

# From school to VET

Supporting and engaging recent school leavers in vocational education



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## Context

- The school to further education and work transition is a complex one.
- Most (55.9%) recent school leavers go from school to some type of further education.
- In August 2016 16.6% of 18-year-olds and 19.6% of 19-year-olds were undertaking VET.

# School to VET transitions

## Choosing VET

How do students **form aspirations** to undertake VET?

How do students receive information about **VET pathways**?

What are the **major influences** for choosing a VET pathway?



## VET study

What **challenges** do students face at enrolment and while studying?

What **elements of VET** study do students find **particularly useful/rewarding**?

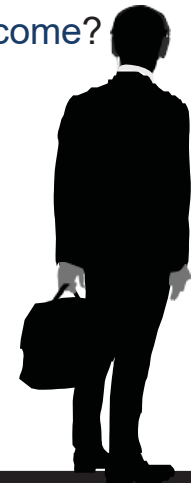
What can **help students to complete** their studies with their desired qualification?



## VET outcomes

What are students' employment and further study **outcomes**?

Do students feel they have achieved their **desired outcome**?



## Challenges at the level of the 'private-proximate'

*They often go 'No, I'm not going to tell you that, but I'm too dumb. I can't do it. I'm not smart enough. I don't understand this. I'm stressed' (RTO staff, Tas, 2017).*

*I haven't been [to the training provider] yet because I was scared last week ... I was scared to go, I was just scared to go. Yeah, it was really scary and I was sitting like, should I go? I was that scared, I made myself sick and I just didn't go. (Young female, Vic. 2017)*

*I'd like to go do the course but it's just their fee ... if the fee was about 100 bucks or something that's fine, I'd be able to do that. But 355 bucks? That's pathetic for a 12 week course ... that's breaking my budget. (Young male, Tas, 2017)*

## Challenges at the training provider level

*The whole enrolment process is very bureaucratic and...so different from anything they've experienced before. It's hard for an adult to navigate it, let alone a 15 year old that may not have family support...The interview to get in is two hours. For someone who is already disengaged...and [feels] that the world's against them, it is going to be against [them] by the end of that (RTO staff, Vic 2017)*

*—A lot ... suffer from anxiety, so [if] you put them into something that they're not going to be able to cope with, because they don't understand it or they can't read it, boom! Anxiety levels just rise and then that's it. (RTO staff, Tas, 2017)*

*Because it's worded differently, they're using bigger words, and it's like I don't know what that word is, and I have to keep going back to the dictionary... It's taking me extra time to do it, because I'm so confused ... it's the same as what I've done, but it's just so different ... so I'll read a sentence and I'll understand two words in the whole sentence. (Young female, Vic. 2011)*

## Challenges at the VET sector and ‘macro-systemic’ levels

*The downside of private training is that there is a tendency to withhold and not share training materials, products and approaches ... and without sharing you can become insular (RTO staff, Qld 2015).*

*Until my brother came here [to TAFE] I had not one clue that TAFE existed (Young male, Qld, 2017).*

*My grandmother said that TAFE is for unimportant people” (Young male, Vic, 2016)*

*A lot of people from the schools think that TAFE is for dropouts and I was getting a lot of that ... I got a lot of attitude from them (Young male, Qld, 2017).*

*It’s more like they threaten you in a way, as in, ‘Hey, if you don’t finish school, you’re going to TAFE!’ (Young male Vic, 2017).*

# What matters when...

## Pre-enrolment

Family attitudes to & knowledge of VET

Information from schools & providers

Range & availability of courses

Location of providers & transport options

Access to subsidies & funding

Difficulty of enrolment processes

## Enrolment

Communication & commitment by staff members

Peer dynamics & learning environments

## Learning/Retention

Skill levels & learning supports

Work-focused & hands-on learning

Wellbeing issues & supports

# Enablers of VET study

- Demystify wherever possible so prospective students don't feel overwhelmed by complexity
- Support the learner in the dimension(s) they need
  - Logistical
  - Academic
  - Social



## Enablers of VET study

- Strategies at use in ‘high-performing’ regions, with higher participation and completion rates among disadvantaged learners included:
  - Using tools and strategies to identify learner profiles and needs
  - Providing specific support for particular types of learners
  - Tailoring staff time and subjects delivered to learners’ needs

## Enablers of VET study

- Successful providers often have a whole-of-institution commitment to support disadvantaged learners
- “Every interactions is important – from the reception, to teaching staff, to common areas such as cafes and libraries”
- “We are one institution, one team. Retention, success and engagement is everyone’s business”

# VET outcomes

- Outcomes for school leavers (18-19 year olds) are similar to other graduates
- Most report an improved overall employment status
- Most report having achieved their main reason for training
- School leavers more often report getting a job as a result of VET study (42% vs 31%)

## Conclusion

Understanding the individual learner and their needs is key

Supporting learners often means facilitating links and cooperation between them and different agencies (i.e. financial support, social services)

Foster a commitment from your whole institution to support learners however possible

Assume the best of prospective learners – they've faced challenges but have aspirations they're reaching for

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