

MODELS OF WORKPLACE ENGAGEMENT

Insights from student voice

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Executive summary

The world of work is changing at a rapid pace, bringing with it challenges for the social and economic participation of all young people. Research shows that young people who have developed capabilities like communication and problem solving, and who have significant workplace experience, will make the transition to work quicker than others.

Workplace engagement and work-related projects which include authentic and contextualised employer engagement; vocational exploration and building of aspirations; experiential learning; and personal accomplishment – lead to better outcomes for young people. Some of the most effective activities help to build student’s belief that they can succeed.

There is a need to design workplace engagement models which are authentic, valued and beneficial for improving school to work transitions. It is within this context that the NSW Department of Education and Training funded the Models of Workplace Engagement pilot.

Eleven schools participated in the pilot, with each developing and implementing individual projects to engage a cohort of students in Year 9 and / or Year 10 in workplace engagement activities. Individual projects varied tremendously, from pre-work experience activities, to site visits and experiential learning. Students involved in the pilots also varied, from those with a keen desire to learn about an industry to those who were relatively disengaged with learning and school.

The aim of this research report is to reflect the pilot project experience, particularly from the student viewpoint. Data was also collected on what types of experiences and needs Year 7 and pilot project students have. Initial research questions centred on student needs and expectations around the world of work.

Through surveys and case studies we seek to reflect student voice and articulate their experiences of the pilot projects. Taken together, the research aims to fill a gap in current understanding around what will motivate young people to engage in workplace learning.

Student experience of the world of work survey

While students reported that schools are already doing many things well in career education, they called for more exposure to workplaces and ‘real’ experiences to help them build confidence and skills to transition into the world of work. Almost half of Pilot students in Years 9 and 10 who completed the survey indicate they have only had a little or no contact with the world of work, a figure which rises to two-thirds of students in Year 7. Many students think their current level of workplace engagement is not enough.

The older students get, the more immediate their desire to understand the world of work and how to gain employment. Both Year 7 and pilot students express the desire for help with developing skills for applying for jobs and practical tips to prepare for work.

The needs of students with regards to career education change over time, from provision of information to seeking real world experiences and assistance to apply for work. Students seek greater support earlier than is currently provided – in particular Year 9 was a key time that the need for career education escalated. Year 7 students express the desire for more assistance with understanding subject choices, and post school training options, whilst pilot students want practical experiences of work and to know more about jobs and careers. This focus on practical experiences stood out as a key student need.

The pilot experience

Each pilot was unique – but there were some common elements overlapping across some or all of the projects in terms of what took place, with each pilot covering on one or more of the following aspects:

- instigation of **workplace tours and visits** to one or more businesses connected to the project's objectives and / or to inform the topic of investigation,
- students **designing, developing and producing an output or outputs within school**, for instance a school garden, a coffee cart, picnic benches, a video resource,
- a common feature within projects were **dedicated sessions for additional training and skills development**, often provided with a partner or partners, such as TAFE, an employer, a youth group, or a training organisation,
- **engagement with experts** or development of mentor-type relationships with businesspeople relating to a specific career field or area of expertise, and
- **Integration or connection of work experience** to what was happening within the pilot

The projects could be grouped into four broad models depending on their key focus: in-house capability building, aspirations and pathways, engagement and skill development, although some projects fell into several categories.

Student engagement was a key part of the pilots. Real and tangible experiences were created that helped students to gain a sense of mastery. Students were given a degree of autonomy within the projects, and projects flexibly evolved and adapted to meet student needs. Teacher involvement was crucial in providing guidance and building business linkages, although many workplace co-ordinators learned alongside students. For many projects links to industry expertise enhanced the student experience.

Students had a range of desired outcomes going into the pilots, from finding out about pathways to immersing themselves in an occupation or industry, gaining work related skills and finding a job.

Students were largely targeted or self-selected for participation in the pilot projects, often meaning they naturally had an interest in what the project was about and were motivated to participate and drive the project forward.

Student feedback on the pilot projects to date is positive. Both survey results and qualitative discussions highlight that many students were engaged and enthusiastic about their involvement. This was also reflected by school staff, who had observed how most of the students had enjoyed being involved and had made positive developments as a result.

What went well?

The pilots performed well at bridging the gaps in current stated needs and expectations of young people and in going some way to meeting their appetite for more exposure, supported learning and first-hand experiences with work. Importantly, pilot projects were rated as most useful on the following aspects:

- building my understanding about different work and career options,
- making me feel more prepared to enter work in the future,
- helping me understand what workplaces are like, and
- building my skills and knowledge related to work.

The usefulness and relevance of the pilots is further evidenced by student endorsement overall – three-quarters of students agreed that the project was enjoyable and worthwhile.

Importantly, the pilots have had a lasting effect beyond students' engagement. Most students had taken follow up steps post pilot, including discussing work and careers with parents, developing a resume, looking into careers and study options and re-engaging in classes.

The pilots have also had benefits to the schools, including the flexible funding providing an opportunity to test and trial an innovation, teacher professional learning including broadening understanding of local industries and enhancing school-industry connectedness. In some schools the pilots helped reconnect disengaged students to school.

What common roadblocks emerged?

Students and staff recognised the challenges in the pilots, they felt out of their depth at times and pilot projects were not easy, but this challenge added to the sense of accomplishment. Time was a particular concern, with co-ordinators needing to balance the project with their normal workload. For some, this was more than was originally anticipated and could be exacerbated by a need for them to get up to speed with elements of the project, managing this with other commitments and requirements on their time. However, the pilot funding provided flexibility and license to try something new.

Similarly, students needed to balance pilot participation with their other studies. Because the pilots were not integrated into the curriculum, students had to make up time spent on pilot projects or participate in their free time.

Lessons for the future

Students and staff are keen to continue pilot projects, with many students identifying that they would like to mentor a new intake of pilot students.

Much can be learnt and leveraged by reflecting on all projects, considering the design features, success factors and implementation considerations which, in general, lead to more effective projects, and what might support the transferring or scaling of these ideas to wider settings.

An issue for future consideration is greater engagement of parents and families. This is particularly salient given the influence that parents have on career aspirations and decisions. This may be an area for expansion in future models.

From an uncertain start for some schools, the pilot projects manifested into something that was engaging and valuable for many students and schools alike. The momentum that had gathered as a result was capitalised by schools, and it is with this sense of purpose that the pilot schools look to build on what has happened to date into the future.

1. The context of student workplace engagement

The world of work is changing at a rapid rate. Automation and the rise of artificial intelligence and globalisation are affecting the employment landscape. Young people finishing school today need to be prepared for an ever-changing world of work. They must be equipped to learn and navigate a range of careers throughout their lives.

We know that young people in Australia are more highly educated than ever before, with most completing school and gaining a post-school qualification. However, young people are taking longer to transition to work and pathways to jobs can often be unclear.

We also know that young people's aspirations can be built or constrained from an early age. Young people cannot aspire to industries and occupations they know nothing about – aspirations are often limited by experiences and networks. It is challenging for parents and schools to keep pace with industry change and the breadth of jobs available within sectors to be able to influence these aspirations.

In this light, an opportunity exists to partner with industry to support all young people to understand a changing range of workplace opportunities, and to help young people plan pathways to achieve their aspirations.

Positively, some young people are more able to navigate the dynamic world of work than others – young people with 'soft skills', capabilities like communication skills and collaboration more easily navigate their way to full time employment. Young people who have experience in the world of work more readily transition from education to employment.

Schools have a key role in affording young people a range of opportunities to understand the world of work. Experiential learning is one of the best ways to do this – students learn most from being in a workplace, or actively engaging in a work-related project.

Work experience has a clear role to play but traditional work experience models where a student organises their own placement with an employer do not suit all students. Students might not have the skills or confidence to approach an employer for a placement or may not know what industry they would like to explore. Transport to work experience is a major barrier in some rural and remote areas. For all these reasons work experience is in decline across New South Wales.

There is a need to 'reimagine' workplace engagement models and opportunities for experience for young people with the world of work which are authentic, valued and beneficial for improving school to work transitions. It is within this context that the NSW Department of Education and Training funded the models of workplace engagement pilot.

The section below provides further data and contextual information around the changing world of work, the construct of the pilot and the research approach.

1.1 What current evidence tells us

There is a need to lift and broaden student aspirations

The jobs of the future are likely to require higher skill levels than before. It is estimated that over 90 percent of the job growth in the future will require a post-school qualification, with many workers expected to retrain multiple times across their lives.¹

Currently most students complete school, although completion rates are much lower in rural and remote areas. Most young people intend to undertake further training after school, although around one in five students do not.

Setting career goals can help inspire young people to achieve higher levels of attainment. Young people, especially disadvantaged students, may achieve greater academic outcomes if they have ambitious aspirations and a pathway to achieve these.²

Young people need guidance and exposure to understand the breadth of occupations and industries. Presently, a substantial proportion of young people across the world aspire to a narrow range of ten core occupations. According to PISA 2018, in Australia a quarter of disadvantaged students and nearly forty percent of advantaged students want to work in one of these occupations.

Figure 1: The top job aspirations of young people³

	Boys	Girls
1 st	Police officers	Specialist medical practitioners
2 nd	Athletes & sports players	Generalist medical practitioners
3 rd	Engineering professionals	Lawyers
4 th	Generalist medical practitioners	Teaching professionals
5 th	Business services & administration managers	Nursing professionals
6 th	Motor vehicle mechanics & repairers	Medical doctors
7 th	Armed forces occupations, other ranks	Psychologists
8 th	Policy & planning managers	Police officers
9 th	Lawyers	Veterinarians
10 th	Teaching professionals	Policy & planning managers

This is in contrast to the predicted five-year highest job growth occupations in Australia:

- Aged and Disabled Carers
- Registered Nurses
- Child Carers
- Software and Applications Programmers
- Waiters, and
- Education Aides.⁴

Young people require assistance to understand the wide range of industries and roles within the changing labour market

¹ Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business (2019). Job Outlook – Future Outlook. <https://joboutlook.gov.au/future-outlook.aspx>

² Sikora, J., & Saha, L. J. (2011). Lost Talent? The Occupational Ambitions and Attainments of Young Australians: ERIC.

³ PISA 2018 Results (Volume II). Where All Students Can Succeed accessed at https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2018-results-volume-ii_b5fd1b8f-en#page283 accessed 9 December 2019.

⁴ Department of Employment, Skills, Small and Family Business (2019). Job Outlook – Future Outlook, accessed at <https://joboutlook.gov.au/future-outlook.aspx> accessed 1 December 2019.

Exposing young people to the breadth of opportunities within the labour market, as well as providing information on trends in employment growth, may support young people to be more expansive in their aspirations.

Pathways are difficult to find and navigate

The transition from school to work is difficult and non-linear, with many young people changing pathways. Although young people may indicate a chosen pathway post-school, often this does not eventuate, with over a third of young people changing pathways between what they indicated at 17 and the reality upon leaving school.⁵

These changes are only the first of a series likely for young people before they enter the workforce. LSAY data reveals that most young people will have at least five transitions by the age of 24.⁶ The world of work is complex and young people take a wide variety of pathways to find their destination.

Access to up-to-date industry information and pathways planning could support young people to identify more linear pathways to their desired career. It could reduce the high level of mismatch occurring presently, whereby a young person's pathway does not match their career goal.⁷

- nearly half of all students aspiring to a role requiring a certificate undertake a bachelor degree. Some young people feel pressured by peers or family to go to university,⁸
- a third of students aspiring to a role requiring a bachelor qualification undertake a vocational qualification, and⁹
- under ten percent of advantaged students and over one in four disadvantaged students wanting to enter a high skill occupation do not plan on completing tertiary education.¹⁰

Transitions are also lengthy, but some things help

The Foundation for Young Australians *New Work Reality* report reveals that young people face a longer transition to full time work, with around half of all young people working a portfolio of jobs until at least their mid-twenties.¹¹

Young people who have developed, and can explicitly demonstrate, capabilities like communication and problem solving, and who have significant workplace experience, make the transition to work quicker than others.¹² Some young people, including low socio-economic students, students with disabilities and students from regional and remote areas are less likely to develop or recognise their capabilities. This impedes their transition to the workforce.

Schools have a key role to play in helping young people to develop a broad set of capabilities that will assist them with work and life

⁵ NCVER (2019). Generation Z: leaving school. <https://www.lsay.edu.au/publications/search-for-lsay-publications/generation-z-leaving-school>

⁶ NCVER (2019). Generation Z: leaving school. <https://www.lsay.edu.au/publications/search-for-lsay-publications/generation-z-leaving-school>

⁷ Li, I. Harris, M & Sloane, P. (2018, September). "Vertical Horizontal and Residual Skills Mismatch in the Australian Graduate Labour Market". *Economic Record: The Economic Society of Australia*, Volume 94, Issue 306. <https://doi.org/10.1111/1475-4932.12413>

⁸ <https://www.skillsroad.com.au/>

⁹ Commonwealth of Australia, Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet (2019). *Strengthening Skills*.

¹⁰ PISA 2018 Results (Volume II). Where All Students Can Succeed accessed at https://read.oecd-ilibrary.org/education/pisa-2018-results-volume-ii_b5fd1b8f-en#page283 9 December 2019.

¹¹ Foundation for Young Australians. (2018). *The New Work Reality*. Accessed at www.fya.org.au.

¹² Foundation for Young Australians. (2018). *The New Work Smarts: Thriving in the New Work Order*. Accessed at www.fya.org.au.

Pathways for disadvantaged students are especially important

Overall around half of Australian students from a disadvantaged background aspire to complete a tertiary education, compared to over eighty percent of advantaged students.¹³

Aspirations can be formed early on, with gender stereotypes setting and some children, particularly those from disadvantaged backgrounds, lowering their ambitions whilst still in primary school.¹⁴

Disadvantaged students especially benefit from school support with pathways planning as they are less likely to have access to outside school assistance and advice and are more likely to leave school prior to Year 12.

Most disengaged young people are likely to transition between school, training and work up to fifteen times.¹⁵

Around one in four young people are not fully engaged in education, work or training at the age of 24.

Around 45,000 of these 24 year olds each year are estimated to be disengaged for the majority of their working lives.¹⁶

Career education and workplace engagement is vital

The changing nature of the workplace and complexity of transitions make the need for career education for young people paramount. The multi-faceted nature of career education includes:

- raising children and young people's aspirations,
- broadening student understanding of roles, industries and the changing labour market,
- supporting students to choose pathways aligned to career options, and
- helping young people to understand and build the broader capabilities required in the workforce.

The responsibility to address these challenges cannot fall to schools or careers educators alone – parents and industry are vital. Parents are a key influencer in children's decisions about the world of work, and a primary source of advice. Industry has a key role to play in supporting young people to understand the breadth of roles and changing nature of occupations.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ <https://www.educationandemployers.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/01/DrawingTheFuture.pdf>

¹⁵ Ranasinghe, R, Chew, E, Knight, G & Siekmann, G. (2019). School-to-work pathways, National Centre for Vocational Education Research, Adelaide.

¹⁶ Lamb, S. and Huo, S. (2017). Counting the costs of lost opportunity in Australian education. Mitchell Institute report No. 02/2017. Mitchell Institute, Melbourne. Retrieved from www.mitchellinstitute.org.au.

When should career exploration and workplace learning start?

Exposure to career education during the primary years can help – for example girls who have access to female mentors in STEM-related industries are less likely than other girls to exclude STEM careers by the time they finish primary school.¹⁷

NSW data confirms that some aspirations are set early with primary school students selecting a small range of roles. However, aspirations can change as students understand their own efficacy, with nearly half of Year 10 students uncertain of their desired career path.¹⁸

The Skills Road Study highlights that around a quarter of young people start thinking about their career in Year 8 or below. Nearly 40 percent of young people who wanted to take an apprenticeship decided this in Year 10 or below.

This points to the need for career development to begin early, ideally in primary school, and continue throughout high school.

What types of workplace learning help?

A range of workplace learning skills and experiences help young people to understand and navigate the world of work. Some of the most effective activities help to build student's belief that they can succeed, their self-efficacy, which is strongly linked to career outcomes. Successfully mastering tasks can help build student's efficacy.¹⁹ Personal performance accomplishment, counsellor support and vocational exploration have been found to have a high impact on young people's ability to determine a career path.²⁰

There is a growing body of evidence about the benefits of employer engagement, and the wide range of activities that yield positive outcomes such as shadowing, mentoring and enterprise activities.²¹ These activities enable young people to explore vocations over an extended period of time and to build trusting relationships. Enterprise activities can build self-efficacy through accomplishment of industry-based tasks.

New research from the Education Endowment foundation suggests that authentic employer engagement can be transformative for young people, broadening their networks, supplementing and enabling young people to make sense of curriculum-based learning, building aspirations, developing work-ready skills and enabling young people to test assumptions about the nature of work. Their meta-analysis of employer engagement highlights the need for experiences to be authentic, recurrent, valued, varied, contextualised, personalised and started at a young age.²²

¹⁷ Codiroli McMaster, N. (2017). Women are less likely to study STEM subjects – but disadvantaged women are even less so. The London School of Economics and Political Science. <http://blogs.lse.ac.uk/politicsandpolicy/who-studies-stem/>

¹⁸Gore, J., Holmes, K., Smith, M. et al. (2015) Socioeconomic status and the career aspirations of Australian school students: Testing enduring assumptions, *Aust. Educ. Res.* 42: 155.

¹⁹ McIlveen, P. Evidence for Career Services: ESA Careers Forum 2019

²⁰ Whiston, S. C., Li, Y., Goodrich Mitts, N., & Wright, L. (2017). Effectiveness of career choice interventions: A meta-analytic replication and extension. *Journal of Vocational Behavior*, 100, 175-184

²¹ Mann, A., Rehill, J., & Kashefpakdel, E.T. (2018). Employer engagement in education: Insights from international evidence for effective practice and future research. Education Endowment Foundation, London.

²² *ibid.*

Across Australia young people have varied experiences of career education and employer engagement. Urbis research to inform the National Career Development Strategy surveyed students to identify what types of experiences they had, and their perceived value.

Visits to workplaces and work placements were viewed as highly useful, but only a minority of students undertook these. Visits to or from TAFE and university, presentations and careers days were experienced by around half of all students and also viewed as useful. Other activities and support, such as careers counselling and use of printed material were also generally viewed as helpful.²³

There is no 'one' activity that supports all students to thrive in the transition from school to work. Evidence suggests a range of activities – from provision of information and career counselling to engagement with employers and participation in work-based activities – supports young people to better understand the world of work, develop their capabilities and personal strengths, explore different industries and feel confident in their career choices.

1.2 Piloting New South Wales workplace engagement models

Cognisant of the changing nature of work and the complexities students face transitioning into the workforce, the New South Wales Department of Education conducted research into elements of workplace engagement models and the needs of industry. Following this, a pilot project was devised to test different models of workplace engagement and inform future workplace engagement guidelines. The pilot aimed to explore, implement and evaluate a range of employer and workplace engagements for students from primary school to high school.

Following an expression of interest process, 11 schools were chosen to pilot models of workplace engagement throughout 2019.

In collaboration with schools, employers and other organisations the initiative aimed to:

1. expand school students' knowledge and understanding of work preparedness, broaden and raise career aspirations, building an understanding of career pathways and increase awareness of the connection between study, work and workplace expectations.
2. improve school students' knowledge of the labour market,
3. help students to develop the skills that workplaces need, such as creative problem-solving, teamwork and an awareness of emerging work opportunities,
4. ensure school students understand the demands required to make a successful school to work transition,
5. provide school students with relevant experiences of work (including part-time work) and practical insights into recruitment procedures and how workplaces function, and
6. enrich school students' education by linking curriculum to real world experiences.

Schools were supported with \$6,000 seed funding and assistance in kind from the Department of Education and were supported by a project advisor. Each school attended a stimulus day in mid-2019 to hear from a range of business and industry representatives, parental engagement and education experts and share and receive feedback on their pilot concepts.

²³ Urbis (2011). National Career Development Strategy (NCDS) Research Project. Element 2: Quantitative Research.

Schools commenced their pilots at different times – for some schools, pilot funding enhanced an existing project or idea; others commenced new projects, and in some cases tested a variety of ideas before settling on a project. Given this, many of the projects had not concluded by the time the research was conducted.

1.3 The research approach

Megan O’Connell Consulting was appointed as the research partner with a particular focus on capturing student voice about engaging with employers to learn work related skills. The research received SERAP approval in August 2019.

The aim of the research is to understand the pilot project experience, particularly from the student viewpoint. This is to fill a gap in current understanding around what will motivate young people to engage in workplace learning.

Initial research questions centred on:

- What are student needs and expectations around the world of work?
- What do students want from workplace engagement?
- How do workplace engagement pilot programs meet needs and wants?
- What additional learnings can inform future guidelines and materials?

Although the focus of the research was on student voice, the research also unveiled insights about the role of co-ordinators, and the support leveraged through the provision of pilot program funding. Where appropriate these are reflected in the findings presented.

The research was undertaken over a series of months and involved:

- Collection of pre-pilot and post-pilot student surveys when available
- Phone discussions with 10 of the 11 pilot co-ordinators
- Quantitative surveys sent to pilot schools for completion by Year 7 students and pilot students, and
- Case study discussions with pilot students in five schools. Only five schools were visited due to time limitations. These were selected in conjunction with the Department in order to draw out a diversity of models, across a variety of locations and student cohorts.

The research includes a survey of students in Year 7, to gain a baseline understanding of what students entering high school perceive as their career needs, who they turn to for advice and what types of experiences they have undertaken.

These questions were also asked of the Year 9 and 10 pilot students as well as supplementary questions about the pilot experience. This data provides new insights into student experiences in selected New South Wales schools. (See Appendix One for Surveys).

Schools were keen to participate in the research, although some schools found it logistically difficult to organise for students to complete the surveys. As a result, the quantitative data, whilst useful, is not representative of all the pilot schools nor can it be extrapolated for New South Wales.

The research findings presented below draw on the quantitative data provided, and the qualitative data gained through interviews with co-ordinators and students in case study schools. Case studies are at Appendix Two.

2. How do pilot school students approach a future of work?

2.1 How do students feel about the future?

Students involved in this research often demonstrated a positive perspective on their future, albeit in the context of changing and potentially challenging hurdles ahead. While many look forward to greater independence and participation in the ‘real world’, this is counterbalanced by apprehension regarding the transition from a relatively protective, familiar, structured environment to one which is more unpredictable and requires greater self-reliance and responsibility. Most students appear to look forward to the prospect of working in the future but are cognisant of the challenges that the change from school to work, from adolescence to adulthood, will bring.

“The future is kind of like there, but it seems distant at the same time. So, it’s kind of like something I’m looking forward to but at the same time it’s kind of daunting.” (Female, Year 10)

Many students are excited about the concept of getting a job or career, a reaction that is common across both Pilot and Year 7 students participating in the survey. Beyond associations with independence and the appeal of earning an income, this excitement is linked to a fair degree of uncertainty.

The changing nature of work heightens young people’s uncertainty. This most frequently comes to light when students raise the prospect of evolving technologies, automation and different ways of doing business that may come into fruition in the future. Anticipating what jobs will exist and what skills will be needed adds another level of unpredictability that can be both stimulating and bewildering. For some students, this prompts a belief that they will need to possess flexibility around their pathway and develop transferable skills that can apply across a range of career and job options. These views align well with existing research on future work directions.

“I have no idea. It’s just so far away. Like so much can change in a couple of years, especially at this speed of everything, all technologies and stuff, it’s whack! Like nothing is set in stone.” (Female, Year 10)

Despite noting the dynamic nature of careers, most students – both Year 7 and Year 9 and 10 Pilot students – indicate that they know what they want to do. This is much higher than in the earlier Urbis research, perhaps due to the pilot students’ experiences in the program and potentially a stronger focus on career education in pilot schools.

Students recognised their ambitions might change as they are exposed to different things and experience unanticipated life events. Indeed, several pointed out how they had changed their thinking around their career aspirations during school.

8 out of 10 Pilot students say they know what they want to do as a career compared with around two-thirds of Year 7 students

Figure 2: Words that come to mind when think about getting a job or career in the future



What one word best sums up how you feel about getting a job or career in the future?

How primed do students feel for work?

Work is understandably a more tangible concept for Pilot students – who are in Years 9 and 10 – as opposed to Year 7 students. Around one third of Year 7 students indicate they are not really thinking about jobs or careers at this stage of their life. Again, this is significantly different to the research whereby only a quarter of year 7 students indicated they were thinking about careers. Students are consistently less likely to express certainty and comfort around different steps to plan and prepare for work. However, both Year 7 and Pilot cohorts tend to recognise the importance of a career and largely feel confident around their likelihood of getting a job in the future.

Most of the Pilot students who completed the survey express a degree of preparedness to move into work and are confident around their knowledge of the kinds of jobs out there and what employers are looking for. What may be more lacking is their perceived ability to get there, that is in terms of the pathways and options available and the means to obtain and enter the type of job or career they would like. Certainly, there is a need and appetite for more support, with widespread recognition among students that they could do with more help to get to where they want to be, including through practical experiences and engagement. The nature of this need is explored in further detail in the following section.

Around 8 in 10 Pilot students feel comfortable about the idea of moving into the workplace

2.2 What do students say about the kind of help that they need?

Despite a degree of preparedness already, students identify a clear need for more support to be better equipped for the world of work. Notably, identification of a high level of need is remarkably consistent between the Year 7 and Pilot student groups participating in the survey.

Across all year groups surveyed, more than 7 out of 10 students say they need a lot of help or some help to prepare for the world of work

One hypothesis is that this anticipated need arises from differing perspectives: Year 7 students are less likely to have engaged and been exposed to the world of work and so anticipate this is something that will need to be addressed in the future. Pilot students, on the other hand, are more likely to be conscious of and exposed to careers and the nuances of work, a situation that may heighten a sense of need as the reality of work becomes more material and relevant to them. Regardless of motivation, the findings highlight strong demand for help to engage with the world of work.

What kind of help do students say they need?

The breadth of support needed is evident when examining the types of areas students say they need help with. On average, Pilot students indicate they need some or a lot of help with eight different facets to help prepare them for the world of work, while Year 7 students average seven.

Typically, between four and seven students out of ten indicate that they need a lot of help or some help with different aspects of careers and workplace engagement; relatively few say that they need no help at all with these things. Overall the findings here indicate that there is not one specific area or cluster of support needs that students have. Students require a multifaceted, holistic and – consistent with the research – individualised approach to help them prepare for the world of work.

1 in 4 Pilot students say that they need a lot of help to get more practical experiences of work

Figure 3: Top five areas of need identified by students (mean score)

	Year 7 Students	Pilot Students
1 st	Developing skills for applying for jobs	Developing skills for applying for jobs
2 nd	Knowing about places you can get information about jobs and careers	Getting practical experiences of work
3 rd	Getting practical tips to help prepare me for the workplace	Getting practical tips to help prepare me for the workplace
4 th	Finding out about different study or training options after school	Understanding different ways to look for work
5 th	Finding out the best choice of subjects and courses to take	Knowing about places you can get information about jobs and careers

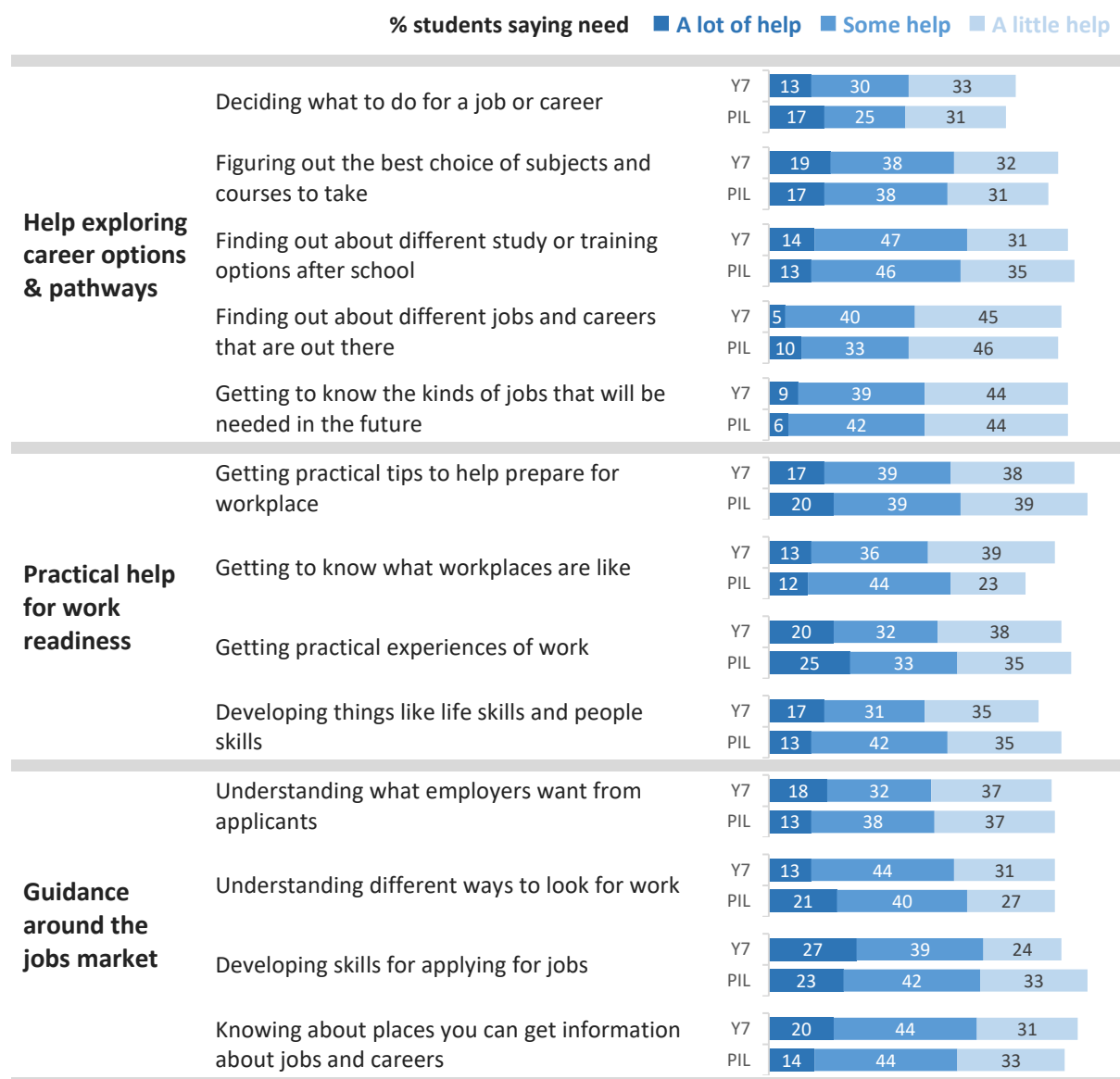
There is also close alignment in the extent and nature of needs expressed by Year 7 and Pilot students in the survey. Nonetheless, some data points towards Pilot students placing greater emphasis than Year 7 on acquiring real-life, practical experiences and skills which can help prepare them to enter and integrate within workplaces. This probably aligns to their stage at school, and the closer proximity of transition into the workforce, whether that be long-term career or part-time job. It was evident hearing from students in the pilot how they were often keen to engage in more ‘real

life’ experiences of work and workplaces, cognisant of learning and building skills in situ, as opposed to classroom-based ‘theory’.

“If you’re out there and you’re actually doing the work, you understand it, you know what you are doing, you have a boss of employer with you. So as soon as there is a problem – they’ve already been doing it for who knows how many years – they can help you out in a few seconds.” (Male, Year 9)

While these practical aspects are also strongly favoured by Year 7 students as something that they would like help with, such support is probably not as pressing for them at this stage of school. Perhaps more salient (and reflected to a small degree in the data), is the need for support around subject and course selection and related pathways and options linked to careers.

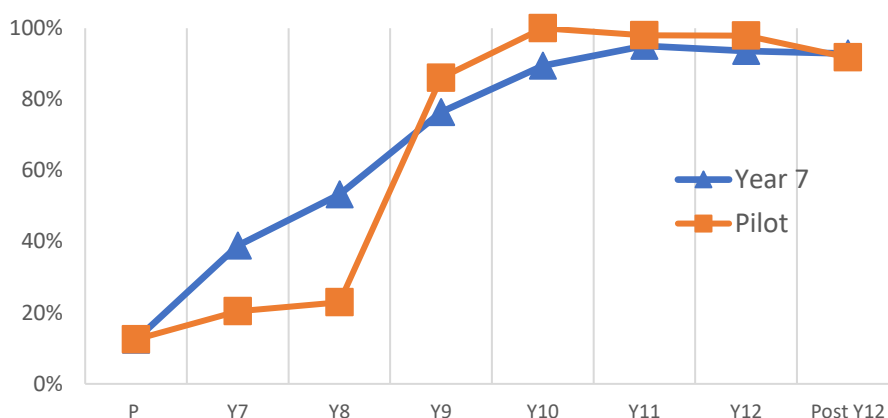
Figure 4: How much help students indicated they need for different areas



When do students need help?

As outlined above, the perceived need for help to prepare for the world of work is widespread and multifaceted for both Year 7 and Pilot students. There is a clear pattern of perceived need increasing as students progress through school stages. In particular, a significant ‘jump’ in need as students enter Year 9, from where it remains high.

Figure 5: When students say they need help



The findings illustrate that Year 9 is a critical juncture for careers and workplace exploration and engagement. It is a time when students appear to be increasing focus towards life after school and placing greater weight on the prospect of work and careers; some may even be moving into part-time or casual employment, a situation evident for some of the pilot program students in Year 9.

Other research suggests that it is also around this period that students’ occupational certainty dips – from quite solid (though narrowly defined and perhaps unrealistic) aspirations about what they want to do when they grow up formed early in childhood and during primary school to a more tentative appraisal or reappraisal or career pathways and prospects²⁴. This is where experiences at school can play a role in expanding knowledge and supporting exploration of different career options and alternative pathways.

“With my work experience I was at a vet clinic, and I did want to become a vet but working there made me realise that I didn’t want to do it anymore.” (Female, Year 10)

Yet it seems that Year 9 students do not get as many opportunities to engage with careers and the world of work as they would perhaps like, and certainly have less exposure than their counterparts in Year 10. This is borne out in data which compares the needs and experiences of Year 9 students who participated in the pilot survey with their peers in Year 10. While caution should be applied in extrapolating this data to the school population as a whole, Pilot students in Year 9 were more likely to express a need for support yet were less likely to receive it, at least at this point in their school

²⁴ Gore, J., Holmes, K., Smith, M., Southgate, E., & Albright, J. (2015). Socioeconomic status and the career aspirations of Australian school students: Testing enduring assumptions. *Australian Educational Researcher*, 42, 155-177.

journey. They also report less confidence and preparedness for the workplace, likely corresponding to their lower engagement and exposure to work-related experiences and settings to date.

While this apparent gap for Year 9 students may become addressed as they progress through school and transition into Year 10 and beyond, there appears an appetite for greater help to support workplace engagement than is currently provided at this stage. Further, while Year 9 is the point at which a need for help to prepare for the world of work visibly escalates, this does not preclude value in support taking place before then.

91% of Year 9 Pilot students believe that what they do now is vital for their work prospects

Around four in ten current Year 7 students perceive a need for help to begin to address careers issues in Year 7. In this light, perhaps the implementation of structured, age-based approaches to careers development and workplace engagement requires reconsideration to instead provide experiences which more adequately respond to individual students' need at a time that is optimum for them.

Where are students likely to turn for help?

Students are likely to turn to a broad range of sources to seek information, advice or support which can help them prepare for the world of work. On average, Pilot students participating in the survey flag nine different sources they would definitely or probably be likely to turn for help. This is lower among Year 7 students, an average of seven different sources reflecting a consistent pattern in which they are less likely to turn to different support avenues than Pilot students in Years 9 and 10. Notably, there is a gap in the proportion of Year 7 students saying they are likely to access school

- Top avenues for support:**
- 1) Ask a parent or carer**
 - 2) Ask another family member**
 - 3) Ask someone in the workplace**
 - 4) Go to a school careers advisor**
 - 5) Speak to someone at TAFE or college**

personnel for help (63%) compared with Pilot students (76%), which could reflect a lack of awareness at this stage of the support that is available through school and a lack of exposure to careers education and personnel. Similarly, Pilot students are more likely to say they would seek guidance from someone already connected to the world of work.

It is worth noting how students are more likely to seek help and advice directly from individuals they know as opposed to resources and materials that may be provided online or in hard copy. This likely reflects a desire for individualised, experiential advice over or on top of more generic, documentary information. There was also a degree of scepticism expressed around the value and credibility of support provided online, especially via social media.

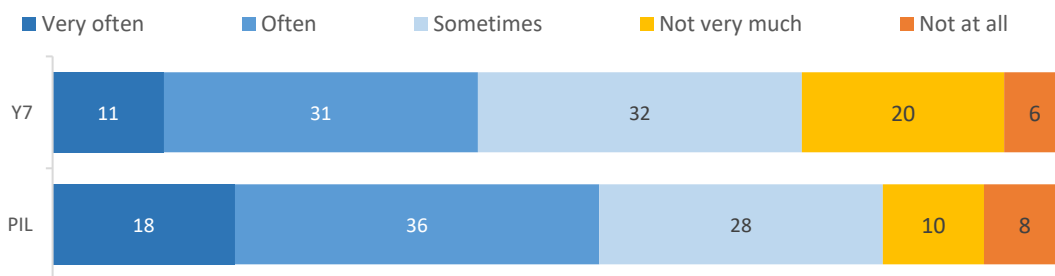
Significantly, when it comes to individualised support for students, parents or carers act as a key 'go to' resource. Overall, such relational sources of help – including parents, other family members and friends – are more likely to be accessed than school support. Ninety-six percent of Pilot students and 92% of Year 7 indicate they would be definitely or probably likely to turn to such support avenues. Research shows how influential such figures can be, with parental aspirations and engagement in conversations with their child one of the biggest factors influencing the development of a student's sense of the world of work²⁵.

²⁵ Bedson, L. & Perkins, D. (2006). A positive influence: equipping parents to supporting young people's career transitions. Brotherhood of St Laurence, Fitzroy VIC

“I’ve got second thoughts at the moment. My Dad had a chat with me about something that I wanted to do, and it got in my head around certain things.” (Male, Year 9)

These findings clearly have implications when it comes to schools and families working together and on efforts schools make to engage and equip parents in careers discussions and workplace engagement activities. Most students say that their parents have talked to them about jobs or careers or provided advice related to the world of work very often, often or sometimes. This tends to increase as students progress through the years and get closer to working age. However, only around half are said to have done this often or very often, and around two in ten students indicate that they rarely or have never had such conversations. This is an important gap to flag, given the bearing parents can have on career choice and pathways from an early age.

Figure 6: Extent students discuss world of work with their parents / carer



2.3 How well are schools considered to be addressing student need?

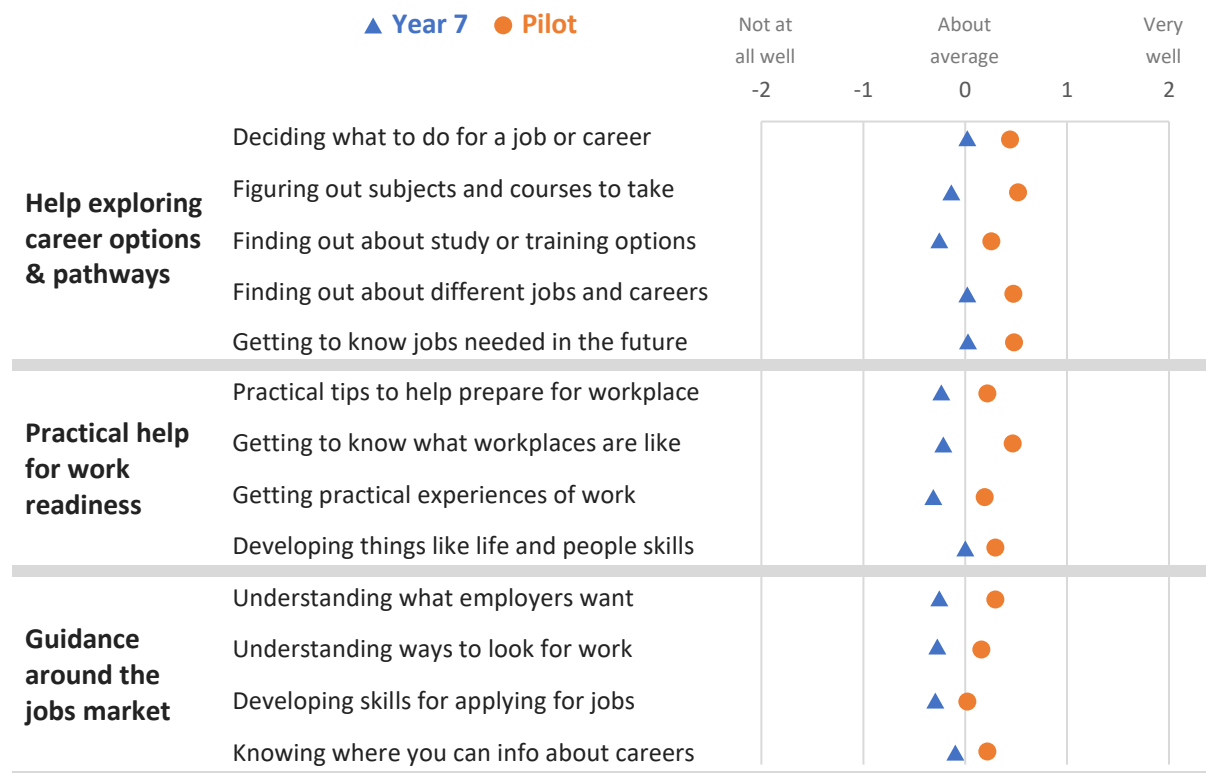
Students indicate that their school is largely supportive in helping them to prepare for the world of work. This perspective appears to strengthen as students engage in such concepts and activities as they progress through school, reflected in survey data showing that Pilot students are more likely than Year 7 to positively regard school provision of information, advice, support and opportunities related to the world of work.

Figure 7: Rating of school support (% agree or strongly agree)

	Year 7	Pilot Students
My school provides a lot of information, advice and support	64%	76%
My school provides information, advice or support that is relevant to me	53%	69%
I know where or who I can go to in school for information, advice or support	61%	92%
My school provides lots of opportunities to find out what world of work is like	63%	74%
My school helps me consider my options for working in the future	60%	72%

Such findings recognise there is a solid foundation in place supporting students to prepare and enter the workplace. There are also opportunities for schools to improve and better target particular student needs. This is highlighted when asking students how well their experiences at school – thus far – have helped to address different features supporting their preparation for and engagement with the world of work. Overall, students consider their experiences at school to have been around average in terms of helping them with these things. Consistent with patterns elsewhere – and likely to be commensurate to exposure and experience – Pilot students are more likely than Year 7 to consider school to have helped to prepare them for the world of work.

Figure 8: How well experiences at school have helped with aspects of the world of work

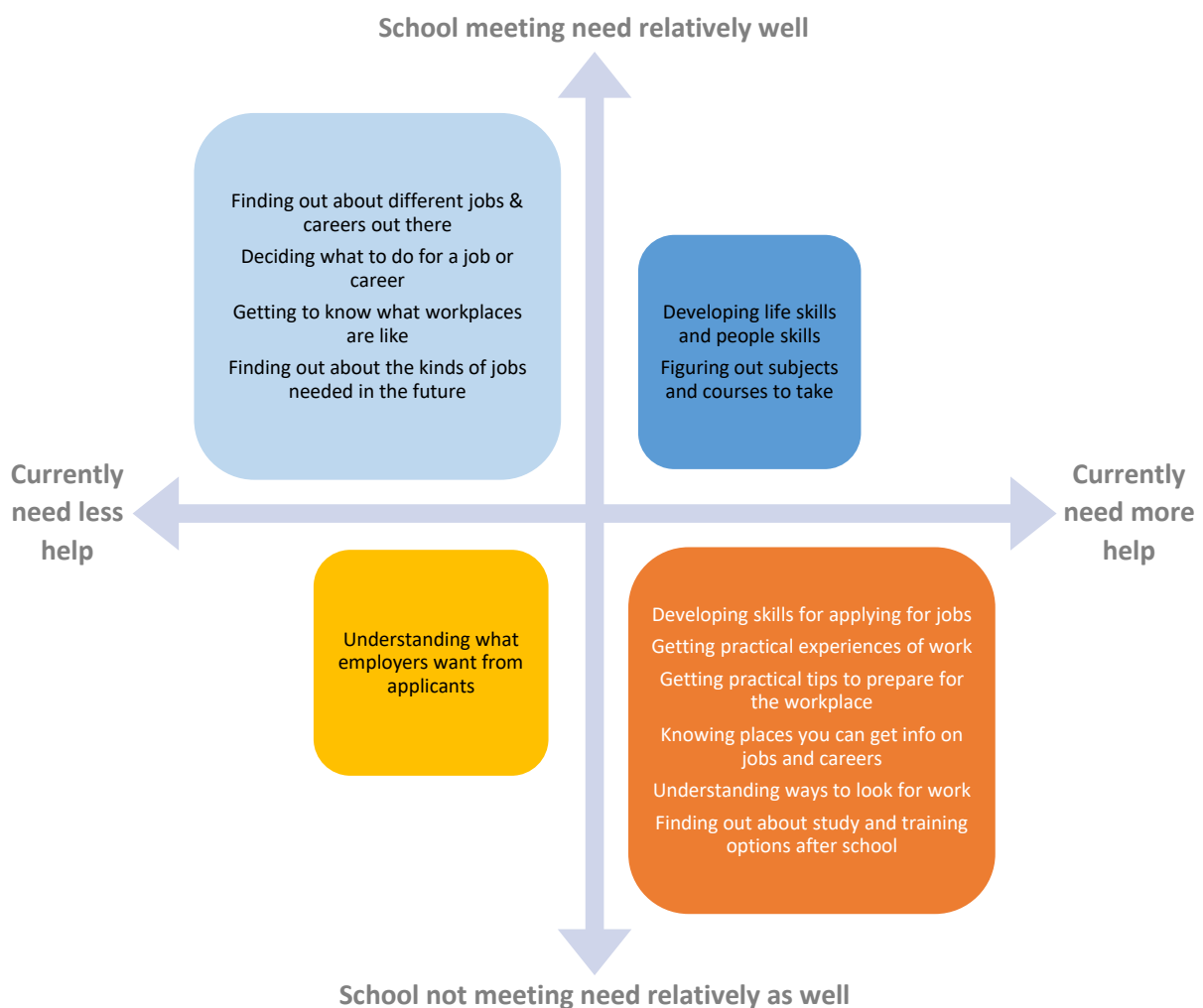


Exploring the perspectives of Pilot students in more depth (given they are better placed by way of exposure to reflect on school experiences to date), it is clear that there is a strong relationship between what they say they need and how well they believe their school is meeting this need. That is, those areas that students believe they need relatively more help with typically correspond to the areas that are not considered to have been as well met by school. And vice versa. Essentially, this convergence points towards there being areas of unmet need, or at least areas which are waiting to be addressed more strongly by students at the point in time of the research.

The figure below maps this relationship drawing on data from the Pilot students survey and looking at relative differences according to mean scores. It shows that there are areas that students consider their school to be doing relatively well and for which they thus express relatively lower need for more help and support (top left quadrant). These tend to coalesce around help to explore career options and decisions, and intelligence around the labour market and pathways. They are – to some degree – theoretical and research-based. One exception is in support provided so that students can get to know what workplaces are like, something that could relate to their pilot program experience which often entailed workplace exposure.

By contrast, the area of greatest relative need which are not currently being as well met by schools (bottom right quadrant) are skewed towards the provision of hands-on, practical and relatable experiences of work, as well as the next steps of pursuing employment and / or further education. This validates and advocates for stronger provision of support from schools to engage with workplaces and the ‘real-life’ world of work.

Figure 9: Alignment of student need with perception of school meeting this need



2.4 What does workplace engagement in the pilot schools currently look like?

The schools involved in the pilot program can appear reasonably active in terms of careers development and workplace engagement, and it was evident in some schools how they were involved and implementing several different new programs and trials. However, this is not necessarily reflected in the student voice, with a strong demand for more exposure and experiences related to the world of work beyond what is currently provided.

Feedback from students who completed the survey shows that most do have some exposure to the world of work through a range of different activities. On average, Pilot students indicated experiencing five of these activities in the last year, while Year 7 received an average of three. Most common was the provision of talks or presentations in school from employers and people related to the world of work. Involvement in school-based activities to link up with business and the world of work appear to increase for Pilot students compared with Year 7, though less than half of these students point to such experiences in the past year. Direct engagement with and exposure to workplaces is also limited, with workplace visits and tours being the most common forum for such experiences, followed by work experience. It is likely that these figures are higher than that of year 10 students in other schools given the pilot students involvement in workplace engagement projects and the declining rates of Year 10 work experience participation in NSW schools generally.

Figure 10: Aspects of the world of work experienced through school in the past 12 months

	% experienced this in the past 12 months	Year 7	Pilot Students
Engagement with employers	Talks or presentations in school from employers	39%	63%
	Careers events or expos with employers present	22%	57%
	Mentoring or coaching from an employer	14%	28%
Workplace and job experiences	Work experience placements	16%	37%
	Work placements via an apprentice or traineeship	7%	13%
	Job shadowing	24%	26%
	Volunteering in the community	17%	13%
	Workplace visits and tours	19%	43%
School-based activities	Lessons or projects in class linked with business	25%	39%
	Lessons or projects in class linked to a job or career	27%	35%
	Activities outside of class linked with business	21%	54%
	Sessions about preparing for the world of work	21%	43%
	Practice job applications, mock interviews etc.	13%	33%
Accessing resources	Online activities related to the world of work	29%	33%
	Looked at other media related to work	25%	41%

More than half

Between a quarter and a half

Less than a quarter

The survey data also indicates that Pilot students who had experienced these things tended to find direct workplace exposure and on-the-job experiences more useful compared to school-based activities. In this light, some students considered a role for traditional work experience placements and reported how these had helped them make decisions around pathways to pursue (or not) and

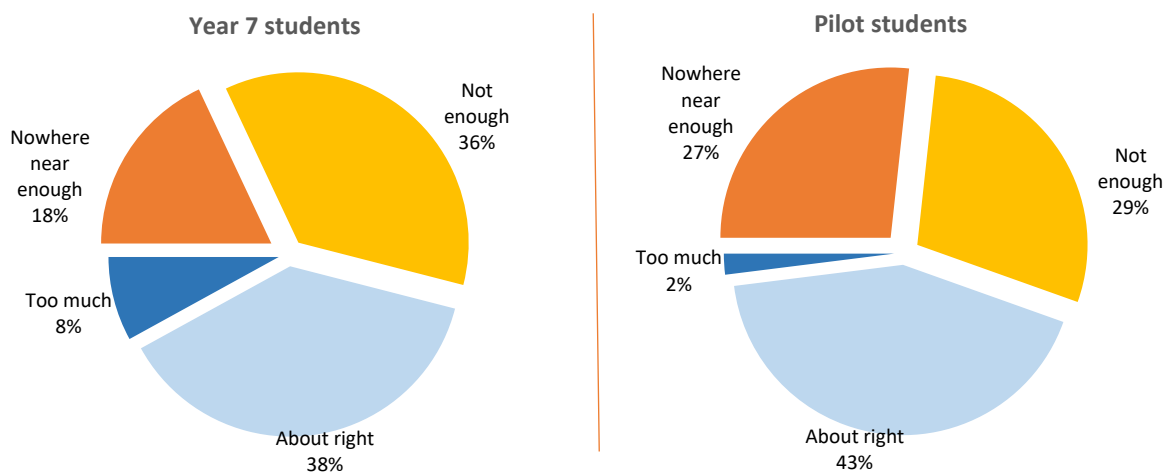
feel more comfortable and confident in a work situation. However, there were also limitations associated with work experience, particularly when compared to the nature of student engagement with workplaces and work readiness activities in the pilot projects. These issues tended to stem from the time limited, in-and-out nature of work experience which can end up being a rather directed, passive experience in which students have little investment.

“With my work experience I went out a couple of times to the worksites and watched them do their stuff, but they didn’t really give me much to do. I kind of just watched and stood around and my legs hurt a lot and I was hungry!” (Female, Year 10)

There is clearly a value placed on workplace engagement by students and a perceived onus on schools to facilitate activities in this area, ideally beyond traditional work experience placements. Current arrangements do not, for many students, appear sufficient. Almost half of Pilot Students in Years 9 and 10 who completed the survey indicate they have only had a little or no contact with the world of work, a figure which predictably rises among those in Year 7, to two-thirds of students. Critically, many think this level of workplace engagement is not or nowhere near enough.

More than 9 in 10 Pilot students believe that workplace engagement at school will make a big difference for them later on in life

Figure 11: Whether think current amount of contact with world of work is enough



These perspectives highlight a need for workplace engagement opportunities beyond what is traditionally or currently provided. They reflect both a desire and a need among students for more than just work experience, validating efforts to try new ideas and create different approaches, such as those attempted through the pilot program.

3. How have the pilot projects sought to prepare students for the world of work?

Eleven schools participated in the Models of Workplace Engagement Pilot funded by the NSW Department of Education. Each school focused on developing and implementing individual projects to engage a cohort of students in Year 9 and / or Year 10 in workplace engagement activities. A brief overview of the different projects undertaken at each school is listed below²⁶:

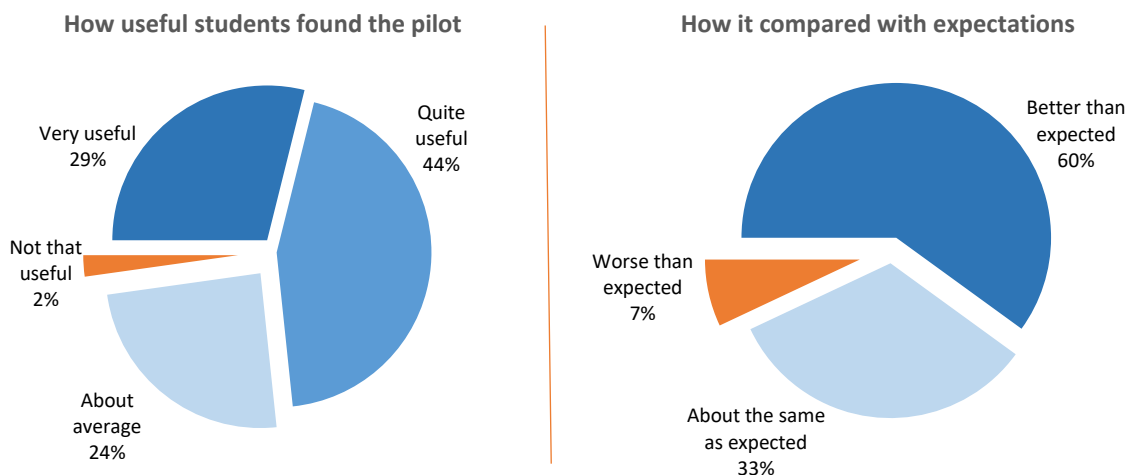
Anson Street School	The school formed project ASTRO – A Step Towards the Right Occupation, with the aim to provide a work readiness program and form individual mentorships based on career interests and needs.
Chifley College Dunheved Campus	The school partnered with Penrith City Council to provide employment engagement opportunities for a diverse group of students, including work readiness workshops, industry visits, interviews and work experience.
Elizabeth Macarthur High School	A team of agriculture students have been working on the development of a school garden and food bowl, undertaking visits of local gardens and horticulture businesses and engaging an external expert in permaculture.
Hawkesbury High School	Students visited Richmond TAFE and undertook a campus tour, hearing from staff working in Horticulture, Animal House, Equine, and Farriery. This was followed by participation in workshops at Agvision and Taronga Zoo.
Hunter River High School	Students have developed ideas for the implementation and operation of a school-based coffee cart business, undertaking VIP visits of local hospitality businesses and participating in a barista training course.
Leeton High School	Students conducted interviews with staff and undertook filming at a large local employer, Sunrice, to develop and produce a video resource outlining career options and pathways within the organisation.
Lindfield Learning Village	Students have been working on options to design and develop a quiet library and study space or spaces within their new school campus, visiting local library facilities and engaging with the local council.
Murrumbidgee Regional High School	Students are designing pieces for the annual citrus sculpture display in Griffith, undertaking a workplace engagement excursion which included guidance from an engineer behind many of the sculptures.
Orange High School	Students completed the TAFE YES Program, after which they participated in a progressive sequence of activities starting with a subject selection night, then a jobs expo, a work readiness training day and work experience.
Ryde Secondary College	Students participated in workplace visits to nine employers during an industry week, producing a video presentation from the experience. This was followed by an information and training day at Macquarie University.
Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts	A group of disengaged students participated in the TAFE YES program and the Fit for Life program in collaboration with Wollongong PCYC, developing work ready skills in bricklaying and work experience opportunities.

²⁶ For brevity, information presented here offers a snapshot based on content and feedback provided by schools and is not necessarily exhaustive of all activities or outcomes that have occurred to date

3.1 How have the pilot projects fared overall?

Student feedback on the pilot projects to date is encouraging and reflects well on their experience and possible outcomes emerging. Both survey results and qualitative discussions highlight that many students were engaged and enthusiastic about their involvement and believed that they had got something out of taking part. This was also reflected back by school staff, who had observed how most of the students had enjoyed being involved and had made positive developments as a result.

Figure 12: Students' overall rating of the pilot experience



For some students, the pilot project proved a highlight of school participation and motivated their ongoing engagement. In part this appeared to be a result of the project standing out as different from regular classes and lessons, with students engaging with different peers outside of their usual friendship groups and contributing to something positive and tangible within the school community. Student enthusiasm was also stoked as a result of the projects tending to align with particular areas of interest, skills or intended career pathways.

“It’s a good experience and you’re learning skills that you need for later life in your work.” (Female, Year 10)

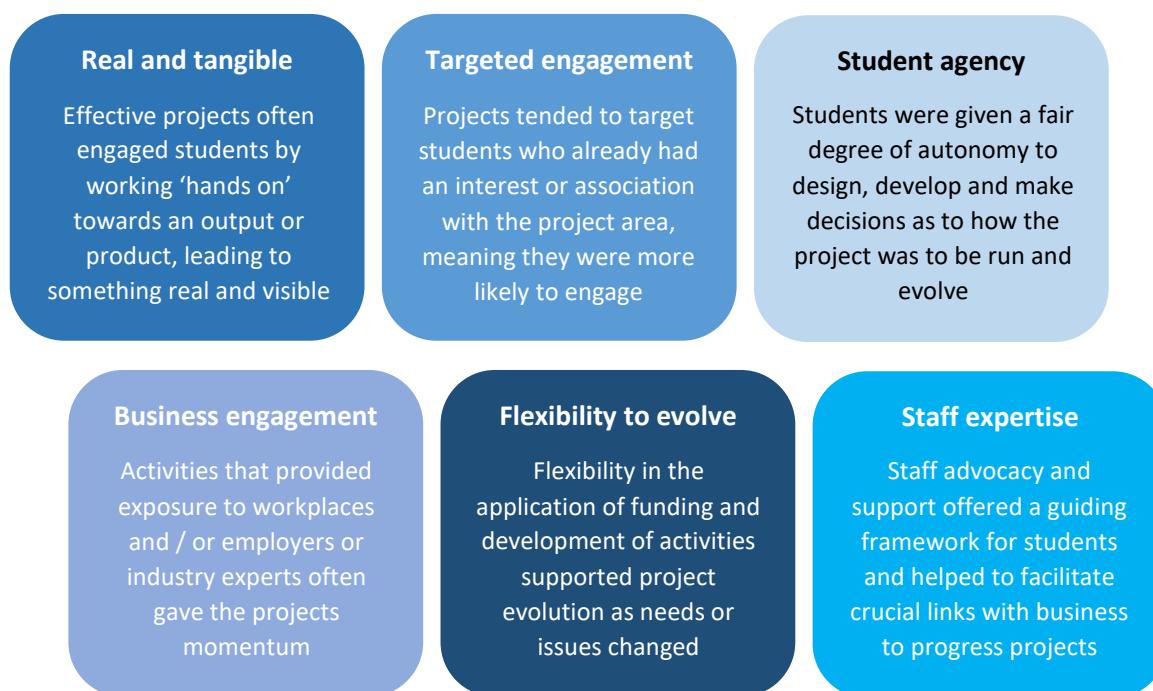
“Sometimes when I know we have Food Bowl in the day I’m excited to come to school and learn more stuff.” (Female, Year 9)

“Definitely take part, because it is a worthwhile experience that you would not be able to gain outside of school.” (Female, Year 10)

Reflecting on their experience, many students were able to advocate for the project, indicating they would recommend participation in something like this to others. In spite of some pressure or challenges along the way – particularly at the start – there was satisfaction in having overcome any reservations or difficulties they had to contribute towards something that they believed was valuable.

Three-quarters of students agreed that the project was enjoyable and a worthwhile

Figure 13: What helped the pilot projects cut through with students?



"We're trying to transform the school to make it have something more healthy for us and to make the school look better." (Female, Year 9)

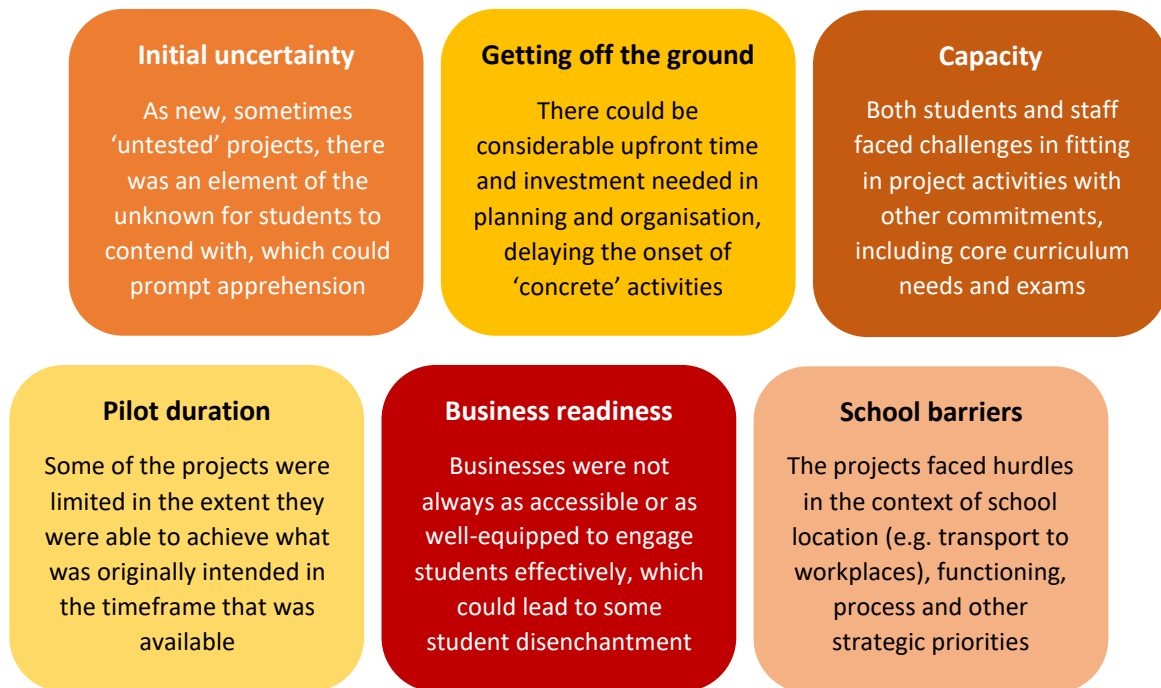
"It's about engaging the students in a way that they have an interest. So we're not doing a blanket approach across Year 10 for example; we've actually done an EOI, we've looked at the students who have selected food and beverage and hospitality pathways in Year 11 and Year 12, and we've aligned those students to industries that they are potentially going to be interested in." (School Coordinator)

"We had a teacher that actually told us what to do and then just left us to it and let us do it at our own pace." (Male, Year 9)

"I enjoyed seeing behind the scenes of business and talking with owners and managers about how they operate their business." (Female, Year 9)

"I think it changed over time, because at the beginning I was like 'oh yeah we'll design a massive library space and it would be a whole room in the school.' And then we kind of learnt what we actually had to work with." (Female, Year 10)

Figure 14: What issues and challenges emerged along the way?



"My least favourite part was perhaps at the start of the project where I felt really, really vulnerable and I didn't really know what I was doing. Because I like to be in control!" (Female, Year 10)

"It took us a while to get it off the ground, and it took us a while to get it running and now that we've got to this point, now is the time to contact businesses and so on. I guess I just wish we could've speeded it up a bit more." (Female, Year 10)

"We've had to miss a lot of lessons that could've been important for exams, especially since they are coming up." (Male, Year 10)

"Talking to people (in business) who had very different mindsets to us and a different idea of where they wanted to take the project...they weren't really treating us like we were on the same level as them." (Female, Year 10)

"It's very difficult to put somebody in a hospitality environment because of the workplace health and safety issues, so we had to find a way of being able to break one of those barriers down." (School Coordinator)

3.2 What was initial student engagement like?

By and large, students were targeted for participation in the pilot projects. This appeared to range from quite specific identification and invitation of individual students, to requests for expressions of interest from cohorts with a connection to the project area (for instance, studying or selecting pathways in a related field). In some cases, students were essentially self-selecting, in that they had originally pitched or put forward ideas that moved forward into the pilot. Crucially, the consequence of these targeted, selective approaches was that most students naturally had an interest in what the project was about and were motivated to participate and drive the project forward.

“Most of the students who are in the group now were really passionate to have a library space, like a space you can just go to and it’s quiet...he was picking something we were passionate about to then go forward in.”
(Female, Year 10)

For those students targeted to participate, there was a sense of expectation that they were obliged to take part. Though acknowledging that they could probably decline if they really did not want to be a part of the project (and it was reported that some students did), there was a general expectation that there was an onus on them to be involved. However, this did not appear to be to the detriment of their subsequent engagement in project activities.

One third of students who participated in the survey indicated that they didn’t have much choice about being involved in the pilot project

Three-quarters responding to the survey said it was clear what the pilot project was about

Findings from the survey with pilot students suggest there was a fair degree of clarity and understanding among them at the start around what the project was about and what it entailed. However, this could be inflated in retrospect, as it was apparent during case study visits that some students felt uncertainty and – with this – some insecurity about what would be involved and what would be expected of them. This appeared to be linked to some of the projects themselves being somewhat undefined and ambiguous in the initial stages, with room to evolve and bed down approaches and activities more definitively as they rolled out. It was noted how – in light of these often being new projects – there was no manual or precedent to draw on, for students and some staff alike, and they would need to be pioneers – or guinea pigs – as a result.

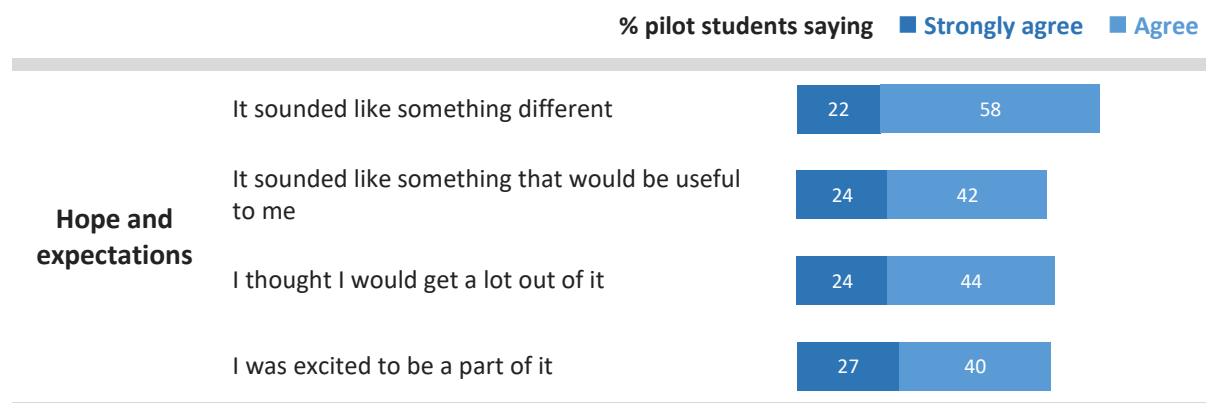
“I had no idea what it was going to be like, I had no idea what I had gotten myself into!” (Female, Year 10)

As a result, several of the projects appeared to take longer than was perhaps first anticipated in determining and planning exactly what was to happen, a situation that could prove frustrating for some students but which itself offered a learning experience.

What hopes and expectations did students have?

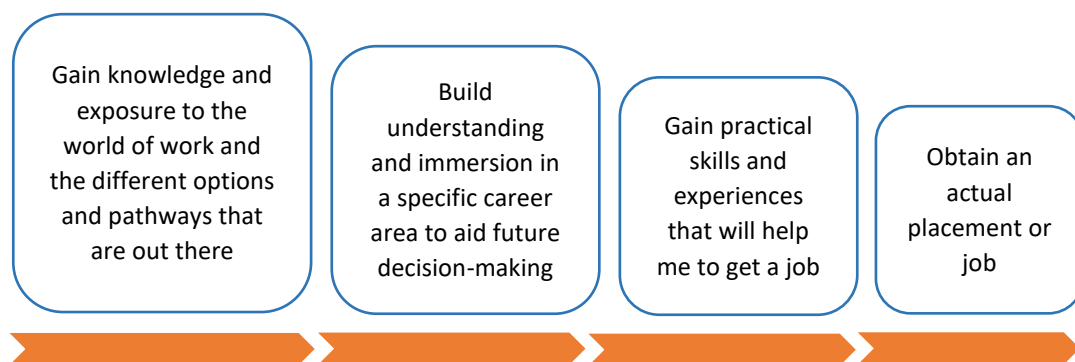
Though initially circumspect in terms of some of the specifics, the majority of students went into the pilot project with positive expectations of what it might provide and the outcomes it could lead to. There also appeared a spirited sense of anticipation in being involved in something different outside of usual school lessons and environments and – for many – in doing something that was of particular interest or linked to something they were enthusiastic about. It was notable how during discussions with students for this research, the tone and energy of the conversation often became more animated when students shared their experience of the pilot project.

Figure 15: Initial student thoughts and expectations around the pilot



There was a broad spectrum of hopes and aspirations students held regarding their participation in the pilot and what they would like to get out of it. This appeared to manifest in something of a continuum, from quite generalised and fundamental knowledge and information-building relating to work, careers and employers, to acquisition of specific skills and experiences that would lead to a job. This variation probably reflects the differing contexts and situations in which individual students came into the pilot, the amount of exposure and experience they had had to date, and the needs that they felt they had at the time.

Figure 16: What students hoped to get out of the pilot



For some students the pilot projects were perceived to develop and strengthen their understanding and exposure to the realities of work and to explore different industries, employers and workplaces that are out there. In this sense, their expectations for the pilot were largely formative in nature and – it was hoped – would provide them with greater insight to be better informed regarding future choices and decisions. They were not necessarily wedded to an industry or career path but were

keen to discover what work was like and what different options might exist. The pilot projects were, for these students, often a first step into workplace engagement and the world of work.

Other students held more definitive aspirations for the pilot project they were involved in and were keen to see some concrete outcomes as a result. In particular, it was hoped that the project would provide them with tangible skills and experiences in a specific field that would support them to attain work in this area. This might include short-term, casual or part-time work at this point in time (such as a job in hospitality) and / or that related to a future career once they leave school. Such students hoped that the pilot would help to equip them with useful skills, training and some experience they could include in their resume that would help them to get a job.

“I was hoping to learn more about the different types of workplaces, what skills employers are looking for, and the opportunities available once I have finished school and / or university” (Female, Year 10)

“I was hoping to get the necessary skills and knowledge needed in the area of interest.” (Female, Year 9)

“More understanding of what the job would be like and if I would like it or not.” (Male, Year 10)

“I was hoping that I would get some work experience that would make me more experienced to basically qualify for some jobs in the future... like I want to get into agricultural jobs.” (Male, Year 9)

While many of the students formed expectations and aspirations for the pilot projects, some appeared to approach the experience with more of a blank slate. They were simply not sure what to expect nor what they would like to get out of it. However, they still tended to perceive the pilot as something different and were open to engaging in it to see where it might lead.

“At first I didn’t really have any expectations at all. I was sort of like, ‘okay, we’ll see where this leads.’ And now I’m like, okay, I’ve picked up skills in talking, I’ve picked up skills in lighting, sound, filming and what it’s like to basically see a product from start to end.” (Female, Year 10)

The gamut of hopes and aspirations students had – or didn’t have – for the pilot projects raises the prospect of developing approaches and models that cater to these differing needs. Within the same project, different students had different aims and needs. This presents a challenge for projects in meeting all of the needs, all of the time, but also represents opportunity for such projects to develop multi-layered, scaffolded approaches that can achieve different things for different people under the same broad umbrella.

3.3 What kinds of things did students do as the projects rolled out?

Naturally, each of the pilot projects involved a unique context and set of circumstances, employing distinct activities to engage students in the world of work. Nonetheless, there were some common elements overlapping across some or all of the projects in terms of what took place. For instance:

- A focal point of many projects was the instigation of **workplace tours and visits** to one or more businesses connected to the project's objectives and / or to inform the topic of investigation.
- Many of the projects involved students **designing, developing and producing an output or outputs within school**, for instance a school garden, a coffee cart, picnic benches, a video resource.
- A common feature within projects were **dedicated sessions for additional training and skills development**, often provided with a partner or partners, such as TAFE, an employer, a youth group, or a training organisation. This included such things as workshops related to job readiness, customer service, resume writing and interview skills, as well as specific job-related training such as barista training, animal handling and bricklaying.
- Several of the projects **engaged with experts** or sought to develop mentor-type relationships with businesspeople relating to a specific career field or area of expertise, e.g. architecture, permaculture, engineering.
- Some of the projects sought to **integrate or relate work experience** to what was happening within the pilot – e.g. fostering work experience placements with a business partner, developing skills and experiences so that students were 'work experience ready'.

A key observation was that many of the projects adapted and evolved over their lifetime. Activities that were originally earmarked to take place did not necessarily happen or shifted to something that was more attuned to what students identified or what was practical and feasible to deliver in partnership with business. While this may feed into initial perceptions of uncertainty and lack of specificity around projects, there were clear upsides in that students could become active agents in shaping what subsequently took place, rather than this being prescribed to them, and projects could tap into new opportunities as they arose.

In this light, many of the students participated in a **phase of planning and development** prior to other project activities taking place. In a few schools – such as Hunter River and Lindfield – this involved students coming up with and pitching their business ideas for project development to their peers and school staff. As well as generating a sense of ownership over the project, this experience offered learning and development opportunities that were considered valuable and applicable to the world of work.

“Pitching, like summarising and saying this is what I’m doing, this is where I am, this is my goal. I definitely learned so many more things about that. And lots more skills just around summarising and presenting to people.”
(Female, Year 10)

It was perhaps in the projects that were initially less well-defined that students had greater agency over planning and development. Students became involved in research and fact-finding around the project area and, working as a team, allocating different roles and apportioning tasks between

themselves. For instance, students at Leeton worked to build familiarity and skills in audio-visual production, organising themselves into roles such as interviewer, cameraperson, sound recorder, and director, prior to going into the workplace. Other students benefitted from expert guidance to provide a bit of direction, such as those at Elizabeth Macarthur who received support from an expert in permaculture to advise on next steps and help identify roles and tasks suited to individual student interests and aptitudes.

While such a planning phase offered a range of development opportunities for students, there was a view from some students that this could be more drawn out and not as engaging as they were hoping the pilot was going to be when they first entered into it. It was therefore when the projects shifted into doing 'concrete' **activities that engaged with business and workplaces** that a stronger sense of purpose and the reality of what the project could offer became clearer. Such activities appeared to provide momentum to the projects and galvanised students as a collective. These occasions were often considered a highlight of the project by students, not only in terms of exposure and insight into the world of work, but in fostering connections between peers through shared experience. The fact that these activities often meant time out away from school in the 'real world' also proved appealing.

"Just seeing all the different sections of a business and like what they expect from us when we go on a work placement or when we go outside of school to get a job." (Female, Year 10)

"One of my favourite parts of this process was when we went to the libraries for the day. I feel like that's where it finally clicked, and we got to know people better as well – because we weren't necessarily in the same friendship circles at the time either." (Female, Year 10)

A distinction between some of the pilot programs was in the type and extent of business engagement that appeared to take place. A few focused the project in partnership with one large employer that has a range of career areas within the organisation – for instance Penrith City Council at Chifley and Sunrice at Leeton. Others exposed students to a range of businesses, such as at Ryde where they visited nine different business workplaces during their industry week, including large national and multinational organisations such as Australia Post and Hyundai.

Students were often also provided with some form of structured **training and development** as part of the pilot program. Some of these occurred in conjunction with employers and workplace visits, while others were delivered by training providers and other community organisations. These sessions tended to focus on one of two areas – i) transferable aspects of job readiness, such as interview preparation, communication and customer service skills and ii) more job-specific upskilling, such as barista training, bricklaying, veterinary care. Typically, such activities were linked to longer term project goals, such as students attaining work placements and / or working on something within school, such as a coffee cart business at Hunter River or picnic tables at Wollongong.

The linkage of the projects to **work placements** were often paramount to staff coordinators involved in developing and delivering the pilot. As noted earlier, this was also something that some students hoped would be a direct result of their participation. A few of the projects – such as at Chifley and

Orange – deliberately built this aspect into the project, with activities and training leading to work experience placements. Others viewed the projects as something that would foster preparedness for work experience and help to shape and inform student decisions around where they go to do a work experience placement. These were longer term outcomes, which were yet to be realised.

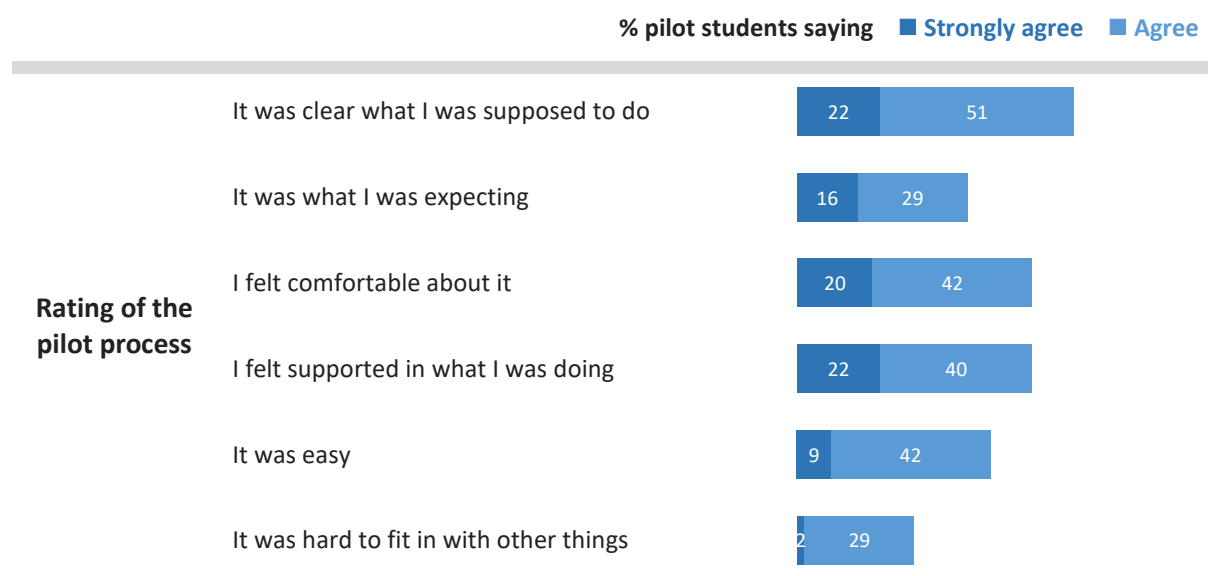
At the time of the research it was apparent that many of the pilot projects were not finished, and further activities were planned, including some workplace visits and work experiences. It was also notable how many appeared set to continue or evolve into 2020 and beyond (regardless of any pilot-related funding), with current students remaining engaged and – in some cases – transferring their knowledge and learnings to other students coming on board. This was considered to offer another development opportunity for pilot students, building a sense of advocacy and bringing thought-leadership to the project moving forward.

“Well since there were people – like us – that have done it, we could share our experience or something with people that haven’t done it, so they are not as afraid to start the program.” (Female, Year 10)

How did students rate the pilot experience as it rolled out?

Feedback from pilot students who completed the survey for this research is indicative of the iterative nature of many of the projects and the way in which their participation was not always directed or predictable. While around three-quarters of students agreed that it was clear what they were supposed to be doing, this wasn’t always what they had anticipated or expected beforehand. For some, this appeared to present a sense of discomfort or challenge – it wasn’t necessarily easy, especially in the context of other commitments and priorities. This is not necessarily a failing or problem and may indeed reflect value in the pilot experience pushing students outside of their comfort zone, exposing them to new situations, and prompting development of new skills that could be of value when transitioning into the workplace.

Figure 17: Student rating of the pilot process



What kinds of approaches did school staff take as the projects developed?

Naturally, the implementation and evolution of the pilot projects relied on the efforts and expertise of school staff. Each project was managed by a coordinator who had a careers-related role within their school. This varied from school careers teachers, some of whom were only allocated part-time hours in this position and undertook other subject teaching, to staff who had been appointed for specific industry engagement and career development roles. Anecdotally, having a dedicated staff member who could focus time and investment on workplace engagement and business liaison in the local area proved valuable to project implementation.

“The reason it’s been successful in the short timeframe is because I’ve already done a lot of legwork in the region doing other things. So, I’ve been able to attract new people but using the reputation and integrity we have already built up.” (Staff coordinator)

A few coordinators worked on the project autonomously and in relative isolation, while others liaised frequently with different staff within school. This was most apparent in projects linked more closely to a specific vocational area taught in the school – e.g. hospitality or agriculture – with teachers in these fields linking in with the project coordinator. As well as bringing in additional staff resource and intelligence to support project activities, this partnership appeared to aid linkages between the pilot project and school curriculum delivery. Outside of individual school collaborations, there was limited evidence of strong networking and sharing of practice between the pilot schools.

In each school, coordinators were the instigators of the pilot. They reported seeing information about the pilot program (e.g. through *SchoolBiz*) and believed this could be applied within their school. Notably, the seeds of many of the projects that emerged appeared to have been in train before the pilot program was introduced – that is, staff coordinators or other teachers had flagged doing something like this in a certain industry field or had been through a similar process in the past. In some ways, the pilot was applied retrospectively to an existing concept or idea to help get it off the ground. This was not universally the case, however, and the pilot application process and associated documentation did prompt consideration of new ideas and approaches. Regardless of how new the concept was, the pilot gave schools the opportunity to try new things. The freedom to be able to design a bespoke project within the broad pilot parameters - with relative autonomy and with the backing of the Department to trial something new – was a motivator and an enabler.

Following approval of the pilot within their school, staff tended to play a guiding role to the development and evolution of projects, and students became more active in the process. It was often important at this stage for staff to have a degree of adaptability in rolling out activities and spending pilot funding, so that this could be tailored according to what students wanted and what opportunities were possible with business and other organisations engaged. Staff often saw themselves as playing more of a facilitative role than a directive one, providing a framework and guidance for what takes place, but allowing students to drive things forward with a fair degree of autonomy. For some, this proved something of a revelation, fostering stronger relationships towards and with students by seeing them in a different light.

“They’re brilliant, they’ve got it all worked out. They always surprise you students – how mature they are and working out what they are doing.”
(Staff coordinator)

There was undoubtedly a substantial amount of hands-on work for staff coordinators to undertake in facilitating project activities. This included such things as identifying and establishing partnerships with businesses, organising workshops and training, liaising with school leadership and administration, facilitating workplace visits (and managing parental consent for this), transporting students to workplaces, and undertaking and supporting the research. In those projects developing a product or service output there was also an aspect of staff time and resource directly devoted to this – for instance ordering equipment or helping with construction. Some staff tapped into additional resource for support, such as training providers or local business organisations with whom they already had a relationship.

The pilot project did place challenges on staff and of particular – perhaps perennial – concern were the time resources that it required. For some, this was more than was originally anticipated and could be exacerbated by a need for them to get up to speed with elements of the project, battling this with other commitments and requirements on their time. Often staff indicated a need to do things in their own time to keep projects on track, although it was not apparent that this was done so begrudgingly. Staff were cognisant that the pilot was a learning experience for them as well as the students, and that going through this process once would make each subsequent endeavour easier. There was also a strong sense of reward in driving the project forward to deliver positive student outcomes and make a difference to individual student lives.

“I guess the main challenge is time. It’s probably been bigger than I originally thought it would be. Yeah just the original organisation. Finding out and purchasing the equipment, learning to do storyboards. Meeting with the students, getting the concept together, that sort of thing.” (Staff coordinator)

“I’ve been really happy to be part of the program. To meet such amazing people through it, and to see some of the kids find happiness. It’s been an awe-inspiring experience to be part of it.” (Staff coordinator)

Staff were also able to learn and reflect through the pilot experience, at times challenging their own ideas or preconceived assumptions about the world of work, or about what young people or industry need and expect from schools. The opportunity to connect first-hand with workplaces, industry experts or education providers themselves, often off school site rather than as invited guests to the school, was beneficial immersion.

*“It was great exposure for myself! I didn’t know about these workplaces.”
(Staff Coordinator)*

*“I would definitely do this again, focus on employers in this community.
Maybe we are pushing uni’s too much.” (Staff coordinator)*

Overall, staff coordinators expressed support and backing from school leadership for the pilot, though it appeared that the nature of this varied across the projects. In many cases, leadership were considered relatively hands off, content to provide broad endorsement for the project and leaving it to the coordinator to organise and manage. This was considered valuable for coordinators to be able to iterate and evolve projects without being overly micromanaged or necessitating rigid process and administrative burden. It was felt that some leadership were holding a watching brief, cognisant that this was something new and waiting to see outcomes before making a longer-term commitment to it. In this sense, the pilot helped to facilitate such a ‘trial’ or ‘experiment’, providing insight and evidence for longer-term, school-wide strategies and activities that may not have been realised otherwise.

“I had licence to try things with the backing of the Department. The school and other teachers couldn’t say no or push back because it was the Department asking.” (Staff coordinator)

3.4 What outcomes have emerged to date?

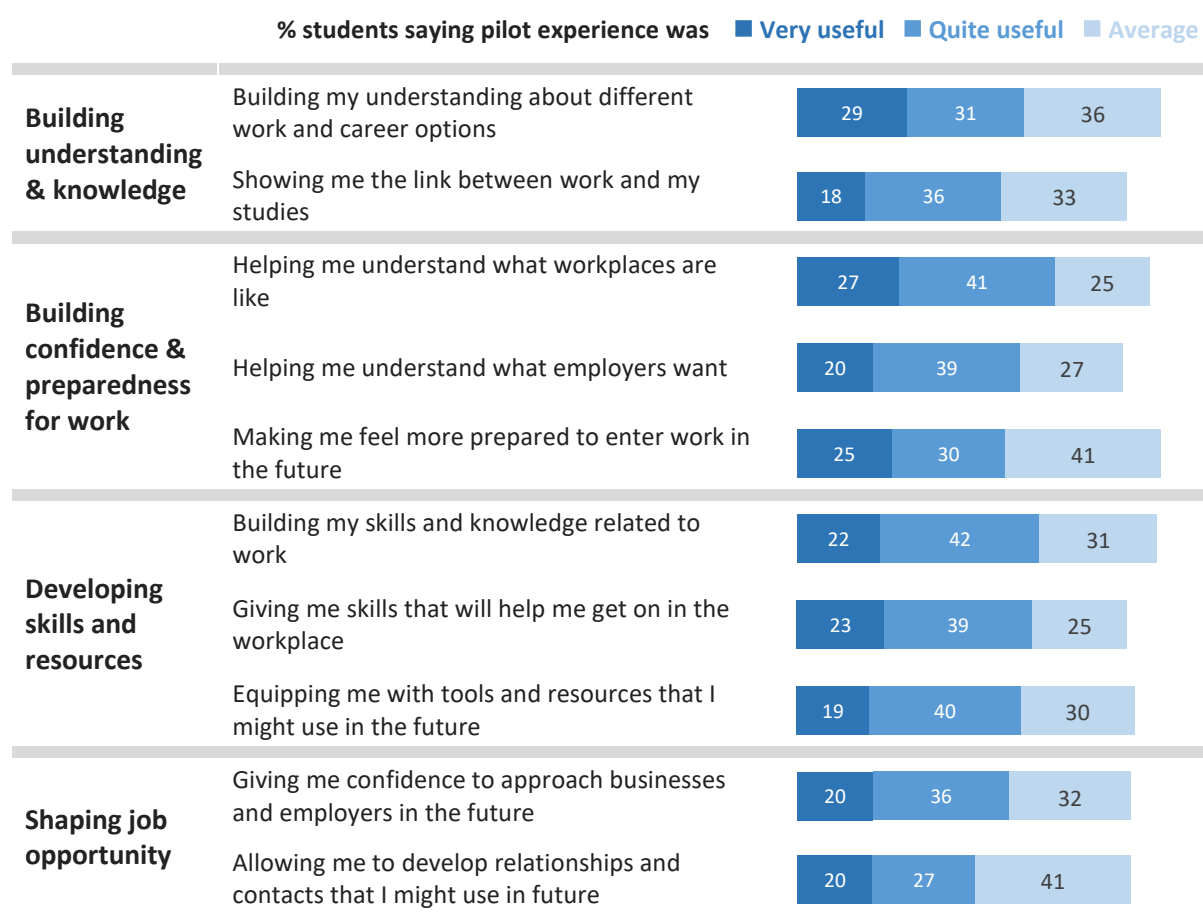
In exploring outcomes, there are some critical considerations to factor in. Firstly, many of the projects were incomplete at the time of the research. Secondly, the pilot projects do not function in isolation from other in-school and out-of-school processes and activities related to workplace engagement. And thirdly, it is too early for schools to measure longer term, objective and sustained outcomes for students, such as placement in a job or further education course.

Rather, the research highlights what could be considered emerging outcomes, based on students' own perceptions of what they had learned and how these learnings had been applied thus far. In this respect, there is much illustrating the worth and value of pilot participation for students.

Outcomes for students

Indicative of the value of the pilot, a large majority of students who completed the survey indicated that their experience was very useful, useful or average when it came to addressing their understanding and knowledge around the world of work, their sense of confidence and preparedness to enter workplaces, building skills and qualities that can be transferred into the workplace, and fostering future job opportunities. Very few indicated the projects were not useful in addressing these aspects.

Figure 18: Perceived usefulness of pilot participation on aspects of work and careers



Exploring some of these concepts further, it was apparent from discussions with students how they believed they had gained insight and developed new aptitudes as a result of participating in the pilot program. Individual perceptions of what they had got out of participation were diverse, but several persistent themes emerged across different projects. These are outlined below.

Figure 19: Key student outcomes observed to date

Development of transferable, 'soft' skills

This appeared to be quite a common reported outcome from participation, with students pointing to the development of things such as communication skills, confidence, collaboration, time-management and self-responsibility. It was noted how such skills were valuable within a work context and could be transferred across different jobs and careers.

Learning business functioning through simulation

Within several projects, the agency that students had over project planning and development engendered learning and exposure to various aspects of business functioning. This included team working and relationship management, determining role allocation and division, undertaking research, business proposals, planning and design, engaging in decision-making processes, working to deadlines, and ongoing project management and organisation.

Understanding and insight into workplace environments and culture

Exposure to workplaces, employers and staff was often a memorable aspect of the pilot experience for students. This prompted a plethora of insights from students involved, including a better understanding of how different parts of a business function and fit together, what happens behind the scenes, how workers came into their roles, the types of activities involved in different jobs and careers, and how businesses interact with customers. Exposure also granted revelation around workplace culture and environment that people already exposed to work may take for granted.

Attainment of career and job-specific knowledge and skills

The focus of many of the projects on a specific subject or industry area meant that students developed specific knowledge and practical skills related to that area. There was some belief that this provided learning in context that would not necessarily have emerged in classroom lessons, and that these skills further equipped students to follow a pathway in this field.

Tangible experiences to support job readiness and employment prospects

The provision of training workshops and workplace experiences provided something tangible that can support students to seek and attain employment. For instance, real vocational qualifications and experiences with businesses that can be used as evidence of experience in job applications.

Self-esteem and sense of achievement

This emerged in some ways as a by-product of participation but was highly resonant. It tended to relate to the contribution activities had made to a product, output or outcome within or outside of school. For instance, establishment of a school garden, development of library spaces, or production of a video resource. The fact that students had been pioneers in this regard and would potentially leave a lasting legacy from their experience for future students garnered positive self-esteem.

Positive engagement with school

In some cases, pilot participation enhanced engagement with school. This particularly appeared to be the case for students who tended to be more disengaged, isolated or struggled more in academic subjects and lessons. Participation in the pilot could foster a stronger connection and nurture positive connotations towards school, connecting what takes place in school with the 'real world.'

“I’ve learnt how to stay more focused, and also better at communicating, better at talking to people, more confidence.” (Female, Year 9)

“We are learning a lot more stuff than we would normally in class. Because in class, we’ll just be learning about agriculture, how to handle animals, but in this we’re learning how to talk to people, learning more about permaculture and more than we are actually in class.” (Male, Year 9)

“Meeting new people and understanding what they have gone through and how they’ve gotten to their job.” (Male, Year 10)

“The kids are developing as project managers, finance managers, they’ve all got different skills that they are utilising, and they are building on it. Which is getting them ready for work.” (Staff coordinator)

*“I think it’s just cool to know that we are going to impact the school with these libraries, and people hopefully will enjoy them for many years”.
(Female, Year 10)*

“It makes you feel like you are someone else, instead of a nobody. There are 1,400 of us here and only eight of us doing this.” (Male, Year 9)

“This project has really told me that there is not just one way you can go, you can go any way you want. One of the guys there told me you could work anywhere with the skills that you have, and that’s something I’ve really taken on board.” (Female, Year 10)

“Don't take it for granted because it is a good way of developing new skills and helps you with your future moves.” (Male, Year 10)

“I gained employment qualifications, gained hospitality skills, gained barista skills and got an insight on how businesses run.” (Female, Year 10)

“I think they now have an understanding of how the skills we are learning in school will actually be used in the real world. It’s showing them the skills we are teaching them are actually relevant outside of school.” (Staff coordinator)

What have students done as a result of participation?

While the research uncovered the perspectives of students and staff around what they felt they had gotten out of the pilot, a further, arguably more objective, indicator of outcomes was examined by asking students who participated in the survey what follow-up action they had taken as a result. Their response reinforces the positive impact the pilot experience had, with nine out of ten students taking at least one step related to their career pathway and the world of work following the pilot.

Pilot students responding to the survey took an average of 5 different follow-up steps as a result

Pilot participation fostered contemplation and reflection on career choices and pathways to work, prompting around six in ten students to discuss work with parents, carers or other family members and five in ten to explore and consider their career options further. Approximately half of students said they had decided on the type of career or job they want to pursue in future following their pilot experience. Qualitative engagement with students illustrated this choice was not always related to the industry or field that the pilot project may have focused on, but that the experience had helped to build a better understanding of work in general, gain confidence in a work context, and focus consideration on what a future career might be like.

Beyond prompting students to consider the future and make choices around their career pathway, involvement also led to more concrete steps towards getting a job. Around half of students respectively said that they had worked on their resume and had actively sought employment experiences, including through paid or voluntary work.

Figure 20: Follow up steps taken as a result of pilot participation (number out of every 10 students)



Outcomes for schools

Although the research explored student voice and focused on their experiences and outcomes, it became evident that the pilot also contributed to wider school and system-level outcomes. That is, there were benefits to schools which emerged from their engagement in the pilot program. These largely related to the opportunity that the pilot program – and associated funding – gave to schools and school staff to try out ideas and options for workplace engagement, leading to something longer-term, replicable or sustainable. The other main school-wide benefits emerged as a result of the impact pilot engagement had on students and how this collectively reflects positively on the whole school community.

Figure 21: Key school outcomes observed to date

Providing impetus for something that had been on the backburner

The initiation of the pilot frequently offered a kickstart for something that had been considered in the past but had to this point been unable to get off the ground. The pilot provided a framework and the backing for schools to try different things to address workplace engagement.

Fostering longer term work engagement opportunities

Many of the pilot projects were involved in creating something that was sustainable and / or replicable. This included the development of infrastructure, models, or approaches that can create ongoing opportunities for other students over a longer period. The pilots also facilitated some new partnerships with business, training organisations and others that can be tapped into in the future – for instance, in providing work experience opportunities.

Contributing to the school environment

Some of the projects involved creating something that would be established in the school for the benefit of all students and staff. Most visible in this regard was the creation of a food bowl garden at Elizabeth Macarthur, the development of a coffee cart business at Hunter River, picnic benches at Wollongong, and the establishment of quiet library spaces at Lindfield.

Staff learning and development

For staff, the pilot too could be a learning curve and provided opportunity for professional learning and development. This might relate to increasing subject area expertise, building skills in tools, techniques or resources associated with the project, and providing time for relationship-building with business that can have longer term benefits.

Enhancing school reputation

There was a belief that by engaging students in the pilot process, the school was developing students who were more prepared for the world of work and better equipped to meet industry expectations and needs. This would reflect well on the school, as students entering workplace experiences would be commended by employers for their work readiness and suitability.

Addressing student disengagement

While difficult to measure in isolation and over the long-term, the pilot appeared to affect the engagement of some students who may have previously been disengaged or apathetic towards school. This could potentially result in improvements in student attendance and behaviour for the school as a whole.

“They’re starting to work on Year 8 kids that are going into Year 9 next year, because there’s another area to then set them up in. So then creating that second area, so having that continuation so it’s not just here we’re doing this, there’s a bigger picture, it’s a flow-on plan...So, it’s not just hey we’re doing this pilot program, that’s it, but there’s a flow-on plan.” (Staff coordinator)

“I can start a business within school, and I can align it to basic enterprise skills that can align to all industries.” (Staff coordinator)

“I thought this would be a great idea, but I had no idea about filming! So that was a steep learning curve for me to educate the students.” (Staff coordinator)

“What we’re doing is fuelling our industry with young people who are potentially either ready for a school-based partnership with an employer or casual employment or full-time employment.” (Staff coordinator)

“Yes, they’re so impressed. I did get feedback from the employer and yes they were very impressed in how professional the students are and how they were a total credit to our school.” (Staff coordinator)

“One of them, it’s reignited her passion and her love for coming to school. She told me that. Not in so many words, but yeah she’s found a reason to come back to school.” (Staff coordinator)

Are there any negative outcomes or limitations that emerged?

The research did not uncover any significant issues that appeared to be detrimental to student outcomes. Probably the only challenge that may have potentially negative consequences related to the time commitment required for participation and the possibility that this might impact on other student learning and school priorities – e.g. assignments, revising for exams, missing some classes. However, students were willing participants in the pilot projects and did not begrudge the time investment. In general, they appeared to manage their time and balance pilot involvement with other commitments. This may be more of a consideration in scaling or transferring these types of projects to other schools or groups of students and depending on how schools approach recruiting participants to the programs.

The pilot project was also reliant on the time investment and commitment from school personnel. While staff working with students on the project had a careers and workplace engagement focus within their role, the pilot program often sat on top of other duties and requirements. At several of the schools, staff indicated how they had often worked in their own time to make the pilot happen. While they were highly motivated to do so to ensure the pilot was successful, this is potentially unsustainable if the pilot was scaled up.

Whilst not a limitation in the pilot projects, but potentially a missed opportunity, is the consideration of greater engagement of parents and families. This is particularly salient given the influence that parents have on career aspirations and decisions. While largely observational based on interviews and discussions with students and staff, there appeared to be little evident activity within the pilots that focused on the engagement of parents in the process or resulting activities and outcomes. Parents might have been used as contacts or pathways to access business organisations, or were set to be invited to presentations, displays or openings. But it was unclear – other than signing off consent forms – how engaged they were within the projects. This may be an area for expansion in future models.

3.5 Where to for the projects from here?

In practice, many of the pilot projects will not automatically come to an end in December 2019, with schools looking to continue and expand on activities achieved so far. While in part this reflects some delays for some projects reaching some project goals, it also represents a deliberate strategy. Many of the schools have used the pilot as an initiator for longer term projects, with the intent that these can become embedded within schools and benefit other students as they transition across school years.

Illustrative of this, the schools that were visited during the research are all intending to leverage off the pilot experience and have plans in train for next year:

- **Elizabeth Macarthur** are continuing to develop their initial garden area, including soil preparation, planting and irrigation. A second area has been designated for students entering Year 9 next year, with the current pilot students intending to provide advice and support to these new students coming into the project. Longer-term, there are aspirations to develop related infrastructure and enterprises, such as a pizza oven, bush food garden, beekeeping and honey production, with possible retail opportunities.
- **Hunter River** are proceeding with the development of their coffee cart business within school, sourcing equipment and resources (including their own Hunter River branded Keep Cup), developing rosters and linking participation to relevant subjects and classes. Eventually it is hoped all school students will at some point gain some type of experience within the business, given the range of roles and career areas it encompasses. This will provide a platform for students to be better prepared for work before entering employer workplaces.
- **Leeton** are looking to replicate the process for video production with other large employers in the local area, pulling in new students to undertake interviews and filming with employers to produce further careers video resources that can be accessed by all students in school.
- **Lindfield** are continuing with activities and sourcing materials to develop quiet areas and library spaces within their school, and are also liaising with their local council to contribute to the design of pop up library spaces and services in the community
- **Ryde** are continuing with plans in place for next year's activities to repeat the project with some of the same workplaces and some new additions. Some students are already requesting to be involved. The school purchased video equipment and this can be used for future projects now. The students make a video and share the worksite visit experiences with students in Year 9 who are then exposed to ideas about the world of work through the insights of from Year 10 students.

One of the more gratifying elements associated with the continuation and evolution of projects is the response – often spontaneous – from students involved this year, who were eager to share their knowledge and insights with new students coming into the project or associated projects in future.

“We’re going to continue finishing our garden but we’re also going to help Year 9, helping them decide what to do.” (Male, Year 9)

“Even if it’s a different kind of place where they are doing it at instead of Sunrice, we could still pass on that knowledge because we’ve interviewed people and that.” (Male, Year 10)

With pilot funding due to expire, the sustainability of projects was salient for staff but, by and large, there was an expectation that they would be able to continue by drawing in other resources and / or leveraging off what has been achieved within the pilot. For instance, using resources, infrastructure or equipment that was funded through the pilot this year and will not incur capital costs again. There was also recognition of opportunities to strengthen the projects by making an overt and formalised link to curriculum areas and student learning and development outcomes. Doing so would ensure projects are embedded in the curriculum and consequently allocated time and resource.

“One of the ideas was to try and link it to the curriculum, the core subject area. So, they can be rewarded with some outcomes through what they are doing. But we haven’t got around to doing that this year...I guess we wanted to go with the flow this year with where we could take it.” (Staff coordinator)

“This is a long-term plan. Ultimately the pilot isn’t going to end in December, and we tick the box. This is about embedding a culture in the school that is around linking curriculum to outcomes.” (Staff coordinator)

From an uncertain start for some schools, the pilot projects manifested into something that was engaging and valuable for many students and schools alike. The momentum that had gathered as a result was something schools were keen to capitalise on, and it is with this sense of purpose that the pilot schools look to build on what has happened to date into the future.

4. Pilot learnings and implications for future workplace engagement programs

The world of work is changing at a rapid pace, bringing with it challenges for the social and economic participation of all young people. Research shows that those who have developed capabilities like communication and problem solving, and who have significant workplace experience, will make the transition to work quicker than others. More specifically, career education research shows that there is clearly a role for workplace engagement and work-related projects which include authentic and contextualised employer engagement; vocational exploration and building of aspirations; experiential learning; and personal accomplishment – all proven to lead to better outcomes for young people.

The pilot projects delivered against many of these desired features and further demonstrate the benefits of these types of career services in schools. In particular, the inclusion of flexibility and student engagement in project design and implementation appear to have been critical factors in the realisation of these benefits.

While these students reported that schools are already doing many things well in career education, students called for more exposure to workplaces and ‘real’ experiences to help them build confidence and skills to transition into the world of work. The pilots performed well at bridging the gaps in current stated needs and expectations of young people and in going some way to meeting their appetite for more exposure, supported learning and first-hand experiences with work. Importantly, pilot projects were rated as most useful on the following aspects:

- Building my understanding about different work and career options
- Making me feel more prepared to enter work in the future
- Helping me understand what workplaces are like
- Building my skills and knowledge related to work.

The usefulness and relevance of the pilots is further evidenced by student endorsement overall (three-quarters of students agreed that the project was enjoyable and worthwhile), as well as their desire to continue to be involved or to mentor new participants or to advocate for continuing or repeating programs for subsequent years of students. The reports that all schools are continuing with aspects of the project, building a sustainable program with a life well beyond the pilot project timeline and funding, is a significant testament to the value of the pilot. For some schools the program has the potential to be embedded and expanded upon to become an integral part of the school and curriculum across different year levels.

While coordinators were grateful for the experience and the projects were strongly endorsed by schools, the projects were not without challenges. If they had their time again, most coordinators would choose to do some things differently from the outset and as a group they have much insight to offer future coordinators embarking on these types of projects. The fact that the projects were pilots - that learning, and change were anticipated and desirable - provided the autonomy and flexibility necessary for the project to truly be seed funding for innovation.

On face value each pilot project appears unique - tailored to that local community or that group of student interests, or the skills and capabilities of the individual coordinator involved, or the particular industry partnership or local employers of that school. While these parameters are important factors in the success of each project, they are reflective of the nuances of underlying design features worth exploring. Much can be learnt and leveraged by reflecting on all projects,

considering the design features, success factors and implementation considerations which, in general, lead to more effective projects, and what might support the transferring or scaling of these ideas to wider settings. This chapter explores the models of workplace engagement emerging from the pilot and the considerations for wider implementation of these concepts and ideas, leveraging student engagement and real and tangible links with the world of work. The group of staff coordinators involved in these pilots remain a significant source of knowledge for further evolving and expanding on these ideas and their insights should continue to be harnessed.

4.1 Student engagement, autonomy and flexibility

“They’re loving it. Because they are actually putting their thoughts into action... it was all very futuristic kind of stuff for them, they had never done this kind of stuff before, so they were just loving it.” (Staff coordinator)

A significant feature of these pilot projects was the desire to engage students as part of the planning and implementation process, to allow students to not only fully immerse themselves in the experience, but to take carriage of the project. This served to create an interactive learning experience with the world of work in contrast to some traditional work experience placements they were familiar with which were rather directed, passive experiences in which students may have little investment.

The flexibility in the application of funding and development of activities together with the fair degree of autonomy given to students to design, develop and make decisions as to how the project was to be run and evolve, led to an experiential learning opportunity beyond the workplace engagement activity itself, resulting in increased student ownership, agency and skills development.

The flexibility and engagement, however, meant that there was uncertainty and the potential for unclear expectations at the start. It was in working their way through this uncertainty that the students had much to gain in problem solving and working together, and in designing a project that was more useful and relevant to them.

The fact that only around half reported that the project was easy (51%); that many were not really sure what to expect at the outset (*“I had no idea what I had gotten myself into!”*); but that the outcome was generally better than expected (66% agree) reflects this challenge, learning and resultant outcome. This is how personal accomplishment and capabilities development can be achieved, which in turn more effectively sets students up for future transitions to work.

Student engagement is both a crucial part of the recipe for establishing the project, as well as an important end outcome from the project. Students were highly engaged after the project. Pilot students responding to the survey took an average of 5 different follow-up steps as a result of the project participation including most often:

- discussed work with a parent, carer or other family member,
- developed or changed my resume or other materials to help me get a job in the future,
- looked into different jobs or career options in more detail,
- thought about or made decisions on future subjects and study options, and
- decided on the type of career or jobs I want to pursue in future

The project influenced the students to think, feel or do things differently with respect to their future subject, study, career or work choices. However, even at the most fundamental level it helped (re)engage students in school - 40% of those who responded to the survey said they focused more on their schoolwork as a result of the pilot project experience.

Purposefully embracing student engagement as a design feature of the project and as part of the implementation and decisioning process, however, can be difficult, and for some teachers, even daunting. It requires a preparedness to go 'into the unknown' somewhat and to relinquish some control to the students. It calls for a balancing act by staff in supporting and facilitating student voice and development of student agency, whilst keeping the project on track and progressing. Staff needed to provide sufficient guidance and scaffolding without controlling decision making. They also need confidence in the outcome even when the process is evolving and may appear somewhat chaotic to observers.

As was the case for students, staff also felt a sense of uncertainty at times and they reported learning from the pilot and feeling a sense of accomplishment in having achieved something when the path to the outcome was not always clear. Staff were aided in having some already feasible ideas and existing strengths and partnerships to leverage. Few, if any, schools were really 'starting from scratch' with getting a project off the ground.

While it is widely acknowledged that these 'inside out' type approaches where schools have autonomy to create their own programs are ultimately more sustainable and impactful, they do require leadership and understanding to get started, and an opportunity for coaching or mentoring when there are doubts or a need for guidance. Inquiry focused approaches to learning within the projects also require some set up and consideration in design and process, along with the mindset and preparedness to 'step back and let the students do it'.

Design considerations

Observations from these project experiences raise issues for consideration for successfully creating this type of learning experience and the associated outcomes from student engagement as outlined below.

Setting up the project and recruiting students

Forming of the general idea or some guidance on the nature of the activities from the school staff to provide the direction, broad boundaries and parameters of the project and consideration of the risks and challenges is important. This includes identifying where students may need higher levels of support or direction over other facets of the project.

Considerations for projects may include existing ideas, strengths or local partnerships which could be leveraged to achieve the desired outcomes and the interests, focus and skills of the career advisor, coordinator or other involved teachers. Staff expertise, advocacy and support offered a guiding framework for students in this pilot and helped to facilitate crucial links with business to progress projects.

Upfront consideration of student selection and inclusion mechanisms and how teams are formed and supported is worthwhile. School cultures, the diversity of student needs, and different types of student aspirations or levels of engagement are all considerations. Several pilot projects learnt from what was tried or tested in these groups which were often created by design e.g. a deliberate mix of genders, mix of student with similar interest or aspirations, or a group of students with similar engagement or development needs.

Consideration might include whether students will opt in or be selected into the program and the mix of students such as age and gender or interests and existing capabilities. Working with people they would not normally work with can be part of the learning experience and gender stereotypes can be challenged in mixed groups. Smaller group sizes, over whole classes or year groups helped keep engagement and decision making more manageable and ensured all participants could play a role and have authentic experiences as part of the activities.

Project parameters and timelines

Investment in time upfront for planning and evolving ideas is needed as is the acknowledgment that there may be a 'stop-start' type feeling for those involved as options are explored, or ideas evolved to be more feasible. Pilot projects included planning days or design workshops and plans also evolved further over time as more information was gathered. Coordinators and students need the time and opportunity to be flexible – considering the time of year the project is to be completed by and, therefore, the best time to begin engagement on design and set up with students is important. Most projects wanted more lead time than was available during this pilot.

Projects need process, personnel and rapport to support and facilitate decision making, guiding students, and supporting them to question and problem solve together. It may be beneficial to build in coaching, mentorship or peer support mechanisms. Staff may need sounding boards or to leverage a network of other coordinators when there are doubts or roadblocks.

Fostering and facilitating outcomes

Effective projects often engaged students by working 'hands on' towards an output or product, leading to something real and visible. This really helps to engage and motivate students during the project and enabled the sense of personal accomplishment. Outcomes could be further fostered through consideration of how projects can be linked back to curriculum or assessments and setting up the tools to aid students along the way to document and leverage their process and learnings.

Consideration of impacts on students thinking and decision making about work and study choices and the potential for parent engagement opportunities which tie into this process could also be included. Facilitating ways parents might be engaged as well or how students engage with parents at home in and round the pilot may extend project reach and impact over time.

4.2 Links with local labour markets, industries and potential employers

"They get in the bus and they're like 'ah that was awesome Miss.' It's the vibe and I can comfortably say they're loving it because they're asking when this is happening next." (Staff Coordinator)

The exposure to and engagement with external experts, employers or workers at workplaces, and the physical environments of work and study (i.e. getting outside of the school), were critical components of projects' success and impact. While the project design involved a range of activities and were driven by students and coordinators rather than employer, industry or tertiary institution led, activities that provided exposure to workplaces and / or employers or industry experts often

gave the projects momentum and were at the heart of the workplace engagement learning opportunities.

While some schools had strong links with industry prior to the pilots, for others, the pilot was the catalyst to form links and to bridge a known gap where relationships with local employers were felt to be lacking. Consideration of the local labour market opportunities and how students might eventually get a job locally was a key driver for some of the connections that coordinators made.

Links with ‘real life’ experiences and the world of work and industry were critical to success and came in different guises across the pilots – there was no ‘one way’ to achieve this.

In other circumstances, it was in facilitating access to an industry or subject matter expert (e.g. a horticultural specialist) who could inform the project direction which was beneficial and inspiring for students. A few projects engaged with or enlisted the help of local councils to play a role in the project which was generally effective and useful although not in all cases.

The type and extent of business engagement that took place varied - there was not ‘one way’ to achieve authentic employer engagement. Some projects focused on a partnership with one large employer that has a range of career areas within the organisation, while others exposed students to a range of businesses. Those involved in structured training and development in conjunction with employers and workplace visits had students working alongside workers in a range of work settings.

The time to be able to explore options and nurture employer relationships was a barrier for several schools, depending on the nature of the staff coordinator role and what other teaching responsibilities they had. Some schools relied on students and their families to help source placements. Some schools worked with TAFEs, Group Training Organisations and job placement service providers with existing employer relationships to facilitate work experience and help line up apprenticeships. The Regional Industry Education Partnerships (REIP) officer also successfully helped to engage businesses for the pilot.

“I find for me to allocate time to engage with employers – it doesn’t happen. Because we’re pretty time poor.” (Staff Coordinator)

Benefits to employers

While the research focused on the experiences and perspectives of students and did not extend to first-hand interviews with employers, there are some observations and secondary reports from staff and students about employer and industry benefits. Given the pilots general focus on work readiness, hands on experience and understanding industry needs better, employers ultimately gained access to future potential workers who are better placed to meet their needs and expectations.

Through participation in the project employers gained exposure to this future talent pool, raising awareness of what they do, and inspiring students to considering work with them or get a placement there in future. This was highly beneficial in tighter labour markets where employers needed to attract workers, although employers all over generally want an efficient approach to labour hire and recruitment. For employers who had not previously taken work experience students or had any connection with the school this opened their mind to the potential benefits.

“It creates a two-way street. Because they’re able to see what students we have here, and then our students are able to see what’s available at Sunrice.” (Staff Coordinator)

Coordinators observed that workplaces and experts also gained from the quality and authenticity of the engagement with students, and the opportunities to reflect on and speak about their own career pathways, roles or everyday work. Some workplaces have gained artefacts, videos and presentations as by-products of the projects which can be used for other internal and external public and employee relations exercises, including recruitment.

The projects also highlighted that there are limitations and challenges of workplaces engaging with students – i.e. employers not knowing what to present to students, what to do or say, how to relate to students or not treating student ideas seriously. Consideration could be given to strategies to help bridge this gap for students and employers so that employers are better placed to engage with students in valuable ways through these types of project.

Jobs pathways

All projects included some focus on work readiness or capabilities development; however, some were more heavily weighted towards creating immediate jobs pathways than others.

Around a third of all pilot students in the survey said that they expected to get a job placement out of the pilots. As outlined in Figure 18, students generally reported that they need a lot of help with work readiness and job seeking:

- developing skills for applying for jobs,
- getting practical experiences of work,
- getting practical tips to prepare for the workplace,
- knowing places you can get info on jobs and careers,
- understanding ways to look for work, and
- finding out about study and training options after school.

A few staff coordinators commented in the research that VET pathways were not always considered and that much emphasis was instead placed on subject selection for university entrance. However, a number of pilot projects worked with Councils, TAFEs and job placement services and deliberately built this aspect into the project, with activities and training leading to work experience placements. Training providers and other community organisations were engaged in intensive sessions on:

- transferable aspects of job readiness, such as job applications, interview preparation, communication and customer service skills, and/ or
- more job-specific upskilling, such as barista training, bricklaying, veterinary care.

These tangible experiences support job readiness and employment prospects i.e. they are real vocational qualifications and experiences with businesses that can be used as evidence in job applications.

Overall the projects struggled to achieve job outcomes in the timeframe of the pilot but there were several school apprenticeships established, numerous work experience placements arranged and some job placement successes, typically leveraging existing employer relationships. At the time of

the research many schools had laid the foundations and were approaching employers over Term 4 and exploring greater connectivity with work placements for 2020.

It was recognised that fostering preparedness for work experience and helping to shape student decisions around work experience placements, while also engaging and understanding employers, was a worthwhile investment that takes time.

“It’s been really good actually – they’re (businesses engaged) very proactive and they are very happy to support their local schools. The difficulty has been being able to connect the opportunities to that, so everyone’s very open to engaging with the young people, but what I want to see is outcomes. And that doesn’t happen overnight – there’s a lot of things that happen behind the scenes for one person to be given a strategic work experience opportunity. I want to see young people who are getting employed.” (Staff Coordinator)

4.3 Emerging models of workplace engagement

Pilot projects were diverse in their approaches to meeting the overall project objectives, that is to:

- expand school student’s knowledge and understanding of work preparedness,
- broaden and raise career aspirations,
- build an understanding of career pathways,
- increase awareness of the connection between study, work and workplace expectations,
- improve school student’s knowledge of the labour market,
- helping students to develop the skills that workplaces need, such as creative problem-solving, teamwork and an awareness of emerging work opportunities,
- providing school students with relevant experiences of work (including part-time work) and practical insights into recruitment procedures and how workplaces function, and
- enrich school student’s education by linking curriculum to real world experiences.

Some projects performed well against multiple objectives whilst others might have achieved well with a narrower focus or have strengths in one or two areas, or aspects well suited to different groups of students with specific needs. While each project was tailored and nuanced, and individual case studies can provide greater detail on project execution, examining broader models or groups of projects may be useful for other schools when formulating possible project ideas.

The emerging models identified include four areas of project focus or demonstrated strengths:

1. In-house projects developing capabilities
2. Discovery, exploration and broadening aspirations
3. Engagement, motivation and inspiration
4. Skills training and work readiness

The following section outlines each of these broad approaches, referencing some illustrative examples of pilot projects demonstrative of the model. The projects selected are not the only projects which may have contributed to these types of objectives and outcomes and they are not the only model features, strengths or outcomes achieved by the selected projects. But they are

chosen to be useful in illustrating a design feature or strength and how a central theme or idea can be used to great effect when applied to local areas or with a specific group of students. It also serves to direct schools as to where to look for more details or a specific contact to help further explore these ideas.

Schools contemplating the development of new workplace engagement projects would benefit from considering elements of these models considering their own school's strengths and partnerships, student needs and local labour market issues. In transferring or scaling these ideas, the 'localising' of the idea and the 'inside out' development of a project students can own is a critical design feature likely to drive effective outcomes for students.

Overall, all projects should strive to include elements of:

- authentic and contextualised employer engagement,
- vocational exploration and building of aspirations,
- experiential learning, and
- opportunity for student-led activities leading to personal accomplishment.

Emerging model 1: In-house projects developing capabilities

These projects are internally designed and driven, hosted within the school, outreaching to experts or employers for specific elements of the project. Constructing an in-house project creates opportunities that may not be possible for students outside of school given their age and the nature of local industries. These projects created elements of the ‘workplace’ experience in the school and outreached for experts and exposure to the ‘real’ thing. While challenging students to learn new skills, work together and try new things, they did this in a ‘safe’ environment of a small group and the familiarity of the school with guidance of the coordinator and support of their peers. This appeared particularly beneficial for Year 9 students but is widely applicable.

Illustrative examples of these types of projects: Hunter River High School, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Murrumbidgee Regional High School and Lindfield Learning Village (see case studies for details)

Each of the illustrative projects was a specific development – a coffee cart, a garden food bowl, a citrus sculpture display, a new library design. These may be less applicable in other labour market areas or less appealing for other school communities. However, the general model is transferable to other ideas, or replicable to other localised industries, specific employers or products where schools have an existing strength, partnership or expertise to leverage.

Project set up involved activities such as students pitching ideas, design thinking workshops, planning days and collaboration discussions for the students to form the projects, build ownership and develop agency. Student-led approaches on a real project enhanced opportunity for learning about how to communicate, collaborate and make decisions. Showing students what it is like to work in a team, this also mimicked how projects might be designed and managed and how decisions might be made in the workplace.

“I feel like because it is so real you actually have a bit of pressure to put something on the table, and actually try to get people to understand your ideas and how that could actually work... Just in general, so other people agree with you and go like yes we can work together on this.” (Pilot student)

Excursions, site visits and contact with experts provided exposure to employers and workplaces. This, together with the project work itself, helped give the projects momentum and socialise aspects of the world of work such as what a workplace looks like or how a business runs, what on the job training is like, what it is like to speak to an employer or interact with other workers.

“Putting it into a real-world context. Not just, okay here we are we’re going to have a workshop and we’re going to have somebody come in, but actually giving them a hands on project and then visiting places as well, so going out and visiting industry so the kids are going out and working with industry people, more than just going out for work experience.” (Staff coordinator)

These projects provide a great opportunity and foundation, particularly for Year 9 students, to be prepared for more intensive or challenging work experiences to follow and being familiar with the needs of local labour market employers. Students develop confidence and capabilities to be more successful in the transition to work.

Students begin to understand the needs of local employers with whom they engage and learn about, as well as requirements for a wider group of employers say, for example, in customer service, hospitality or retail roles. When paired well with an expert or local employer, they develop the skills and insights to understand and respond to specific industry needs or a technical vocational pathway, say, fostering an interest in or application of STEM given the use of nanochips or solar panels in sculpture designs for example. This has a direct impact on employability and ultimately jobs pathways.

“And that’s the one thing with hospitality – the reason why I selected that in this program is because those enterprise skills that are learnt through making someone a cup of coffee are actually essential across any employment pathway. It’s the experience that goes with the coffee, it’s about the employability skills, time management, the resourcing, people, serving, memory – all of those other skills – problem solving, hygiene, cleaning, workplace health and safety, it’s all of that.” (Staff coordinator)

These can also be extended over time, for example, the garden food bowl project eventually creating a product that is sellable, then encompassing skills around new areas of marketing, production, packaging, and selling and connects the students with other parts of the community, businesses and links with other curriculum areas.

These projects, and extensions of them, were more easily established when there were two advocates or instigators - a careers advisor who could champion it and make connections with industry, as well as a teacher who could join it up with the classroom.

Emerging model 2: Discovery, exploration and broadening aspirations

While many projects opened the student's eyes to new career options and pathways into jobs, some projects had this as a specific feature or design objective. By providing exposure to different workplaces, or work in a range of roles they may not have known existed, and a hands on connection to employment opportunities that they may not have considered, these projects generated new ideas, consideration sets and perspectives on the world of work.

"There are jobs out there. But getting across to the kids that yeah there are careers in agriculture and horticulture. Because there's a real culture amongst people that you don't do a career in agriculture because there are no careers; whereas there are more careers out there than you can imagine – for every graduate there's five to six jobs for them." (Staff coordinator)

Illustrative examples of these types of projects: Ryde Secondary College, Leeton High School, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, and Hunter River High School (see case studies for more details)

Ryde Secondary College provided interactions with nine employers in a local geographical area (Macquarie Park) while Leeton High School had students interview workers in different roles in one large local employer (Sunrice), Elizabeth Macarthur High School organised site visits across the horticulture and agricultural industry and Hunter River across hospitality worksites. Again, while these are particular to each location or school, the idea is transferable and easily replicable - a school chooses several employers in a local area to visit; explores varied jobs in one large employer; or visits employers in a certain industry group, to develop new perspectives on the world of work around them.

These projects involved students creating something as part of the projects – for Ryde and Leeton this was creating a video to be used with other audiences to share the learnings, while Elizabeth Macarthur students were gathering insights for developing a local garden and Hunter River were developing a coffee cart business. Students had a fair amount of autonomy over what they were doing, how they organised their roles and worked together.

The projects really helped students understand that workplaces can be varied in look and feel and challenged preconceived ideas of what offices, factories, or farms were like.

"I certainly wasn't expecting to like go into the factories and that. I was kind of expecting just to be sitting at an office for meeting some people and interviewing them, like not actually going into the factory life of the workers." (Year 10 student)

A key aspect of these projects was the authentic interaction students had with workers at the site visits and given the opportunity in small groups to not just observe but to ask questions and to have

questions asked of them. Many employers involved had never had work experience students or had a connection to a local school. They were interested in the students as well and were being exposed to a future source of labour - the learning was a 'two-way street'.

The interactions supported the development of (new) aspirations, at times challenging some students who previously had a set idea of what they wanted to do. At times the experiences challenged social norms or gender stereotypes, for example, by exposing boys to childcare and girls to car manufacturing or showing the different roles men and women can play in factories or on farms.

Discussion with workers on how they came to their current role brought into focus school subject selection and sometimes caused students to question a strong emphasis on achieving a certain entrance score or entry to a specific university course. It showed students that real people came to their roles via varied pathways and that many options were feasible.

Emerging model 3: Engagement, motivation and inspiration

Illustrative examples of these types of projects: Chifley College, Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts, Elizabeth Macarthur High School, Orange High School and Hunter River High School.

For several projects, coordinators deliberately sought to create opportunities which would engage, motivate or inspire specific students to either learn more about their interests and apply their talents, or to simply reengage with school and feel more positively about their futures.

Some projects were designed to lift up students who were potentially facing particular challenges in transitioning to work due to cultural and language barriers, social and economic disadvantage, or lacking confidence, self-esteem or social connectedness. For some projects, some selected students were at risk of disengaging from school.

"Some kids that I saw that were struggling. And kids who I knew had a passion in agriculture. And I just said to them guys we've got this project, who wants to be involved." (Staff Coordinator)

"We've got a core group of kids who do want to work and are really passionate, then there's another group that goes 'well, why should I, I don't want to?'" (Staff Coordinator)

"It makes you feel like you are someone else, instead of a nobody. There's 1,400 of us here and only eight of us doing this." (Year 9 Student)

Projects targeted students and invited or selected them to be part of the program, as well as asking for expressions of interest from other students. Several projects such as the Food Bowl project at Elizabeth Macarthur and the Hunter River coffee cart business drew in students who were interested in associated industries of agriculture or hospitality and tourism.

For Leeton High School (making a promotional video from Sunrice interviews) and Ryde Secondary College (making a video of multiple workplace visits), it was the video creation which was either an initial enticement and/ or served to inspire a few students to use their talents further - one of the students expanded an interest in photography and the school has subsequently set up a photography club, which is led by this student, and another has entered and won competitions for his own creative works.

A project feature for Orange and Wollongong High Schools was the Youth Engagement Strategy (YES) TAFE program that helped disengaged students reconnect and realise the extent of job possibilities available to them. In some cases, the school contacting parents and gaining their encouragement for their child to attend was a catalyst for take up and ongoing participation.

Schools found attendance at the programs was higher than regular school attendance and student feedback forms clearly identified that many students were more engaged, focused and thinking about concrete jobs pathways. The hands-on, practical components, together with the diversity of the activities was engaging and enjoyable for students. Students also commented on being able to learn with others, in a group, as being beneficial and that the teachers were fun.

“I didn’t know before how much TAFE offers, how enjoyable and rewarding it is.” (Pilot student in YES program)

Overall these projects help to build self-esteem and pride and motivate greater engagement and participation in learning. They also served to spark an interest and encourage a growth mindset, resulting in new aspirations or increased motivation to reach for goals, enabled by the increased self-efficacy from the project experience. For some students the projects included setting up work experience placements with possibilities for potential employment in apprenticeships.

Emerging model 4: Skills training and work readiness

Around a third of students in the pilot survey reported that they expected to get a job from the pilot project. Students reported needing a lot of help with how to look for work and how to apply for a job, as well practical tips for being successful in the workplace. Work readiness was a component of all projects to some degree, but some projects more than others had this as a specific focus, incorporating practical sessions and industry experiences to set students up for work experience placement, apprenticeships and other paid work opportunities.

Illustrative examples of these types of projects: Chifley College, Wollongong High School of the Performing Arts, Orange High School and Hunter River High School.

Projects worked on developing capacity in students to respond to industry needs as well as equipping them with something concrete to put on their resume. Some projects included courses and skills training relevant to local industries. Students could cite qualifications and experiences from the pilot as evidence of their interest and skills when talking to employers.

Connections to TAFEs and Group Training Organisations were common in these projects, which helped with subject selection and facilitating school-based apprenticeships as part of the project. Activities included, for example, TAFE tours and hands on sessions in TAFE, school subject selection

nights, Job Expos and guest speakers, and intensive workshops for practical skills when applying for a job including resume and cover letter writing, interview techniques, online job applications and mock interviews.

The projects included links to industry and business, meeting local employers, and setting up work experience placements and jobs pathways. To be able to make these projects lead to real job opportunities schools needed to understand the standards employers want and expect of students in work experience or entering employment. Schools can work towards these, potentially through staged programs commencing in earlier school years to build over time into Year 10. It was reported that students had previously been placed into work experience who are not work ready, and this disappoints employers, in turn leading to a poor reputation of the school and students among employers and, ultimately, fewer opportunities in future.

“When you’re project managing something that’s really meant to change a culture or inject employment into an area it does take a little bit longer than two terms to make that happen... We have to build capacity around it; it’s a new thing. So, we have to get industry on board, we need to build faith and trust that we’ve got young people that are skilled.” (Staff Coordinator)

Some projects had direct contact and strong relationships with business, but it was said that these take time to develop and nurture, and schools in the pilot often leveraged existing networks and contacts. Several schools reported that the period of two terms of the pilot was not realistic for creating new relationships. Several projects at the time of the research were looking to follow up with work experience placements or meeting with employers in Term 4 for future involvement. Coordinators were looking into the following year to be able to realise some of the potential employer connections and job outcomes from the foundations laid in the pilot during 2019.

The time to be able to explore options and nurture employer relationships was a barrier for several schools. Working with TAFEs and VET job placement service providers with existing employer relationships, drawing on the Regional Industry Education Partnerships (REIP) officer, connecting with local councils, and engaging with parents and leveraging their existing relationships, were some of the successful strategies used to engage businesses for the pilot.

4.3 Conclusions and summary of implications

Schools have a key role to play in helping young people to develop a broad set of capabilities that will assist them with work and life, and workplace engagement is one tool in the toolkit. Current arrangements do not, for many students, appear enough. The pilot projects performed well at bridging the gaps in current stated needs and expectations of young people. They also provided experiences proven to be more effective in aiding school-to-work transition including authentic and contextualised employer engagement; vocational exploration and building of aspirations; experiential learning; and personal accomplishment and capabilities development through problem solving and teamwork.

Overall the findings indicate that there is not one specific area of support needs that students have, but that students need a multifaceted, holistic and individualised approach. This has implications for designing workplace engagement programs which can meet such potentially diverse needs. It lends support to the notion of establishing a wide toolkit with multiple approaches, models or project components to workplace engagement, potentially scaffolded across year levels.

The Year 7 survey suggests the need to provide Year 7 students with a better and more nuanced understanding of the range of jobs and the nature of work so they can explore the possibilities, while simultaneously building their transferable skills and confidence to be able to pursue and transition into any of these possibilities. This echoes the existing research that earlier involvement in careers education will widen student aspiration, work and study choices and support more varied pathways to emerging labour market opportunities.

Structured, age-based approaches to careers development and workplace engagement may require reconsideration. Alternative options may include calling for expressions of interests or tapping into experiences and individual students' needs at varying ages.

Multifaceted models could involve a combination of 'real life' experiences of work and workplaces designed to meet the needs of different types of students, and building skills in situ, as well as classroom-based 'theory' or school incursion type careers information and experiences. There remains a place for more traditional individualised work experience placements, which could be enhanced and supported by bridging or preparatory group projects for students who need this capabilities development to be confident with employers in a workplace. The latter is proven to be useful for all students in ensuring they have the capabilities to transition to work quicker.

The pilot experiences strongly support the engagement of students and flexibility in design of projects in order to build these capabilities. The links to employers, industry and 'real' workplaces outside of the school environment is also a critical element of project design. The emerging models from the pilots and the knowledge from the coordinators involved can be leveraged to support transferability and scalability of projects.

For scaling these ideas, mitigating barriers to take up such as the need for leadership and understanding, coaching and mentoring and challenges in the costs and logistics in getting off school sites and connecting with industry for students to produce something 'real and tangible' also needs consideration. Encouragement for schools to use existing strengths and partnerships and to take these ideas and 'localise them' will be integral to developing new feasible and sustainable programs across schools. Improving links to curriculum, engaging with parents, and fostering stronger jobs pathways from projects are three areas for project extension or improvement.

Appendix One

Year Seven Survey

World of work survey

School name:

Welcome!

We want to hear what it's like for people like you when it comes to thinking about jobs and careers and doing things at school that are related to the world of work.

By doing so, you will be contributing to an important study for the NSW Department of Education which aims to find out how schools can better provide opportunities for all students to be confident and prepared to enter the world of work.

It's not a test and there are no right or wrong answers, we are just after your point of view and an idea of what things are like for students at the moment!

How do I complete the survey?

The survey has several sections to go through which ask questions about jobs and careers, preparing for the world of work, and any experiences you've had of the world of work through school.

There are two types of questions:

- Questions which ask for your response to a list of options, such as whether you agree or disagree with something or have taken part in a particular activity. For these questions, please circle the numbers representing the option or options that best apply.
- Questions which ask for you to write something in the space provided.

If you are unsure about something or don't think the question applies to you, you can leave it blank. But please have a go as best you can.

What will happen to my answers?

Your participation in the survey and answers you provide are strictly confidential.

The responses you give are collated with those of other students who are taking part in the research to give us an overall picture – so, for instance, we can add up all the survey responses and might find out that 95% of students love school...if there was a question about loving school!

The survey is one part of a larger research project and will feed into an overall report which details main themes and findings. The report will not identify anyone who took part or their individual responses in a way which identifies them.

So, please be open and honest...there are no right or wrong answers!

A) About jobs and careers

The first few questions are about how you feel about jobs and careers in general...

QA1. What **one word** best sums up how you feel about getting a job or career in the future?

QA2. How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Please circle one number for each statement...

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I know what I want to do for a job or career	1	2	3	4	5
I know what sorts of things employers are looking for from applicants	1	2	3	4	5
I know what sort of jobs are out there to choose from	1	2	3	4	5
I know which subjects are best for me to get a job	1	2	3	4	5
I know a lot already about how to get a job I might like	1	2	3	4	5
I know the best study options for me after I leave school	1	2	3	4	5

QA3. And how much do you agree or disagree that...

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I can't wait to work for a living	1	2	3	4	5
I'm confident that I can get a job I would like in the future	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable about the idea of moving into the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Having a good career is really important to me	1	2	3	4	5
What I do now is vital for my future work prospects	1	2	3	4	5
I'm not really thinking that much about jobs or careers at this stage of my life	1	2	3	4	5
Work experience and finding out about different jobs through school will make a big difference for me later on	1	2	3	4	5

B) Help preparing for the world of work

The next few questions are about information, advice or support that might help young people think about the kinds of jobs and careers they might like to do and prepare them for the world of work

QB1. Overall, how much help to prepare for the world of work do you think you need at the moment?

NONE	A LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	I HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT
1	2	3	4	5

QB2. Please indicate how much help you think you need for each of the following things

Do you need no help, a little help, some help or a lot of help with this?

	I need NO HELP with this	I need A LITTLE HELP with this	I need SOME HELP with this	I need A LOT OF HELP with this
Finding out about different jobs and careers that are out there	1	2	3	4
Getting to know the kinds of jobs that will be needed in the future	1	2	3	4
Deciding what to do for a job or career	1	2	3	4
Figuring out the best choice of subjects and courses to take	1	2	3	4
Finding out about different study or training options after school	1	2	3	4
Understanding what employers want from applicants	1	2	3	4
Getting to know what workplaces are like	1	2	3	4
Getting practical experiences of work	1	2	3	4
Getting practical tips to help prepare me for the workplace	1	2	3	4
Developing things like 'life skills' and 'people skills' that can help in a job or working in a team	1	2	3	4
Understanding different ways to look for work	1	2	3	4
Developing skills for applying for jobs– e.g. approaching employers, resume writing, interviews	1	2	3	4

Knowing about places you can get information about jobs and careers	1	2	3	4
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QB3. What would you do if you wanted some information, advice or support to help you prepare for the world of work?

	DEFINITELY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	MAYBE	PROBABLY YES	DEFINITELY YES
Ask a parent or carer	1	2	3	4	5
Ask another family member	1	2	3	4	5
Discuss it with a friend	1	2	3	4	5
Go to a teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Go to a school careers advisor or other careers staff	1	2	3	4	5
Ask another staff member at the school	1	2	3	4	5
Do a general internet search	1	2	3	4	5
Visit a specific website I know about	1	2	3	4	5
Use a social media site / page / groups	1	2	3	4	5
Check out online video sites / channels	1	2	3	4	5
Visit a library / careers library	1	2	3	4	5
Look for other printed materials – leaflets, brochures etc	1	2	3	4	5
Ask a boss or employer or someone else in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Speak to someone at TAFE or college	1	2	3	4	5
Speak to someone at university	1	2	3	4	5
I'd figure it out myself	1	2	3	4	5
Something else (write in below):					
	1	2	3	4	5

QB4. And when do you think this sort of information, advice or support is needed?

	DEFINITELY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	MAYBE	PROBABLY YES	DEFINITELY YES
In primary school	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 7	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 8	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 9	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 10	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 11	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 12	1	2	3	4	5
After Year 12	1	2	3	4	5

QB5. How often have your parent(s) or carer(s) talked to you about jobs or careers, or given you advice or support to help you prepare for the world of work?

NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY MUCH	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
1	2	3	4	5

C) Experiences with the world of work through school

For the next few questions, we want you to think about some of the things that might take place in school to help young people better understand and prepare for the world of work, including how businesses and employers may be engaged with the school in activities and experiences for students.

QC1. Firstly, thinking in general about what happens at school, how much do you agree or disagree with the following?

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
My school provides a lot of information, advice and support to help prepare me for the world of work	1	2	3	4	5
My school provides information, advice or support about the world of work which is relevant to me	1	2	3	4	5
I know where or who I can go to in school if I want information, advice or support about the world of work	1	2	3	4	5
My school provides lots of opportunities to find out what the world of work is like	1	2	3	4	5
My school helps me consider my options for working in the future	1	2	3	4	5

QC2. Overall, how much contact have you had with people from the world of work in the past 12 months through school?

NONE AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME	A LOT
1	2	3	4

QC3. And do you think this has been enough contact for you, or too much, or not enough?

WAY TOO MUCH	A LITTLE TOO MUCH	JUST RIGHT	NOT ENOUGH	NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH
1	2	3	4	5

QC4. We want to find out what your experiences of the world of work – if any – have been like in the past 12 months.

For each of the following things listed, please indicate:

(a) Whether you have experienced or been involved in these kinds of things in the past 12 months

(b) For each one that you have experienced, write in how useful you found these to be by giving it a score out of 10, where 10 is really useful, 0 is not at all useful and 5 is somewhere in between

	(a) EXPERIENCED IN LAST 12 MONTHS ↓	(b) HOW USEFUL (SCORE OUT OF TEN) ↓
Talks or presentations in school given by speakers from the world of work	1	
Career events or expos with people from the world of work attending	2	
One-on-one mentoring or coaching from an employer or worker	3	
Work experience placements	4	
Work placements through an apprenticeship or traineeship	5	
Job shadowing (when you watch and learn from someone in their job)	6	
Volunteering in the community	7	
Workplace visits and tours	8	
Lessons or projects in class that linked up with businesses or people from the world of work	9	
Lessons or projects in class that linked to a particular job or career area	10	
Programs or activities outside of normal class subjects that linked up with businesses or people from the world of work	11	
Lessons or sessions provided at school about preparing for the world of work (e.g. practical tips, payslips, uniform etc)	12	
Practice job applications, mock interviews etc.	13	
Online activities related to the world of work (e.g. competitions, games, virtual tours, quizzes)	14	
Looked at other media related to the world of work (e.g. videos, brochures, books)	15	
None of the above	99	

QC5. Overall, how well have the experiences you have had through school helped you with the following things?

	NOT AT ALL WELL	NOT VERY WELL	ABOUT AVERAGE	QUITE WELL	VERY WELL
Finding out about different jobs and careers that are out there	1	2	3	4	5
Getting to know the kinds of jobs that will be needed in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Deciding what to do for a job or career	1	2	3	4	5
Figuring out the best choice of subjects and courses to take	1	2	3	4	5
Finding out about different study or training options after school	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding what employers want from applicants	1	2	3	4	5
Getting to know what workplaces are like	1	2	3	4	5
Getting practical experiences of work	1	2	3	4	5
Getting practical tips to help prepare me for the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Developing things like 'life skills' and 'people skills' that can help in a job or working in a team	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding different ways to look for work	1	2	3	4	5
Developing skills for applying for jobs – e.g. approaching employers, resume writing, interviews	1	2	3	4	5
Knowing about places you can get information about jobs and careers	1	2	3	4	5

QC6. Now, imagine you are in charge of work experience or jobs and careers advice at your school. What sorts of activities or experiences would you put in place?

And finally...

THANK YOU! Just to finish we have a few questions about you, so that we can analyse how the results might be similar or vary between different types of people. Remember, all your answers are confidential

QE1. What **year level** are you currently in?

Year

QE2. How **old** are you?

Years old

QE3. Are you...

Male	1
Female	2
Other	3
I'd prefer not to say	4

World of work survey

School name:

Welcome!

We want to hear what it's like for people like you when it comes to thinking about jobs and careers and doing things at school that are related to the world of work.

By doing so, you will be contributing to an important study for the NSW Department of Education which aims to find out how schools can better provide opportunities for all students to be confident and prepared to enter the world of work.

It's not a test and there are no right or wrong answers, we are just after your point of view and an idea of what things are like for students at the moment!

How do I complete the survey?

The survey has several sections to go through which ask questions about jobs and careers, preparing for the world of work, experiences of the world of work through school, and any participation you had in a recent program your school took part in to develop opportunities for students in the world of work.

There are two types of questions:

- Questions which ask for your response to a list of options, such as whether you agree or disagree with something or have taken part in a particular activity. For these questions, please circle the numbers representing the option or options that best apply.
- Questions which ask for you to write something in the space provided.

If you are unsure about something or don't think the question applies to you, you can leave it blank. But please have a go as best you can.

What will happen to my answers?

Your participation in the survey and answers you provide are strictly confidential.

The responses you give are collated with those of other students who are taking part in the research to give us an overall picture – so, for instance, we can add up all the survey responses and might find out that 95% of students love school...if there was a question about loving school!

The survey is one part of a larger research project and will feed into an overall report which details main themes and findings. The report will not identify anyone who took part or their individual responses in a way which identifies them.

So, please be open and honest...there are no right or wrong answers!

A) About jobs and careers

The first few questions are about how you feel about jobs and careers in general...

QA1. What **one word** best sums up how you feel about getting a job or career in the future?

QA2. How much do you agree or disagree with the following? Please circle one number for each statement...

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I know what I want to do for a job or career	1	2	3	4	5
I know what sorts of things employers are looking for from applicants	1	2	3	4	5
I know what sort of jobs are out there to choose from	1	2	3	4	5
I know which subjects are best for me to get a job	1	2	3	4	5
I know a lot already about how to get a job I might like	1	2	3	4	5
I know the best study options for me after I leave school	1	2	3	4	5

QA3. And how much do you agree or disagree that...

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
I can't wait to work for a living	1	2	3	4	5
I'm confident that I can get a job I would like in the future	1	2	3	4	5
I feel comfortable about the idea of moving into the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Having a good career is really important to me	1	2	3	4	5
What I do now is vital for my future work prospects	1	2	3	4	5
I'm not really thinking that much about jobs or careers at this stage of my life	1	2	3	4	5

Work experience and finding out about different jobs through school will make a big difference for me later on	1	2	3	4	5
--	---	---	---	---	---

B) Help preparing for the world of work

The next few questions are about information, advice or support that might help young people think about the kinds of jobs and careers they might like to do and prepare them for the world of work

QB1. Overall, how much help to prepare for the world of work do you think you need at the moment?

NONE	A LITTLE	SOME	A LOT	I HAVEN'T REALLY THOUGHT ABOUT IT
1	2	3	4	5

QB2. Please indicate how much help you think you need for each of the following things

Do you need no help, a little help, some help or a lot of help with this?

	I need NO HELP with this	I need A LITTLE HELP with this	I need SOME HELP with this	I need A LOT OF HELP with this
Finding out about different jobs and careers that are out there	1	2	3	4
Getting to know the kinds of jobs that will be needed in the future	1	2	3	4
Deciding what to do for a job or career	1	2	3	4
Figuring out the best choice of subjects and courses to take	1	2	3	4
Finding out about different study or training options after school	1	2	3	4
Understanding what employers want from applicants	1	2	3	4
Getting to know what workplaces are like	1	2	3	4
Getting practical experiences of work	1	2	3	4
Getting practical tips to help prepare me for the workplace	1	2	3	4
Developing things like 'life skills' and 'people skills' that can help in a job or working in a team	1	2	3	4

Understanding different ways to look for work	1	2	3	4
Developing skills for applying for jobs– e.g. approaching employers, resume writing, interviews	1	2	3	4
Knowing about places you can get information about jobs and careers	1	2	3	4

QB3. What would you do if you wanted some information, advice or support to help you prepare for the world of work?

	DEFINITELY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	MAYBE	PROBABLY YES	DEFINITELY YES
Ask a parent or carer	1	2	3	4	5
Ask another family member	1	2	3	4	5
Discuss it with a friend	1	2	3	4	5
Go to a teacher	1	2	3	4	5
Go to a school careers advisor or other careers staff	1	2	3	4	5
Ask another staff member at the school	1	2	3	4	5
Do a general internet search	1	2	3	4	5
Visit a specific website I know about	1	2	3	4	5
Use a social media site / page / groups	1	2	3	4	5
Check out online video sites / channels	1	2	3	4	5
Visit a library / careers library	1	2	3	4	5
Look for other printed materials – leaflets, brochures etc	1	2	3	4	5
Ask a boss or employer or someone else in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Speak to someone at TAFE or college	1	2	3	4	5
Speak to someone at university	1	2	3	4	5
I'd figure it out myself	1	2	3	4	5

QB4. And when do you think this sort of information, advice or support on the world of work is needed?

	DEFINITELY NOT	PROBABLY NOT	MAYBE	PROBABLY YES	DEFINITELY YES
In primary school	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 7	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 8	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 9	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 10	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 11	1	2	3	4	5
In Year 12	1	2	3	4	5
After Year 12	1	2	3	4	5

QB5. How often have your parent(s) or carer(s) talked to you about jobs or careers, or given you advice or support to help you prepare for the world of work?

NOT AT ALL	NOT VERY MUCH	SOMETIMES	OFTEN	VERY OFTEN
1	2	3	4	5

C) Experiences with the world of work through school

For the next few questions, we want you to think about some of the things that might take place in school to help young people better understand and prepare for the world of work, including how businesses and employers may be engaged with the school in activities and experiences for students.

QC1. Firstly, thinking in general about what happens at school, how much do you agree or disagree with the following?

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
My school provides a lot of information, advice and support to help prepare me for the world of work	1	2	3	4	5
My school provides information, advice or support about the world of work which is relevant to me	1	2	3	4	5
I know where or who I can go to in school if I want information, advice or support about the world of work	1	2	3	4	5
My school provides lots of opportunities to find out what the world of work is like	1	2	3	4	5
My school helps me consider my options for working in the future	1	2	3	4	5

QC2. Overall, how much contact have you had with people from the world of work in the past 12 months through school?

NONE AT ALL	A LITTLE	SOME	A LOT
1	2	3	4

QC3. And do you think this has been enough contact for you, or too much, or not enough?



WAY TOO MUCH	A LITTLE TOO MUCH	JUST RIGHT	NOT ENOUGH	NOWHERE NEAR ENOUGH
1	2	3	4	5

QC4. We want to find out what your experiences of the world of work – if any – have been like in the past 12 months.

For each of the following things listed, please indicate:

(a) Whether you have experienced or been involved in these kinds of things in the past 12 months

(b) For each one that you have experienced, write in how useful you found these to be by giving it a score out of 10, where 10 is really useful, 0 is not at all useful and 5 is somewhere in between

	(a) EXPERIENCED IN LAST 12 MONTHS 	(b) HOW USEFUL (SCORE OUT OF TEN) 
Talks or presentations in school given by speakers from the world of work	1	
Career events or expos with people from the world of work attending	2	
One-on-one mentoring or coaching from an employer or worker	3	
Work experience placements	4	

QC5. Overall, how well have the experiences you have had through school helped you with the following things?

	NOT AT ALL WELL	NOT VERY WELL	ABOUT AVERAGE	QUITE WELL	VERY WELL
Finding out about different jobs and careers that are out there	1	2	3	4	5
Getting to know the kinds of jobs that will be needed in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Deciding what to do for a job or career	1	2	3	4	5
Figuring out the best choice of subjects and courses to take	1	2	3	4	5
Finding out about different study or training options after school	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding what employers want from applicants	1	2	3	4	5
Getting to know what workplaces are like	1	2	3	4	5
Getting practical experiences of work	1	2	3	4	5
Getting practical tips to help prepare me for the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Developing things like 'life skills' and 'people skills' that can help in a job or working in a team	1	2	3	4	5
Understanding different ways to look for work	1	2	3	4	5
Developing skills for applying for jobs – e.g. approaching employers, resume writing, interviews	1	2	3	4	5
Knowing about places you can get information about jobs and careers	1	2	3	4	5

QC6. Now, imagine you are in charge of work experience or jobs and careers advice at your school. What sorts of activities or experiences would you put in place?

D) Recent experiences

You recently took part in a specific program the school ran which aims to provide students with opportunities for learning and engagement with employers and workplaces

(If you are unsure exactly what this program was, please check with your teacher)

QD1. Thinking of **how you first came to be involved in this program**, how much do you agree or disagree with the following?

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
There was plenty of information provided to me about it	1	2	3	4	5
It was clear what it was about	1	2	3	4	5
I didn't have much choice about being involved	1	2	3	4	5
It sounded like something that would be useful to me	1	2	3	4	5
I was excited to be a part of it	1	2	3	4	5
I felt I could ask questions and find out more about it	1	2	3	4	5
It sounded like something different	1	2	3	4	5
I thought I would get a lot out of it	1	2	3	4	5

QD2. Please tell us what things were you hoping to get out of this experience?

QD3. Thinking about the **experience you had on this program**, how much do you agree or disagree with the following?

	STRONGLY DISAGREE	DISAGREE	NEITHER	AGREE	STRONGLY AGREE
It was easy	1	2	3	4	5
I felt comfortable about it	1	2	3	4	5
It was clear what I was supposed to do	1	2	3	4	5
It was what I was expecting	1	2	3	4	5
It was worthwhile	1	2	3	4	5
It was enjoyable	1	2	3	4	5
It was hard to fit in with other things	1	2	3	4	5
I felt supported in what I was doing	1	2	3	4	5
It made me think about my future	1	2	3	4	5
I learnt something new	1	2	3	4	5
It felt relevant to me	1	2	3	4	5

QD4. Overall, how would you rate the experience?

NOT VERY USEFUL	NOT THAT USEFUL	ABOUT AVERAGE	QUITE USEFUL	VERY USEFUL
1	2	3	4	5

QD5. And was the experience...

WORSE THAN EXPECTED	ABOUT THE SAME	BETTER THAN EXPECTED
1	2	3

QD6. How useful was the experience in terms of doing the following things?

	NOT VERY USEFUL	NOT THAT USEFUL	AVERAGE	QUITE USEFUL	VERY USEFUL
Building my understanding about different work and career options	1	2	3	4	5
Building my skills and knowledge related to work	1	2	3	4	5
Showing me the link between work and my studies	1	2	3	4	5
Making me feel more prepared to enter work in the future	1	2	3	4	5
Helping me understand what workplaces are like	1	2	3	4	5
Giving me skills that will help me get on in the workplace	1	2	3	4	5
Helping me understand what employers want	1	2	3	4	5
Giving me confidence to approach businesses and employers in future	1	2	3	4	5
Allowing me to develop relationships and contacts that I might use in future	1	2	3	4	5
Equipping me with tools and resources that I might use in the future	1	2	3	4	5

QD7. And have you taken any steps or action as a result of taking part? Please select all that apply

Thought about or made decisions on future subjects and study options	1
Looked into different jobs or career options in more detail	2
Decided on the type of career or jobs I want to pursue in future	3
Developed or changed my resume or other materials to help me get a job in the future	4
Looked or applied for work experiences, including paid or voluntary work	5
Discussed work with a parent, carer or other family member	6
Discussed work with a careers advisor or other staff member at school	7
Gone to information sessions, expos, talks related to work	8
Focused more on my schoolwork	9
Something else (please specify below):	10
None	99

QD8. If another school was interested in doing this same sort of activity next year, what advice would you have for them?

And finally...

THANK YOU! Just to finish we have a few questions about you, so that we can analyse how the results might be similar or vary between different types of people. Remember, all your answers are confidential

QE1. What **year level** are you currently in?

Year

QE2. How **old** are you?

Years old

QE3. Are you...

Male	1
Female	2
Other	3
I'd prefer not to say	4

QE4. Are you currently doing any paid or volunteer work in a job or apprenticeship or traineeship?

Yes – paid work in a job or business	1
Yes – volunteering	2
Yes – apprenticeship	3
Yes – traineeship	4
No – none of these	5

Appendix Two

Case study: Pathways to hospitality through a coffee cart business at Hunter River High School

Hunter River High School are developing a coffee cart enterprise within school to provide opportunities for students to be better prepared and equipped to meet employer needs as they enter the workforce.

How the project came about and why:

The project initially formed through research and consultation between the school's industry partnership manager, school leadership, the local council and industry to identify an area where employer needs and expectations of young people entering work were being inadequately met. The area of hospitality, events and tourism was highlighted as one such area for which there was strong and growing demand in the region.

The school has previously been a pilot site for the P-TECH model, an innovative approach to education-industry collaboration, providing students with an industry supported pathway to a STEM-related diploma, advanced diploma or associate degree. Cognisant that STEM subjects and careers

We sat down as a school – myself and the principal – and we said, well, we're low socio-economic, food and beverage is always a very accessible pathway; for a lower academic student as well, because it's more about people skills. We can potentially incorporate that into something tangible for them to be able to say I can do this, and this is where I've done that.

SCHOOL COORDINATOR

were not for everyone, and could be prohibitive to lower academically performing students, the school was keen to develop opportunities for work exposure and industry engagement in some other accessible fields and roles, with hospitality fitting that bill.

The aim of this project, then, was to expose students to the world of work in an accessible way, helping to raise awareness and aspirations around work, build both transferable and job-specific skills, and offer students an experience that would help them

to be work ready and better placed to get their first job.

How students engaged in the project:

Students were invited to submit an expression of interest to be involved in the project, with staff making targeted approaches to students who had taken subject options and pathways related to food and beverage and hospitality. The project then rolled out in three stages:

- **A three day design thinking workshop on how to run a business**, with around 40 students from Years 9, 10 and 11 learning, developing and pitching business ideas – this is where the coffee cart business idea was pitched by students and selected to go forward.

- **A VIP day-tour of local hospitality businesses and worksites** for 14 students. Students visited the Mercure Hotel and Raymond Terrace Bowling Club, receiving behind the scenes tours and interacting with management and other staff. They also observed local food outlet centres to examine aspects of business design, environment and interaction with customers. At the end of this day, students debriefed and workshopped ideas for the development of the coffee cart business.
- **A two day barista training course** provided to a total of 45 students, who received a certificate for completing this course.

We saw how different businesses were run differently and the different styles – like the fast food and the sit down meals and how the businesses work.

STUDENT

Students have subsequently been working with guidance from a Food Technology teacher on tasks to prepare for the opening of the coffee cart business, such as researching equipment, stock, and roster planning, with the coffee cart intended to commence in early 2020.

Highlights and benefits of participation:

Students have largely enjoyed taking part in the project and are looking forward to the coffee cart opening. A highlight for many was the day out of school visiting workplaces, hearing from workers, and observing businesses in action in a way which can be applied to their own coffee cart enterprise. Students also valued the opportunity to try out their barista skills and obtain a certificate as a result.

Reflecting on their experience to date, students highlighted several **positive impacts**, including:

- Exposure and behind-the-scenes access to hospitality workplaces, providing a better understanding of how these businesses work, how staff relate to their job and interact with one another, and how businesses attract, manage and service customers
- Improved awareness of the different aspects involved in running your own business (including the different roles and jobs involved), both front and back of house
- Development of technical skills and attainment of certification related to hospitality, most tangibly in terms of a barista qualification
- Development of broad, transferable skills like customer service and marketing, as well as personal aptitudes, such as developing business ideas and pitching these to different audiences
- Improved sense of preparedness to enter the workplace and attain a job in the hospitality sector, even if this does not end up being a long-term career area, and
- For some, clearer aspirations around work, careers and / or future study.

It's a good experience and you're learning skills that you need for later life in your work.

STUDENT

I learnt a lot about customers and how to pitch an idea during the business course.

STUDENT

Even if it's not for hospitality, it's showing us how to handle people, like how to greet them. It's work, so it's helpful really for anyone even if they don't like doing hospitality.

STUDENT

Challenges encountered

To some extent the project was reliant on what businesses could offer and provide during the workplace visits, with some disappointment among some students that certain aspects or areas of these businesses (e.g. food preparation) were not covered.

From a staff perspective, the timeframe for the pilot has been a challenge in terms of embedding something that can lead to sustained cultural change in student aspirations and employment in hospitality. Fostering such outcomes – and being able to measure these – is believed to require longer-term, systemic approaches.

What next?

A plan of action is in place for 'Phase 4' which essentially involves steps and activities to get the coffee cart business up and running, such as ordering equipment and organising rosters. The coffee cart is planned for early 2020 and it is anticipated parents and community stakeholders will be invited to a grand opening. Longer term, the coffee cart business within school is foreseen as an ongoing, sustainable resource for all students to access workplace experiences in a range of roles and career areas.

Key learnings from this project:

- ▶ **The pilot project is responding to an identified local business need**, recognising the concerns employers have about the job readiness of students entering their workplaces and seeking to address this gap.
- ▶ **By focusing on hospitality, the project is approachable and has potentially universal reach** – it is an area that is accessible for everyone, including less academically achieving students and students with disability. It is also a field in which many young people can attain their first job, even if they are not looking for a long-term career in this sector.
- ▶ **The development of an in-school business enterprise provides a bridge for students to be ‘work placement ready’**, in that they can attain experiences and skills in a controlled, safe environment to help them to be better prepared before entering outside workplaces and employers through work experience or a job placement.
- ▶ **The project has engaged students by targeting those with an interest in this area** and allowing them to pitch and develop their own ideas for a real, tangible business in school – they will see something visible and have ownership over this as a result.
- ▶ **The project develops a sustainable resource that can be linked to a range of subject areas and career pathways**, moving beyond the life of the pilot itself and providing opportunities for all students to attain exposure and experiences related to the world of work and what they are studying at school.
- ▶ **The pilot approach is broadly replicable in other industry areas**, taking the concept of addressing local employer need and developing an in-school enterprise so that students are better equipped to meet these needs as they enter the workplace.

Case study: Growing the Lizzie Mac Food Bowl at Elizabeth Macarthur High School

Elizabeth Macarthur High School implemented a project with a small group of Year 9 Agriculture students to develop a school garden, the first step in the establishment of the Lizzie Mac Food Bowl.

How the project came about and why:

The idea for the creation of a food bowl had been around for a while and was raised as an option during an internal innovation hub session among staff. The school careers advisor teamed up with a teacher in Agriculture to further the concept, select and support students, and facilitate project activities.

The project was a response to the perception that jobs in agriculture and horticulture were prone to being misunderstood and that students had limited awareness of the different types of careers and pathways available in these sectors. It was also noted that there is strong demand for jobs in this field and high vacancy rates. While the local area encompasses a broad range of industries, there is a strong connection to agriculture and horticulture, exemplified in the school name and historical connection to Elizabeth Macarthur, who was a pioneer in this area at nearby Belgenny Farm.

There's a real culture among people that you don't do a career in agriculture because there are no careers; whereas there are more careers out there than you can imagine – for every graduate there are five to six jobs.

AGRICULTURE TEACHER

How students engaged in the project:

Several Year 9 Agriculture students were targeted to take part, mainly because they were known to have an interest or passion in agriculture and – for some – because they were showing signs of disinterest or disengagement in school. A wider call out was also made for interested students, though this didn't yield take up, possibly because the project was new and something of an 'unknown'.

We all put in our own effort. Like a couple of us went out and researched what we needed to get, and others went and measured the garden. Others drew up the diagrams, like we got the best drawers to do the diagrams. We all got our part that we wanted.

STUDENT

Students submitted an expression of interest for participation, outlining why they wanted to be involved, what they hoped to get out of the project, and what they could bring to it. A core team of eight students, both male and female, were engaged, with some other helpers drawn in by the core team to support tasks on an as-needs basis. Working together, each member of the team identified a role for themselves, such as project manager, finance officer, and designer.

Project activities developed iteratively and – initially – there was a perception among students that things were a bit slow to get off the ground. In broad terms, the project has thus far involved:

- **A planning and development stage**, in which students undertook background research, including a visit to Belgenny Farm, assessed the physical garden space, developed plans and diagrams, and explored what materials and tasks will be required.
- **A two day immersion with a permaculture expert**, who came into school to share his experience, provide insights into the design and management of the garden space, supply materials and resources to support the project, and help students recognise the skills they bring to the project.

- **Hands-on garden construction and development**, starting with land clearing and disposal of materials, followed by the construction of garden beds and soil preparation.

Highlights and benefits of participation:

Students have been enthusiastic about the project and enjoyed the opportunity to do something different outside of normal school classes. Among the highlights were the visit to Belgenny Farm, the interaction with the permaculture expert, the practical work elements involving the creation of something in school, and the engagement with different people outside of their normal friendship circles.

Reflecting on their experience to date, students pointed to a number of **positive impacts**, including:

- A strong sense of achievement and self-esteem from contributing and being the first group of students to make a difference to the school environment through this project
- Development of a team ethic and experience managing and coordinating a project as a collective unit, respecting different personalities and skills and learning from one another
- Improved self-confidence and developing self-responsibility and autonomy in decision-making
- Improved self-awareness of interests, skills, strengths and weaknesses
- Building technical knowledge and skills related to agriculture and horticulture, as well as transferable skills such as problem-solving, communication and people management
- Stronger awareness of some of the different jobs related to agriculture and horticulture, and
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It is good because we are learning a lot more stuff that we would in class... learning how to talk to people, learning more about permaculture, more than we actually are in class.

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Challenges encountered

There was some frustration from students that the project appeared slow to get off the ground and it took a while for them to have hands-on experiences of work in the school garden. This has meant that the garden itself had not progressed as much as they had hoped at this stage. There were also concerns about sustaining the garden over the summer holidays, and some were keen to access it over this period.

From a staff perspective, the project took considerable time and investment, but this was believed to be worthwhile for the outcomes achieved and the longer term nature of what is taking place. Challenges were flagged around some of the process and paperwork involved in making physical changes to the school environment (e.g. removing a tree) and ensuring students are approved to access worksites.

What next?

The garden space is the first of a series of areas and related initiatives intended to evolve as part of the Lizzie Mac Food Bowl. While there are still elements of the first garden to finish, the students are planning to advise and support new Year 9 students coming on board next year in the development of a second garden area. Longer term, it is hoped a number of related initiatives could materialise to provide other similar work engagement opportunities for students, such as a bush food garden, beekeeping and a pizza oven.

Key learnings from this project:

- ▶ **The pilot project is part of a longer-term initiative**, meaning that it will likely have broader reach and impact than solely for the students involved in the pilot phase. Participation in the pilot program has essentially kick-started the development of a school resource for workplace engagement and created a small group of ‘experts’ who can pass on their experiences and insights to other students.
- ▶ **Using the project to develop something real** within school fostered positive student engagement and a strong sense of achievement for students that they were contributing and making a difference.
- ▶ **Enabling a fair degree of student autonomy and agency in project activities and management** meant students were driven to participate and prompted personal development in a range of soft or transferable skills useful in the workplace, such as decision-making, teamwork, and communication.
- ▶ **The engagement of an industry expert** to motivate, teach and guide students provided considerable momentum to the project, at a stage when they were starting to feel frustrated that it was not getting off the ground as fast as they had hoped.
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Case study: Partnering with a large local employer to produce a video resource at Leeton High

Leeton High School formed a partnership with a major business in their area – Sunrice – to develop a video resource highlighting the range of careers and work experiences available in the organisation.

How the project came about and why:

The idea to develop and produce a video resource was initially prompted by one of the examples provided as part of the pilot program expression of interest process. This idea was picked up by the school coordinator, who was keen to nurture a partnership with a major employer in the area, Sunrice. Initiating contact with Sunrice, it became apparent that they too were enthusiastic to engage with Leeton High and showcase their organisation and the careers available in their business through the pilot project.

New to the school at the start of the year, the school coordinator noted how there was not much of a relationship in place between Leeton High and Sunrice. There were narrow perceptions of the type and nature of jobs with the organisation, and, for some, stigma associated with working there (e.g. low-skilled, production line roles). Cognisant of the range of job opportunities and career areas that exist within Sunrice, the project intended to bust some of these myths, and broaden awareness and understanding of different opportunities available.

There was a bit of stigma attached to it, or a bit of misinformation out there about what kind of work opportunities there are out there. So, this is the whole purpose – we can educate people at school that we have this huge organisation that employs over 2,000 people, and these are the different types of jobs you can get there and careers that are available.

SCHOOL COORDINATOR

In essence, the project aimed to work on both a micro and macro level. At the macro level, it was about producing this resource for the whole of school. At the micro level, it was about engaging a small group of students in this production, exposing them to workplaces and workers at Sunrice and providing them an opportunity to develop skills in media, communications, and resource production.

How students engaged in the project:

Students were targeted for project participation, with the school coordinator liaising with Head of Year 10 to identify students who they thought would benefit from taking part and who would be a good fit to interact with management and staff at Sunrice. Initially, six students were approached, though two dropped out.

The first stage of the project was about familiarisation and planning, both for the Year 10 students and school coordinator. A key aspect of this was a **factory tour** at Sunrice, allowing students to get an insight into the business, its products, and the different workplace environments and jobs involved. During this stage there was also research done around things like video production, interviewing and sourcing equipment.

I was very, very scared, but when we got in there the people that were being interviewed were scared too. And I was like, we're in the same boat, we're all going to have to relax.

STUDENT

The four students independently formed roles – director, interviewer, cameraperson and lighting and sound. They then went about **visiting several worksites to carry out interviews with staff**, using a set of questions developed in advance with Sunrice, as well as capturing stock footage of workplaces. Visits were arranged at various stages across the year, with students taking time out of school and being transported to Sunrice sites by the coordinator.

The footage captured has subsequently been undergoing **post-production review and editing**, leading up to the development of a final video product to be presented to the school.

Highlights and benefits of participation:

Students initially held some apprehension about entering Sunrice and interviewing workers and – in some cases – quite senior management within the organisation. However, this was appeased to a degree by having an initial factory tour, which provided revelation about workplace environments and culture. Their comfort grew during the experience, with memorable connections made with different staff interviewed and regular insights gained around the rich tapestry of working life.

Reflecting on their experience to date, students flagged a number of **positive impacts**, such as:

- Growth in self-confidence and communication skills, exemplified by their ability to manage and direct executive level staff at Sunrice during the interview process
- A better appreciation and understanding of the range of jobs and careers available at Sunrice
- Insight into different career pathways people can take to get to different positions, through hearing the stories and experiences of the workers they interviewed
- Technical skills related to video production, such as interview techniques, storyboarding, and editing
- Development of management, teamwork, organisation and decision-making skills, and
- A sense of achievement and advocacy related to the project, with a willingness to share their experiences and insights with other students in the future.

It is also worth highlighting the positive impact the project has had on the relationship between the school and Sunrice. Sunrice provided feedback to the careers advisor on the maturity and professionalism of the students, which has reflected well on the school and the reputation of its students more broadly.

The project has really told me that there is not just one way you can go. You can go any way you want. One of the guys there told me you could work anywhere with the skills you have, and that's something I've really taken on board.

STUDENT

I've picked up skills in talking, I've picked up skills in lighting, sound, filming and what it's like to basically see a product from start to end, and what pride people take in it.

STUDENT

Challenges encountered

The project was a learning process for students, staff and Sunrice alike and there was some wariness that it took a while to figure out how the concept would work and what exactly was going to happen. Students committed significant time and energy to the project and missed some lessons as a result. Much was reliant on the enthusiasm of the contact at Sunrice to support the project and facilitate access to workplaces and staff. There was also reliance on the school coordinator to provide transportation to workplaces.

A further challenge to the project emerged as Sunrice announced redundancies towards the end of 2019 primarily as a result of the drought. This has thrown up question marks over the release of the video, given sensitivities that some of the school students' families have been affected.

What next?

At the time of research, the video resource was about to undergo editing and production, prior to release in the school. Sunrice has also indicated they would promote the video on their own communication channels. Longer term, the careers advisor is keen to replicate this process with other employers in the area, drawing on the resources acquired and expertise gained. This includes engaging students involved in the Sunrice project to share their insights and mentor other students who come on board in the future.

Key learnings from this project:

- ▶ **The pilot project has provided a pathway for the school to form a stronger partnership with a large, local employer**, expanding awareness and understanding of career opportunities available and developing ongoing opportunities for other workplace engagement activities.
- ▶ **There was clear benefit for the employer organisation to be involved**, in that they can better showcase their business and the careers opportunities available, build their reputation among students, staff and the school community, and potentially tap into a key future labour and talent pool.
- ▶ **The project was suited to a small team of students** who were willing and able to commit time on top of other requirements and lessons. Consideration and targeting of students who would represent the school positively with the employer organisation was critical to its success.
- ▶ **Providing an initial gateway into the project helped to appease student apprehension and garner comfort with the experience** – in this case the provision of a factory tour at Sunrice helped to familiarise students, while the presence of workers who had previously been students at the school or who were parents of current students helped to establish a common connection.
- ▶ **Exposure to workplace environments provided innumerable insights**, many of which were incidental or outside of core activities – for instance, observing worker interactions and culture while on site.
- ▶ **A project of this nature is highly replicable** for other schools with other employer organisations to enhance understanding of different careers and jobs. However, critical to success is the effective engagement and support of a key advocate and ally within the employer organisation.
- ▶ **Students taking part in this experience represent a resource to advocate and mentor new students** coming on board to do similar projects. This provides a further development opportunity to them as well as allowing for transfer of knowledge and learning.

Case study: Discovering Macquarie Park Employers Ryde Secondary College

Ryde Secondary College implemented a project with a small group of Year 10 students to visit 9 local employers to learn about the world of work and career decisions. Students made a video presentation of their weeklong fieldtrip and presented it to Year 9 at a university hosted industry day.

How the project came about and why:

The project was a response to a lack of engagement with local employers and a lack of awareness of students of what was on their doorstep at Macquarie Park. The idea for the project came from the desire to link students with these local employers and broaden horizons by discovering more diverse careers and jobs pathways.

Macquarie Park is a large business precinct near the school and has over 50 large employers across a wide range of industries. Work experience is an embedded part of the school's career services program; however, the school has previously had only one contact from an employer in Macquarie Park and business websites suggested that none appeared to have work experience programs or links with high schools or career events. There was a missing link between local business and potential future workers.

How students engaged in the project:

Students were engaged through a call for interest at assembly which resulted in all female students to begin with. The coordinator then targeted males to be part of the group, leveraging an interest in video making to attract these students. The size of the group was limited to a maximum of 11 – the capacity of the minibus but also considered the maximum size for engaging with employers in an authentic way. The planning day, time in the minivan, and on worksites together, plus making and presenting the video as a team, led to a strong group bond and sense of pride in achievements.

The project involved:

- **A planning day**, getting to know each other and scoping out what they were interested in career wise. Students then drove around the precinct together to explore the options and discuss ideas on which workplaces they would ideally like to visit. The students then voted on the shortlist of most desirable businesses to target for the visits.
- **Setting up the visits**, the careers adviser set about sourcing the employers and gaining agreement for the timing and nature of the visits. Contacts from an extended family member of one of the students, a connection with an employer made at a careers event, and assistance from Ryde Council also helped to secure the final businesses involved. A Google Drive and classroom was set up to store photos and information for students.
- **Visiting 9 workplaces**, including taking the video footage and then later editing the video and designing the presentation for the industry day.

I get really upset about the lack of engagement employers have with high school students. There's a missing link.

CAREER ADVISER

Work experience is usually with small business... but I was interested in talking to corporate entities about how they conduct business. That's why I wanted to do it.

STUDENT

I think it was our group. We made it work really well. I think we were a good group. We engaged really well and asked the right questions.

STUDENT

Highlights and benefits of participation:

Students enjoyed the teamwork of the project as well as the individual benefits from participation. Among the highlights were the 'VIP' nature of the visits, seeing behind the scenes. It was also eye opening to see contrasting workplaces and how physically different they could be from research offices, to open plan smart desks, to creative workspaces, and postal delivery operational areas. The interaction with the different workers on site who told stories of their personal career journey was highly impactful. The task of working together to make the video and presentation for the industry day to reflect on their experience also brought the group together further, developing capabilities for working in teams and communicating effectively.

Reflecting on their experience, students pointed to a number of **positive impacts**, including:

- Exposure to businesses and employment options that they would not have otherwise considered.
- Stronger awareness of the diversity of jobs out there and the likely extent of unknown options that they have yet to explore.
- Stronger appreciation of flexible options when forming career paths from understanding how others had come to their particular roles – understanding that there is not only one way to get there or that choices made now are not locked in, rigid and inflexible pathways.
- Prompted consideration of study and subject choices and either challenged or validated a previous focus on a potentially narrow set of university courses or emphasis on specific subjects.
- Stronger awareness of what workplaces look like and prompted consideration of what types of environment they might prefer to work in.
- Exposure to resources for deciding what careers might be of interest, as well as gaining an understanding of what employers might be looking for, gained through the visit to the HR recruitment company.
- A sense of achievement from contributing and making the video presentation and being the first group of students to undertake this type of project for the school.
- Development of capabilities from working together as a group of diverse students, respecting different personalities, collaborating, contributing to decision making and learning from one another.

Hearing that made us see that you don't have to have everything planned out in life. When we think of career paths, we think of typical things that we already know. We don't know what is out there.

STUDENT

What we saw on those days, the average person would never see!

CAREER ADVISER

Challenges encountered

Getting employers on board was the hardest thing. The project was pioneering for the school given only one previous connection to this employer precinct

"...boys went to the childcare centres; the girls went to Hyundai. Afterwards I thought it was good – not the original plan but looking back it had benefits.

CAREER ADVISER

existed. Scheduling the time away from class and the coordination of visits by the careers adviser who doesn't have access to the students on a regular basis given her role was also a challenge.

What next?

Ryde are continuing with plans in place for next year's activities to repeat the project with some of the same workplaces and some new additions. Some students are already requesting to be involved. The school purchased video equipment, and this can be used for future projects now so students in Year 9 are also exposed to ideas about the world of work through the insights from Year 10 students.

Key learnings from this project:

- ▶ **World of work exposure**, taking students out of school to in situ observation was when the students really saw the benefits of the whole project and eyes were opened.
- ▶ **Authentic exposure to real workers** at the workplace was an important part of the impact of the project. The intimate nature of the interaction was felt to be far more effective than, say, a guest speaker at school to a large audience. Opportunities for all parties to ask questions of each other made it particularly insightful and valuable.
- ▶ **Making the video gave the students a focus and purpose**, developing a sense of pride in what they had achieved, as well as fostering teamwork and helping students reflect and internalise learnings.
- ▶ **Linking students to local employment** and giving employers exposure to future workers broadened horizons for both parties and improved the reputation and brand of both the school and the companies involved.
- ▶ **The assistance from contacts and council** in getting enough employers on board made a difference. Sourcing new employers without outside connections was resource intensive and required event management skills and capabilities. Schools without a dedicated careers adviser / careers staff who also have a teaching role may not be able to achieve this. Alternative approaches to getting employers involved might be considered.
- ▶ **Not following traditional areas of expressed interests and gender stereotypes** but instead taking everybody to every worksite – both boys and girls visited the childcare and boys and girls visited the car company. This proved beneficial for challenging preconceived ideas and widening aspirations.
- ▶ **The pilot project is highly replicable**, the model is established, and the video equipment is purchased. Some employers are willing to repeat the visits and there are new employers who can come on board. More efficient ways of getting the employers locked in and coordinating this with when students are selected will be considered for future years.