

UNIVERSITY OF NEW ENGLAND

SUBMISSION TO INQUIRY INTO SCHOOL TO WORK TRANSITION

Prepared by the Academic Quality and Analytics Unit

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Terms of Reference:

1. Measurements of gain in school and how this contributes to supporting students to prepare for post-school education and training;
2. Opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training, including use of employment outcomes of students who undertake school-based vocational education or post-school tertiary pathways;
3. Other related matters that the Committee considers relevant.

Both State and Federal governments are giving increased attention to employment issues in regional Australia. Labour market data (Imip.gov.au) indicates unemployment and underemployment rates are persistently higher in areas outside the capital cities. A recent report from the Grattan Institute states that 'while economic growth has been concentrated in cities for some time, the trend has really accelerated in the past decade. Half of all jobs growth is now within a 2km radius of the city centres in both Melbourne and Sydney, reflecting the increasing share of new jobs in services industries where physical proximity really matters'. (Presentation by John Daley to Productivity Commission Conference, Canberra, 12 December 2016).

Adjustment to the realities of the changing nature of work is not experienced uniformly across the country and the strategy for 'jobs and growth' in the regions is complicated.

Youth Action NSW released a policy paper on Tuesday 18 July 2017 with recommendations to NSW Government on improving career guidance in schools.

https://d3n8a8pro7vhm.cloudfront.net/youthaction/pages/393/attachments/original/1500359553/2017-07-18_Career_paper_formatted_FINAL_RS.pdf?1500359553

The recommendations include assisting schools to develop a minimum level of career guidance, strengthening support for career advisers and tailoring programs for the disadvantaged. Creating linkages between schools, industry and tertiary education is a key element of this proposal. The report discusses the additional barriers to career transition facing regional students, those with a disability, and those from migrant or indigenous backgrounds.

In a press release (26/7/2017), Jan Owen, CEO Foundation for Young Australians presented FYA's *The New Work Smarts* report.

A new report from the Foundation of Young Australians (FYA) has revealed that in the future no job will be immune to automation.

The New Work Smarts analysed over 20 billion hours of work completed by 12 million Australian workers across 400 occupations each year to predict the skills and capabilities

that will matter most in 2030. The report shows that automation is going to change what we do in every job, in every occupation.

FYA CEO, Jan Owen said that the report provides an opportunity to map the changes across jobs, and equip young people with the skills which will be required to navigate these shifts.

“We need to shift our focus away from trying to predict which jobs will disappear due to automation and start preparing young people for a future where the way we perform all jobs will change because of automation,” Ms Owen said.

“What this report shows us is that to be ‘work smart’ in the future, young people will need to not only acquire foundation and technical skills, but be able to use these in an increasingly entrepreneurial and creative ways, as well as possessing a thirst for ongoing learning.”

UNE is ideally placed to work with schools across the region in preparing students to develop the skills required in the new world of work.

Just one example of where UNE is already operating in this space is the UNE SMART (Sustainable Manageable Accessible Rural Technologies) Farm which showcases the latest technologies aimed at improving productivity, environmental sustainability, safety, workflow and social/business support networks on Australian farms. The [SMART Farm Innovation Centre](#), linked via AARNet and the national broadband network (fibre, terrestrial wireless AND satellite, serves as a research, education and outreach facility and is a national demonstrator site, serving as a test-site for new technologies, the SMART Farm is a connected classroom where the community as well as students of all ages can access the [latest data streaming](#) in from a range of field, animal and machinery sensors.

While school based careers teachers provide assistance for students who are still at school, once they leave there is really nothing in the way of professional quality career advice and support available. ‘Getting a job’ is not a single event. In the current economic climate, many jobs are part-time, casual, short-term, and downsizing and retrenchments are common. It takes longer for young people to find a job, and they can expect to regularly experience periods where they are unemployed or underemployed. Career transitions can happen at any time, so access to quality career support throughout life would be a great support. This goal was articulated in the National Career Development Strategy produced by the Gillard Labor Government.

Moving from school into further education is not a guarantee of future employment security, although successful completion of either university or TAFE qualifications dramatically improves employment prospects. One strategy that could be trialled would be to provide ‘Year 13 career guidance’ for students in the period immediately after leaving school so that these students don’t fall through the system.

There is a strong correlation between low educational attainment and struggles in entering the workforce. If young people can continue to accelerate their learning, they will have greater chances of success. Retention and engagement throughout the school years is essential. Schools try to meet students’ personal, social, and welfare needs, as well as provide an education, but they cannot be expected to do this without support. The UNE ‘Social Workers in Schools’ program has had success in providing a resource to support students and their families within the school and wider community system. Students in schools that provide qualified and well-resourced careers teachers have significantly better prospects. Work experience and mentoring are proven strategies. Unfortunately, the latest research shows investment by schools in career resourcing is in decline, with 1 in 4 careers

teachers having had their time allocation decrease in the last 3 years. <http://mccrindle.com.au/the-mccrindle-blog/Insights-int-our-school-based-career-practitioners>

There is potential for university teacher education staff to work in schools as a multi-disciplinary team to improve transition from school to work or further study through supporting teachers and the wider school community. There is also more that can be done to assist students in making informed study/career choices prior to enrolment and reducing attrition rates in first year, thereby increasing the likelihood of gaining employment.

High School students should be aware of available pathways and enabling programs, as well as the myriad of support services that are available to assist with retention, for example, first year advisors; academic skills unit; wellness engine for alerts. UNE provides and promotes these services, however, whether students realise they need these services, and take the initiative to access support that is available, is a moot point. Students who would most benefit, are also those that don't realise they need help. They don't know what they don't know. There is more that could be done to address this challenge.

Understandably, there is considerable focus on the direct transition from school to education or training. In regional areas, there is also a real need for a focus on those experiencing involuntary structural unemployment, and building employability skills capabilities for young people who are no longer in the education system and who are not working or being trained for work.

The challenge of adapting to the new work realities needs to be addressed on multiple fronts. As well as equipping individuals with the skill sets they require, we need to be building our capacity to provide meaningful work within communities. Regional economic development sits alongside building employability capabilities in our future workforce to ensure the viability of our regional communities into the future. UNE is ideally placed to be a Centre of Excellence in working with regional communities to transition to the new economy. UNE can contribute expertise and knowledge to support students at school and in the transition to further education or training, professional services working with unemployed and marginalised populations and helping communities develop innovative and sustainable economies.

The world of work is changing. Jobs exist now that didn't several years ago. Technology and automation are taking some jobs and creating others, and changes to the way we work will impact on all occupations. New technologies are arising that require new skills. This highlights the importance of universities engaging with key industries, to ensure they offer innovative and relevant courses that will assist with employment prospects of graduates.

