Response to the Inquiry into School to Work Transition - July 2017

Inquiry into school to work transition

Integrated Information Service

Integrated Information Service's (IIS) submission will focus on the second point of the terms of reference, "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".

IIS has operated the Australian Apprenticeships and Traineeships Information Service (AATIS) for over 15 years, under funding from the Australian Government Department of Education and Training.

AATIS publishes the Australian Apprenticeships Pathway website (currently under redevelopment - www.aapathways.com.au). It provides a broad range of apprenticeship and traineeship information to a wide audience. This information interprets training package qualifications in occupational terms and gathers each qualification's apprenticeship and traineeship availability data from state and territory jurisdictions. This facilitates searches for examples of apprenticeship and traineeship occupations available in a specific state.

The site and resources are used by all stakeholders: service provider networks; government; employers; schools and students; job hunters; as well as parents and other influencers.

AATIS gathers information and provides general resources to help build understanding of Australian Apprenticeship occupations and the requirements of employers and training. These resources include short 'You Tube' videos (www.mygain.com.au), general practice aptitude quizzes, job pathway charts, a career explorer tool, and a pre-apprenticeships listing service.

The full service includes the delivery of an App version of the website, a social media presence and a contact point for service providers and industry stakeholders (via phone, email and through information sessions). AATIS also receives calls and emails from the public.

The AATIS websites receive a total of approximately 1.2 million page visits annually. Over 250 organisations link to the website.

AATIS' 'Pre-apprenticeship Finder'
This unique resource provides a structure for organisations providing pre-apprenticeships to list initiatives, allowing website users to search for these pre-apprenticeships by general industry categories and location.

The resource is the most frequently used search type on the Pathways website (16% of all searches). It is predominantly used by students, job hunters and the organisations and people supporting them. This indicates an acceptance from these groups that an individual's transition from school to work can require specific training and assistance.

Anecdotal feedback to the AATIS contact line indicates that in some industries employers show a preference for interviewing job applicants who have completed a pre-apprenticeship, even on occasion approaching providers directly to identify potential recruits. The electrical industry is frequently

mentioned in this context. Care needs to be taken that people who don't need the assistance of a pre-apprenticeship aren't forced into completing one because employers have developed a 'blanket policy' of only accepting applicants who used that pathway.

The Pre-apprenticeship Finder (www.aapathways.com.au/pcf) is offered to providers as a free avenue of promotion for pre-apprenticeship activity. It is reliant on organisations voluntarily listing information.

In early 2017 there were close to 200 'active' pre-apprenticeships from 23 providers listed on the Pre-apprenticeship Finder. In the past, listings have mainly been from providers in Victoria, Western Australia, Tasmania, and Queensland. Listings tend to peak at the start of each semester.

Where government and peak level industry associations have encouraged providers to use the Pre-apprenticeships Finder there has been some increase in the volume of listings.

Informing students about Pre-apprenticeships

Key barriers to the effectiveness of pre-apprenticeships include a lack of definition of 'pre-apprenticeships' and consistent statements of their benefits. There is also often no specific or consistent funding commitment for pre-apprenticeships.

The effect of these issues can be to increase the complexity of putting a pre-apprenticeship together at a local level, with even successful initiatives not certain to receive ongoing funding.

Data on initiative outcomes is probably currently gathered but is not generally available for analysis, which inhibits evaluation of the effectiveness of initiatives and approaches.

Many providers prefer to use their networks to recruit into pre-apprenticeships. This is a very important and often successful approach, however there is sometimes a reluctance to use communication options other than this 'beaten path' method, even where initiatives aren't being filled.

These factors combine to make pre-apprenticeship evaluation and promotion difficult. They can impact negatively on building their status and level of acceptance with schools (including careers advisers and students), with parents and other influencers, and with employers.

Information provision to schools

IIS has interacted with careers associations and also directly with schools over many years.

As is generally acknowledged, career development skills in schools are not at a consistently high level. It appears that there is often little value placed on the role of career advisers within schools, and staff 'churn' through the role is too high.

As a key conduit to students and their influencers any deficiency in the standard of this role has a major impact on the information and advice provided for consideration. This is especially the case where information is in an area that the Adviser has little experience of, which is often the case with apprenticeship and traineeship pathways.

While higher education providers have an established profile with the school community, for the vocational sector it is a battle to find effective communication channels to careers advisers in schools. There is no direct avenue, for example, through a recognised source with acknowledged authority.

This can lead to stakeholders approaching schools using a scattergun approach. Careers Advisers can be inundated with information from a range of individual organisations using different messages and presentation styles. This lack of cohesion in the message, and the absence of information educating schools on vocational pathways, generates confusion and provides reasons to ignore the communications that are received.

An information source endorsed by key stakeholders as a major reference point would benefit careers advisers, students and their influencers. It could also coordinate the production of purpose specific resources, produced in a consistent format and presentation. Access from a single point, as well as the uniformity of the 'product', would greatly assist promotion and take up.

Materials should be industry focused to help orientate students to the world of work within various industries and as far as practicable provide indications of emerging trends and sectors. Skills Service Organisations would be an obvious network to help deliver this approach.

The information developed needs to be placed in the channels and in the format used by stakeholders. While some advisers may still favour paper based resources, young people gravitate to online platforms.

It is important to have realistic expectations about what is possible through different communication channels, such as websites, Facebook, Instagram and other social media. Careers decisions require some contemplative thinking, and often conversations, to develop thoughts. Some channels will be of limited benefit in this, but will provide benefits in seeding ideas and drawing people toward complex information, and connections to services providing careers discussion points, whether in or out of schools.

Analysis of communications channels is required to effectively target communications, that is where and when communications should be 'shallow' and concise, and where and when they should provide depth and detail.

An assessment of where career conversations are held and how to impact them is also an important element of effective communications, which need to support both sides of the conversation. A tool, or 'road map', facilitating careers decision making would provide useful support to all parties in an environment of disparate information sources and a range of choices.

Use of visuals, particularly video, within the expectations of users is essential. Users of You Tube have effectively defined video's rules for publishing around the length and tone of videos. If videos are over produced, or longer than 60 – 90 seconds their impact is likely to be diminished on the 'You Tube audience'.

Personal experiences of school to work transitions should be used to inform advisers, students and influencers. Exampling processes and experiences through participants like apprentices, trainees and employers is an effective communication approach and an expectation of the 'youth' audience.

In IIS's opinion, students should be engaged early in their school careers using brief videos exampling job roles and the experience of working. This will help build recall of occupations and industries, and an understanding of employer expectations. The aim of this approach would be that later in their school

Response to the Inquiry into School to Work Transition - July 2017

life a student may not need a resource heavy post-school 'transition intervention', rather a 'light touch' plan for transition.

Summary of suggested actions

1. As governments further develop and fund pre-apprenticeships as a recognised school to work pathway, make service provider listing of pre-apprenticeships on the Pre-apprenticeship Finder a required action.

2. Development of video case studies and promotional content using participant experiences. Use a central information source such as AATIS to facilitate career adviser access, and to target students directly through You Tube.

3. Develop and implement a communications strategy to explain to students the reasons for taking an Australian Apprenticeship pathway. Include various communications channels to the extent that they are useful in achieving the long term aims of career development.

4. Use the expertise of the careers sector, such as the Career Industry Council of Australia, to develop a resource that provides a guide to careers decision making. This would help Careers Advisers, students and their influencers access and analyse information, prioritise, contemplate and discuss the information and potential directions.

5. Extend the role of Skills Service Organisations to the development and maintenance of a general careers product covering a broad range of industries.