/1/BSL_Aust_youth_unemployment_hotspots_Mar2016.pdf
accessed 17 July 2017

achievement; there is a "clear relationship between social disadvantage and poor educational outcomes"³

3. **Mainstream systems may not build on strengths of local population.** For example Brimbank has almost twice the population that speak English and another language "well or very well" compared with Greater Melbourne (ABS 2016). Brimbank's cultural diversity can be viewed as a strength and yet policies and programs do not always acknowledge this reality and this can negatively affect young people's identity development and contribution to employability skills.
4. **More education (school and post school) leads to better employment outcomes:** "People with higher levels of educational attainment were more likely to be employed"⁴ and yet Brimbank has large numbers of residents (15+) who have below Year 11 level of schooling; 32% (over 47,000 people) compared with 26% for Greater Melbourne. In parts of the municipality there are significant proportions of the population with no formal qualifications; this makes people more vulnerable to further unemployment, poverty and socio-economic deprivation. ABS 2016 figures show Brimbank residents have lower rates of trade qualifications, lower rates of university qualifications (13.2% compared with 23.6% for Greater Melbourne) and fewer attending university. Brimbank has rates of TAFE participation (2.4%) slightly above Greater Melbourne (2.2%)⁵
5. **Inequities in school funding disproportionately affect schools in low socio-economic areas;** the process of 'residualisation' entrenches inequality and concentrates disadvantage. More poorer and disadvantaged students go to government schools, and government schools receive less federal government support. "Residualisation refers to a process where more affluent students move to more affluent schools, usually in the private sector, resulting in a geographic and sector-based concentration of disadvantage (Bradley Review 2008, 33; Gonski Review 2011, 108; Brotherhood of St Laurence 2015, 7; Hinz 2013, 4).⁶
6. **Brimbank students' experiences of, and opportunities in, education and training are affected by systemic and structurally inherited disadvantage in the education and training sector.** "Historic political decisions have created a 'veritable jungle of policies which limits accountability and have contributed to growing resources and performance differences between rich and poor schools, with *disadvantaged students suffering most*' (Hinz 2013, 1; Bracks 2015, 57).⁷
7. **Poorer educational experiences for students directly affect their school to work transitions and preparation for post-school education and training.**

³ <http://cpd.org.au/2016/05/unevenplayingfield/>, accessed 17 July 2017

⁴ <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/mf/6227.0>, accessed 17 July 2017

⁵ <http://profile.id.com.au/brimbank/home> accessed 17 July 2017

⁶ Giving the West a Chance, Public Affairs Internship Portfolio by Michael Lim, p.5

⁷ *Ibid*, p. 19

"Schools that do not have the required resources to support disadvantaged and vulnerable students will result in a large amount of young people being more at risk of poor educational outcomes (Smith Family 2010, 5). This can significantly affect their ability to complete school and successfully participate in the labour market. Consequently, this will only serve to entrench poverty and continue the cycle of disadvantage (McLachlan et al 2013, 108)."⁸

8. **Feedback from diverse young people in Brimbank** during 2017 "Line of Sight" project by Brimbank City Council's Learning Unit listed these factors as influencing school to work transitions;
- Lack of knowledge of required skills
 - Racism and discrimination
 - Lack of one on one support
 - The importance of volunteering
 - The importance of industry networks.⁹
9. **Poor public transport options in Brimbank**; transport poverty affects access to education in Melbourne's West.¹⁰

Local issues affecting young people's experience of post-school education and training in Brimbank include:

- English language proficiency and availability of more English language schools
- Gap in provision of technical schools; better funding and resourcing
- Increase in provision of special schools; expanding current Jackson's special school which has K-12 campus into more appropriate aged based campuses.
- More alternative education models developed and available; such as Oasis program at Sunshine College which is working at capacity, and meet gaps in further provision. Investigate 'half paced' VET program to support those students progressing at slower pace.
- Appropriate cross cultural programs to support diverse young people to connect with, understand and thrive in education system.
- Lack of dialogue between business training needs and training organisations' curricula developed to meet those needs.

⁸ Ibid, p. 22

⁹ Internal document, Line of Sight transitions project, Feb 2017

¹⁰ http://www.westjustice.org.au/cms_uploads/docs/westjustice-fare-go-report.pdf , accessed 17 July 2017

In summary, Brimbank needs structural inequalities in education addressed to 'level the playing field' and some specific support for building better post school outcomes. Perpetual disadvantage in education and training, however it is measured, leads to those most vulnerable disproportionately bearing the brunt of the disadvantage, which is very unfair. Brimbank City Council is working strategically and locally to address some of the issues identified. We would urge the committee to consider this analysis and feedback to work with us to improve school to work transitions for Brimbank students.

Yours sincerely

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