

**A WINDOW INTO THE FUTURE.  
LESSONS FROM THE JOBS PATHWAY PROGRAMME.**

A Report to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum by Peter Kellock,  
in association with Colin Bruce.

**August 2000**

This paper is published in three sections:

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Dusseldorp Skills Forum  
Suite 6, Level 2  
13-15 Smail Street  
Ultimo NSW 2007  
Australia

Email: [info@dsf.org.au](mailto:info@dsf.org.au)

Telephone: +61 2 9212 5800  
Fax: +61 2 9212 1533

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Peter Kellock  
The Asquith Group  
PO Box 2155  
Kew VIC 3101  
Australia

[tag@enternet.com.au](mailto:tag@enternet.com.au)  
Mobile: 0412 342 637  
Fax: +61 3 9859 9452

## FOREWORD

There are times when it seems that the enormity of the “problems” confronting us as a society is such that we bog ourselves down in a quest for the 'big solution'. This report hints at something quite different.

The Jobs Pathways Programme is a success story. It is the story of a relatively simple idea picked up by one Commonwealth (Labor) Government and extended by another Commonwealth (Coalition) Government. It is the story of how practitioners (teachers, community workers, local employers, group training operators) seized the idea and with very modest funding have created something quite unique: a program that combines a preventative service delivered within schools with a case-management safety net service once students have left school. It is the story of what creative and enterprising community organizations of all sorts can do for young people given the chance.

Like all good stories this one has had its ups and downs and we find in the telling a good few lessons: not just about this particular program but also about ways in which we can better support communities to really make a difference for their young people.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum commissioned this report from Peter Kellock of the Asquith Group. A number of others –inside and outside of government- have contributed to it. Others participated in consultations on the draft convened in Melbourne and Sydney. We are grateful to them all but particularly to the many JPP providers who generously supported the task through the provision of information, their time and their experience.

I strongly commend this report to you and would welcome receiving any comments or observations you might have upon reading it.



Jack Dusseldorp,  
Chair  
Dusseldorp Skills Forum

## 1. EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

This study was commissioned to seek ways of strengthening the support for young people in the school to work transition. The Jobs Pathways Programme (JPP) is an important model of government funded assistance for young people moving from school to the labour market. After five years since its inception, the evolution and expansion of the programme offer potential insights into the transition process.

Research on comparable international approaches indicates that a distinctive feature of the Jobs Pathways Programme is to combine a preventative service delivered within schools with a case-management safety net service once students have left school. Most other programmes investigated focus on either one or the other, but not both. This appears to be a positive feature as long as the dual focus of the service is made clear.

However, it is also apparent that JPP operates without a strong supporting framework. There is no establishing legislation, formal agreements with other stakeholders, or entitlement to access the service on the part of young people, unlike some of the overseas models. JPP is dependent on clients being referred to the service through a variety of intermediaries.

The study shows that JPP is increasingly being delivered within schools, and increasingly concentrates on preventing younger students leaving school.

JPP depends on providers developing good relationships with schools through key personal contacts to be able to effectively access clients. School staff are in a position to determine whether young people access the service, and the level of the service they will receive. This can range from every student in a senior school being assisted by JPP to schools in which there is no JPP presence.

JPP providers develop a wide range of options and strategies to encourage young people to remain at school or to assist them to become ready for employment. The type of organisation delivering the service has some impact on the kind of options that are available to young people. While all providers present a range of options, training providers tend to identify more varied vocational training options, Group Training Companies identify more relevant pre-apprenticeship courses, and so on.

A strength of JPP is the profile of staff attracted to the programme. Many come from the employment services sector, and from a range of industry positions. Once they are working in close contact with schools, students and teachers regard them as a valuable asset.

The monitoring and support provided to young people is a highly positive feature of JPP. There are concerns that the period of follow up is too limited, particularly for younger clients who may have only a short tenure in initial jobs. JPP providers support some young people well beyond the funding period. They are also frequently asked to assist

students younger than 15 years of age. Reflecting international research that indicates that transition occurs over an extending period of time, JPP providers have found it necessary to commence supporting many young people before they reach the compulsory school leaving age. Some clients also need support beyond an initial six month period after leaving school.

Where relevant data is available, there is evidence that JPP is having a significant positive impact on successful youth transition to employment and other non-tertiary study outcomes in particular regions. In States where there is a requirement to track exiting student outcomes over a period of time, the contribution of JPP to lower rates of youth unemployment is evident. The difficulty is that JPP not only operates without a regulatory framework or formal protocols with the education system; it also operates without the assistance of supporting information systems.

Data existing in both the secondary and tertiary education systems that could be used to identify eligible clients is not accessed. JPP is primarily dependent on the judgement of school staff for referral. Information on the numbers assisted by JPP projects is also not able to be obtained.

Five years of funding for JPP using an 'open' model of seeding various initiatives has led to a diverse set of approaches developing.

There are examples of good practice found as a result of the surveys and case studies used in this study. Doubtless there are many other commendable approaches which were not researched. Among the examples were innovative approaches using industry mentors to support students; reports on student destination being regularly provided to schools; development of alternative and vocationally focused programs for 'at risk' students; and integration of JPP services with work placement and school-based New Apprenticeships.

However, it was also evident that the innovative and developmental work was not being widely circulated between the agencies delivering JPP services. The competitive and short-cycle funding approach helps to shape an environment in which such information is not shared. Good practice remains localised and poorly promoted.

The flexibility that has characterised the development of JPP to date could now be strengthened as a program and consolidated as a model. There is a need for a balanced approach that maintains the capacity of providers to flexibly respond to local needs while establishing a more consistent approach to providing access to the programme and to delivery.

In order to strengthen JPP as a form of comprehensive assistance to young people making the transition to work, the study reached the following conclusions.

The lack of a strong framework for a transition safety net service is evident. The main role of the Commonwealth Government is currently that of contracting JPP services. But given the number of sectors involved in the transition process, the breadth and

complexity of the agencies and services which together provide the pathways, and support for young people in transition, more is required. The environment is fragmented, crowded and relatively poorly coordinated at present.

JPP operates across these arrangements without a strong mandate, and depends on fragile relationships with schools to access clients. The current arrangements do not represent a national safety net that can guarantee a young person support when they require it.

The establishment of a national framework to coordinate across education, training and employment sectors is urgently required. Such a framework needs the support of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and employer groups.

**A national body established by agreement between governments to develop a national framework for transition arrangements in Australia is required. These arrangements could be established under similar arrangements to the ASTF, or more formally constituted as a joint government authority.**

This body would develop a framework for transition arrangements that would provide a more adequate safety net for young people. The framework requires the following elements:

- **The routine collection and exchange of information resulting from student tracking from post-compulsory schooling through to secure employment, training or higher education.**

- **Formal protocols developed between governments to establish a framework of referral for students at risk of leaving school early to a recognised transition service.**

- **Performance benchmarks including skills profiles required for transition service providers**

- **The development of a national careers information and guidance system that can equip all students in secondary schools with knowledge and information on pathways, options, and include information on workplace requirements.**

- **Regular evaluation of the impact of transition services.**

This framework then needs to be implemented at a local level through a series of formal agreements between schools, training providers, community agencies, and enterprises.

## **Contracting transition providers**

To date, the funding available for JPP has been of a developmental nature, and has seeded some innovative approaches producing good outcomes. The innovation needs to be encouraged and the outcomes promoted more widely.

Current approaches to obtaining JPP services leads to apparent anomalies in student access. Students in some regions have very limited access, while in other regions the service is reasonably comprehensive. Benchmarks on the cost of delivery of transition services and preventative services are needed to reduce current variations in coverage of JPP from one region to another, so that all young people who need assistance can access the transition service.

The current submission-based process creates a highly competitive environment between JPP providers which affects their capacity to collaborate, share information and improve their service based on the collective experience of delivering JPP. These processes can also create competition between agencies at the local level. Organisations that may bid against each other for JPP services then subsequently need to collaborate to achieve outcomes for young people. The annual funding (and re-funding) process also undermines the confidence of schools in establishing a strong dependence on the JPP service.

**Funding for the transition service should be on a basis that promotes collaboration, openness and transparency within a region, through a process managed at a regional level.**

**Services should be established for up to three years (subject to performance based on strong service benchmarks and accountabilities) and ensure equity of access for young people.**

**Resources should be provided to facilitate local collaboration between agencies and stakeholders before development of the local proposal. Agreement on the optimal service provider or consortia in a region is likely to lead to stronger relationships between schools, JPP providers, employers and other relevant agencies. Area Consultative Committees could be used to manage or contract the facilitation stage.**

To ensure that all young people who do not intend to proceed to tertiary study can access JPP, additional resources are required for the programme. New sustainable resources should be directed towards establishing JPP as a comprehensive national transition programme. Provision needs to be established on funding allocated to regions based on the population of eligible young people. Additional weightings can be made for factors such as travel in regional locations, local youth unemployment rates, and rates of transition to higher education.

**Additional resources are required to ensure all young people in need can access JPP. Funding requirements need to be identified on a population basis, take local factors**

**such as unemployment rates and transition to higher education into account, and allocate funds to regions where decisions on provision can be made.**

Once organisations or consortia are contracted to provide JPP services, their capacity to learn from each other would be enhanced by strengthening their national forum, which is currently the National JPP Network. The capacity of the National Network to distribute information, coordinate responses and promote good practice is currently limited by a lack of resources.

An allocation of core funding to support the operation of the National Network would allow this forum to function as a point of information distribution and communication for JPP providers. An alternative option would be to explore an alliance or merger with similar associations such as Jobs Australia.

**The National JPP Network should be adequately resourced by government to provide information, coordinate issues and promote good practice on behalf of, and between, JPP providers.**

There appear to be three functions being performed by the JPP providers under the current arrangements. The first is providing information and case management to potentially all students who are leaving school seeking employment. The second is providing a range of interventions to assist predominantly younger "students at risk" remain at school or move to alternative education and training environments. The third is involvement in identifying general careers advice, assistance in curriculum delivery, and establishing other vocational options within schools.

More clearly defining components of the service will assist both providers and stakeholders to obtain a clearer understanding of the service, and provide a stronger basis for funding and delivery of the programme. The components should be delivered by the same agency or consortia nominated as a result of the locally agreed collaborative process.

It is important that a consistent platform of service is established that guarantees a safety net assistance for those leaving school, while still allowing local flexibility to respond to particular needs in preventing young people from leaving school.

**Service benchmarks need to be developed for the preventative and placement aspects of the transition service as two distinct elements. This would encourage providers to develop creative preventative approaches while separately providing the safety net services.**

The transition process is generally taking a longer period of time for young people to complete. Some young people, particularly those at risk, need more time to make a secure transition. JPP providers continue to support some young people for extended periods of time beyond the limits of their contract. An effective transition system needs to be able to meet the requirement to support some young people for extended periods of time.

**An effective transition service needs to provide support for high risk individuals up to 12 months after leaving school, and to work with students younger than 15 on preventative approaches.**

JPP could be immediately strengthened by integrating the service with other services directly related to school to work transition. Parallel activities that directly or indirectly assist young people to successfully make a transition from school to work or other equivalent post-school outcomes would be the optimal linkage. Integrating arrangements within a region could help the main stakeholders, schools and employers, access a range of related services through the one agency or 'gateway'.

Combining the information, assessment, referral and support functions of JPP with arrangements for work placement, and part-time New Apprenticeships in schools would make sense both for schools and employers. JPP providers would be able to work with students over an extended period of time, and employers would have one point of contact to deal with for a number of school requirements.

It would be important that the service continues to be provided by staff from outside the school with the appropriate profile of skills and experience.

Integration with these school-based services offers the advantages of a less competitive funding regime, and greater continuity of service provision.

**Integration of JPP with other services provided in schools preparing students for transition to employment, such as work placement and part-time apprenticeships, would strengthen access to the service within schools. Integration would need to ensure that positive current features of the service, such as the skills profile of staff, were maintained.**

The role played by JPP providing the vocationally related component of careers information services could be formalised as current arrangements for providing information in schools often appears inadequate. If funding for transition services is allocated through regional partnerships, a careers service could also be purchased for young people in and out of school. This service would be most effectively provided by a combination of school and transition service personnel. The requirement for a careers service that is knowledgeable about all the pathways available to young people, and can advise young people as effectively about workplace requirements as tertiary education requirements, is likely to require a number of organisations to be involved.

The capacity to provide career services should require that staff should meet defined skills and qualification profile requirements.

**Local co-ordination of transition services should include contracting a comprehensive careers and guidance system for students.**

The new national transition body could host an annual conference that include both State and Commonwealth transition programmes, and serve as a national forum to discuss and profile good practice. Content could also be provided in electronic and printed form in regularly produced newsletters or booklets under a funding allocation made by the Commonwealth.

**An Annual National Conference, providing a discrete forum within the conference, could profile examples of good practice selected by a nomination process. Presentations made could be subsequently documented and circulated to schools and providers in booklets, newsletters, or on the web.**

Duplicated effort by many JPP providers developing materials and resources is an inefficient use of funds and limits development of the programme. The competitive environment does not encourage the widespread distribution of resources. The basic information and work readiness tools used in JPP are remarkably consistent across the programme, and JPP providers could opt to use centrally commissioned resources or make their own arrangements.

**Core materials and resources for use by JPP providers could be commissioned by the national body and developed through other agencies including providers. This would help to establish a set of resources for the programme.**

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**PART A: ANALYSIS & FINDINGS**

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Suite 6, Level 2  
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Australia

Email: [info@dsf.org.au](mailto:info@dsf.org.au)

Telephone: +61 2 9212 5800

Fax: +61 2 9212 1533

---

Peter Kellock  
The Asquith Group  
PO Box 2155  
Kew VIC 3101  
Australia

[tag@enternet.com.au](mailto:tag@enternet.com.au)  
Mobile: 0412 342 637  
Fax: +61 3 9859 9452

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## **1. CONDUCT OF THE STUDY**

This study of the Jobs Pathways Programme was conducted through three stages. Commencing with a review of the available literature on JPP and comparable transition initiatives, JPP providers were then surveyed to obtain a succinct summary of their approach and their views on effective transition services. More detailed views of providers and stakeholders were documented through selected case studies (these form Part C of this paper, which is a separate publication).

The study has been undertaken as a learning exercise, not as an evaluation of the programme. It should be noted that the Department of Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) has been conducting an evaluation of JPP internally during the same period of time.

During the study, requests for data on clients and service provision and were made to the Commonwealth in order to help scope the study and document the extent of coverage of assistance under JPP currently available. This data has not been made available, on the basis that the contractual arrangements between the Commonwealth and providers are 'commercial in confidence'. Lack of access to basic data on the level of participation in JPP and the outcomes achieved at a regional and local level make it difficult to determine the impact of the programme. It also makes it more difficult to promote successes achieved under JPP.

To support the study, the Dusseldorp Skills Forum established a small Reference Group. This included the DETYA Manager of JPP, representatives from the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, and a number of current and former managers of JPP brokerages. The Reference Group met by teleconference with the project consultants. The development and design of the survey instrument and selection of the case studies was discussed with the Dusseldorp Skills Forum, DETYA and the Steering Committee to ensure that appropriate choices were made.

We would like to acknowledge the contribution of JPP providers, staff in schools, employers and clients of JPP who assisted with this study.

## 2. INTRODUCTION

The Jobs Pathways Programme is currently designed to assist young people between the ages of 15 and 19 who intend to make the transition from school to work within the following twelve months. This includes both those still at school who are preparing to leave school (from Year 10 onwards) and those who have left school since 1 July the preceding year.

The nature of the assistance provided is based on an assessment of each individual's need, followed by advice, referral to other agencies and services, and support.

The outcomes of the current Programme are dependent on the needs of the individual. They can be:

- ❑ employment
- ❑ a return to education or training (including achievement of a recognised Year 12 certificate)
- ❑ the successful completion of one or more courses of action aimed at improving their overall capacity to compete effectively in the labour force;
- ❑ commencement in a school-based vocational programme or part-time apprenticeship.

The Jobs Pathways Programme, introduced by the Commonwealth Government in 1995, is a service delivered by providers contracted under an open tender submission to provide services within a geographic region based on Department of Education School Districts and clusters of schools.

The total funding provided for JPP by DETYA in 1999-2000 JPP was \$23.6m. It was not intended that this would necessarily provide for universal coverage in terms of either JPP regions or access for all potentially eligible participants.

The programme has evolved and expanded in the five years since it was introduced, and the focus of the service has been refined on several occasions. In the period since 1995, a number of changes in the wider policy environment have also had an impact on the services and support available to young people in transition from school to work.

These include the introduction of Full Service Schools providing access to a broad range of health, counselling and social services for young people and their families in particular schools and regions, emphasising the school as a centre for linking students to other key services and supports.

The contracting out of the former public employment service to create the Job Network has also changed the environment in which general employment services as well as apprenticeships and traineeships are accessed and delivered. A competitive environment for the provision of employment services has also become potentially more fragmented.

The Dusseldorp Skills Forum commissioned an independent study of JPP to produce a strategic report that might influence the policy environment on transition issues and interventions, as well as serving as a 'best practice' manual for JPP brokers.

The study was designed to:

- document and highlight good practice in the delivery of JPP
- develop benchmarks of good practice
- suggest how to share such information on an ongoing basis
- document the impact of projects by comparison with regions where no projects operate
- investigate the distinctive features and strengths of JPP compared with other transition programmes
- explore the relationships of stakeholders within projects
- explore the interface of JPP and JPET, and explore options for stronger integration
- investigate ways in which JPP could be strengthened to be the major brokerage mechanism underpinning a national commitment to youth to provide effective post-school transition.

It was anticipated that the evolution of the Jobs Pathways Programme for school leavers in transition could provide significant insights and experience for the development of community structures and systems required to deliver a national approach ensuring that all early school leavers are actively linked to processes ensuring that they increase their skills and qualifications. Those leaving school before completing a Year 12 certificate might be provided with an entitlement to either return to school to complete Year 12, obtain an education and training qualification that is generally comparable to year 12, or obtain a full-time job linked to education and training. Such an entitlement would require a commitment to resourcing the required support systems for the young person, as well as the training and subsidised employment needed to actively reinsert them into the education and labour market systems.

The study was designed to seek ways of strengthening JPP as a model for a comprehensive system of assistance for young people attempting to move from school to the labour market.

A study of the Jobs Pathways Programme presents the opportunity to document the effectiveness of brokerage arrangements, and the variables that might impact on their effectiveness, including the type of agency involved, the state of the local and regional labour market, the relationships with other stakeholders, and the related policies of the schools involved.

### **The Evolution of the Jobs Pathways Programme**

The Jobs Pathways Programme (JPP) has grown from a \$2m pilot programme of ten projects initiated five years ago to a national programme funded by DETYA that covers 95 regions and operates under a national budget of approximately \$23.6m. In 1999-2000, the Commonwealth has awarded 95 contracts to cover JPP regions across Australia. Up

to 70,000 students from 1,600 secondary schools will be assisted. However, there are still some school districts not serviced by JPP.

The first projects were located in areas of high youth unemployment where there were not necessarily strong partnerships between education, industry and the wider community..

The concept behind the development of the pilots was that young people were to have at least completed a vocational program while still at school. The intention was to create a strong bridge between upper secondary school-industry programs and jobs. However, the implementation was soon broadened to include all school leavers not going on to full-time study.

In the first couple of years of operation of the programme, the brokers were required to focus on brokering a job or a traineeship, or providing assistance to obtain a job or training placement. Most typically, the programme was viewed by brokers as a job placement service tailored to the needs and circumstances of school leavers not going on to further full-time study.

The successive tenders let by the Commonwealth Government have resulted in several adjustments in the focus of the programme. The first and second tenders provided for both employment outcomes and (less specifically) for retention of 'at risk' students at school. The third tender provided only for employment outcomes. The most recent fourth tender has expanded the outcomes for which providers will be funded.

The tender by DETYA from August 1999 allows for a wider range of clients and of outcomes, with a focus on the provision of skills and knowledge as well as on employment outcomes. Providers are now able to assist 15 to 19 year olds inclusive, whether they are still at school, are in the process of completing year 12, or have left school since 1 July 1999. The focus on outcomes include the successful completion of courses of action designed to increase employability; return to further education and training (including return to complete year 12) and commencement of a school-based VET programme or part-time New Apprenticeship.

Various types of organisations are contracted by the Commonwealth Government to provide JPP services in 1999-2000. Community organisations, Group Training Companies, Job Network employment service providers, TAFE Institutes, private training organisations, schools and ASTF clusters all deliver JPP services.

### **Previous Studies**

DETYA commissioned a review of the initial implementation of JPP in 1996/97. Conducted by Miles Morgan, the review made several suggestions for strengthening JPP. These suggestions included improved broker accountability by registering and signing off clients; potential extensions of contracts of up to three years subject to meeting performance criteria; and focusing the programme primarily on year 12 students making

a transition to the workforce. The review also indicated their view that ASTF networks would be well placed to offer JPP services.

DETYA is currently conducting another evaluation of the Programme, this time being undertaken internally. The evaluation includes a national survey of a sample of JPP participants, and is due to be completed early in the second half of 2000.

A short paper for the Dusseldorf Skills Forum by Richard Sweet in May 1996, *The Jobs Pathways Guarantee: Some Observations on the Pilot Programmes* compared the implementation in the first twelve months with the original conception of the programme.

Sweet found that JPP providers at that time viewed their role as providing an employment placement service in which assessment, advice, support and guidance were the key elements. The need for early intervention with young people while still at school to provide relevant information and establish a link was frequently raised by providers.

The main achievements of JPP in the pilot phase appeared to be in demonstrating that young people were lacking the knowledge and skills to make the transition from school to work-not so much vocational skills, as general job seeking and presentation skills. The other achievement noted by Sweet was the demonstration that a wide variety of types of broker could deliver a practical proactive service by working between schools and employment service providers.

The report suggested that ways to improve the transition service would be to build systematic monitoring and tracking systems at the local level, and to establish links between the school leavers and the support and service agencies well before the time that the student leaves the school.

### 3. A CONTEXT FOR JPP

#### Comparable International Programmes

In 1996, the OECD initiated a study across fourteen countries to identify major aspects of change in the transition from initial education to working life, and to evaluate the contribution of different policy approaches to facilitating transition. The "*Thematic Review of the Transition from Initial Education to Working Life*" has produced brief reports on each of the countries visited, as well as a comparative report on transition across the countries that were studied. These studies can be accessed at the OECD website: (<http://www.oecd.org/els/edu/index.htm>).

The OECD study observes that transition across OECD countries in the 1990's shares some common themes.

- ❑ **Young people are taking longer to make the transition.**  
A combination of factors is leading to a longer transition period, including students deciding to stay in education until they are older, employers wanting to employ older apprentices, students' reluctance to commit to specific vocational choices leading to continuing secondary education, completing double degrees, and delaying settling into work after leaving school (due to travelling and other options).
- ❑ **The boundaries are 'blurring', and there is no longer as sharp a distinction between initial education and work.**  
The establishment of part-time apprenticeships combining school and work; students doing part-time work while still at school, and schools introducing more blended school and workplace activity has resulted in an increasing overlap between education and work.
- ❑ **There are changing definitions of who is at risk**  
Those at risk appear to be more than just those who are not obtaining employment in the short term. The patterns of some young people also suggest that combinations of short term jobs, mixed with periods of unemployment and undertaking short training courses are also predictors of risk in the long term. Those graduating from upper secondary school, but not qualified for tertiary study can also be included in this group.

The OECD study also identifies a number of effective features of transition programmes emerging from the international study. These are:

- ❑ A healthy economy
- ❑ Well organised pathways connecting initial education with work or further study
- ❑ Widespread opportunities for combining study with workplace experience
- ❑ Tightly knit safety nets for those at risk
- ❑ Good information and guidance systems
- ❑ Effective institutions and processes.

The provision of a safety net depends on the identification of those at risk.

The level of schooling attained is an important predictor of post-school training and success in the labour market. Comparing the outcomes in the United States, Great Britain and Australia, Tan et al. (1992, p.92) confirms other research findings 'that the level of school attainment is an important predictor of post-school training and labour market success'. In all three countries, better educated young people are more likely to undertake training, which in turn influences their wages and reduces the likelihood that they will experience unemployment.

Studies in the United States and Sweden show that failure to make an early transition to permanent work or to full-time study is associated with long-term risks of marginalisation, helping to trap people in a cycle of unemployment, part-time work and government schemes (DEMOS, 1999). Similarly, in the United Kingdom, if young people between the ages of 16 and 23 had no experience of unemployment, they were subsequently unemployed over the following ten years only 1.6 per cent of the time. However, if young people were unemployed for more than a year between 16 and 23, they were subsequently unemployed for almost 23 per cent of the time over the following ten years (Gregg, 1999).

The interventions open to governments to assist in the transition process are usually to develop policies programmes and strategies designed to retain young people within the education system, or to work intensively after they have left school to link them back in to employment, education or training. Governments can and do simultaneously pursue both options.

The chances of successful intervention seem to be higher when students are still at school. Offering a range of pathways while still at school encourages students to remain engaged in school. This allows intensive resources to be directed to those in need when the numbers are smaller in the first place.

The **United States** and Canadian approach to transition has traditionally been based on a relatively open education system. Their market-based approach requires individuals to fend for themselves in trying to enter the labour market, and employers being responsible for training their own employees (Lowe and Krahn, 1993).

In response to emerging transition issues common to many other western countries, the United States provided seven years of seed funding to States and local industry education partnerships through the 1994 National School to Work Opportunities Act to develop integrated school to work systems. The legislation was driven by the perception that students required more employer involvement in education, more work-based learning and youth apprenticeships to provide a clearer pathway from school to career.

In the United States there is very strong opposition to the concept of tracking students, and a corresponding commitment to the idea of the comprehensive high school. As a result, most resources have been deployed to reduce the dropout rate, rather than assisting

those who may have already done so. With relatively little focus on those who have dropped out, there is less emphasis on employment placement and support in the post school phase.

Local partnerships formed between educators and the business community have produced a variety of initiatives in career education, career planning and career information. State Governments are also contributing significant funding into these activities encouraging schools through regulations and mandates. The major products appear to be career guidance charts and other student support material of an informational nature, while there are fewer examples of integrated vocational and general curricula. An American Evaluation of the School to Work initiative in 1999 concludes that the partnerships have been led by educators, are not strongly linked to employers or employment outcomes, and may not survive the cessation of Federal funding in 2001 (Mathematica Policy Research, 1999).

While the focus in the United States has been to provide career tools and information to students at school, the United Kingdom has established a series of inter-related interventions attempting to provide a framework for regional partnerships, strengthen the careers service, and provide intensive assistance for those who have already left school.

The **United Kingdom** approach has successively built up a number of initiatives during the 1990's that have influenced the transition between compulsory education and employment. From the introduction of a national qualification framework in 1988 based on competencies recognised in the workplace, the government has moved on to concentrate on reforming careers information, introducing vocational pathways within the education system, establishing mechanisms to coordinate and energise local partnerships, and providing the New Deal to assist young people who have left school and are at risk.

Careers information in the UK is now provided by 91 *Careers Service* companies under boards composed of local and business representatives. Mostly funded by the central government, they operate under 5 year contracts, subject to the agreement of annual business plans. Through the business plans the government can ensure the *Careers Service* companies work to minimise dropouts, and track young people after they have left school or other institutions. Each company can obtain additional resources through other activities. They each hire their own employees including professional careers advisers who must possess a regulated and recognised qualification. Some employers criticise the Service for still promoting the higher education pathways at the expense of the work-based training pathway for more able students.

Targeted assistance is provided to young people who have left school and are unable to secure employment. Under the government's *New Deal*, a government agency *The Employment Service* targets young people aged 18 to 24 who have been unemployed for six months. The aim is to eliminate long-term youth unemployment and rise the skill levels and employability of those young people most in need of help. The young people are provided with intensive advice, guidance, information and support for a maximum of four months. If they have not found a job after four months, they are offered either full-

time education or training; six months work with a voluntary sector organisation or an Environment Taskforce; or subsidised work with an employer. The Employment Service cooperates with a number of partners to deliver the service, including the *Careers Service*.

The New Deal is based on balancing 'rights and responsibilities', providing increased opportunities for the young unemployed, but requiring that they take up one of the four options offered at the end of the four month gateway period.

Training Enterprise Councils (TECs), or in Scotland, Local Enterprise Councils (LECs), play an important role in linking business and education at the regional level. These industry led groups have been active throughout the 1990s in the local management of implementing the new apprenticeship system through contracting training providers; coordinating adult training; strengthening local economic development, and launching local partnerships. They are often involved in partnerships around the *New Deal*. The TECs and LECs also gets involved in promoting programmes to employers that help to develop the personal qualities that employers are looking for. Targeted at 14 to 16 year olds, the employers support the local schools and colleges by providing mentoring, mock interviews, work experience and workplace visits, and debriefing sessions.

Recognition of the increasing numbers of disaffected young people aged 14 to 17, either in or out of school, has resulted in another initiative called 'New Start'. Recognising the need to start working with students as young as 14 or even earlier, this approach is again built on local partnerships between voluntary and social service organisations, the careers service, and schools colleges and training providers. These parties and the TEC have to be involved as partners for the programme to receive part of the \$10m available over three years.

The most sustained international examples of coherent approaches are in the Nordic countries which have developed a 'youth guarantee' for all of an opportunity through a position in either education, training or work (McKenzie,1998). A system of incentives and penalties is used to push young people towards productive work. The Norwegian and Swedish experience in particular show the value of individualised follow-up measures for those who have left school or are at risk of doing so. Although this can be resource intensive, these approaches show that early school leaving is not inevitable.

In **Denmark**, there is a strong focus on keeping young people in education till they have achieved a qualification. Various forms of support are available while students are still at school, including a prominent role for guidance systems.

The 15% of students who have left school before completing a qualification are actively encouraged to return to education through a combination of rewards and penalties. Each local municipality is legally required to follow up all young people under the age of 20 who drop out without receiving a qualification. Once notified by the school, the municipal office or youth guidance service follows up. The young person is interviewed, and in association with an adviser from the guidance service, they have to develop an

action plan that involves work, education and training, with the primary goal of getting them back into mainstream education to get a qualification. There are two subsequent interviews within twelve months to check progress on the action plan. Students under 18 receive no income support if they are not in education or training, and those over 18 receive income support only if they are actively fulfilling their action plan.

The youth guidance service can offer a lot of options, but for those under 18, the focus is only on getting them back into education, not into employment.

The impact of this approach is impressive. Unemployment has virtually ceased to exist for those under 18 years of age. Very few young Danes move directly from school to employment, and those who do become unemployed do not stay unemployed for long. In recent years, the proportion of young Danes in youth education and entering tertiary education has been steadily rising.

Programmes are heavily resourced and ... "many are used by students who are not failing, but who find in them an attractive alternative to the conventional system. The fact that they are for everyone, rather than only the failures, may create the circumstances that make them successful for those who would otherwise fail." Many of the decisions are left to those at the local level (municipalities) who have the best knowledge of needs and local circumstances.

In **Norway**, since 1994, young people have a statutory right of access to a follow-up service designed to reintegrate school dropouts into education. The follow-up service is provided through a well-resourced administrative structure that works with the Public Employment Office, the upper secondary schools, and municipal health and welfare services.

Coordinated at the county level, the follow-up service aims to quickly reintegrate early school leavers into school so that they can gain an upper secondary school qualification. The service contacts those who are entitled to a place but who fail to apply for continuing education, as well as those who drop out. The service operates through a network of coordinators who in turn work with local counsellors or mentors who are the main contact point with young people.

The service works closely with the school counsellor service and the school psychological service (and is sometimes co-located with these services). The young person is given a counsellor and develops a personal action plan that is regularly reviewed. The form of assistance is tailored to individual needs. Services include personal advice, counselling and access to community services, offer of trainee places in firms, subsidised employment, education and training opportunities.

This again is a well-resourced service. As an example, one county has the equivalent of fourteen full-time staff working with a potential client group of 16,000 with the entitlement. Estimating that 5% of these (perhaps 800 young people) constitute the target group, this is a ratio of about 60 clients per staff member.

However, initial evaluations of the impact of the service are very positive. Dropout rates are falling, and a very high percentage of those contacted are in positive activities. Combinations of traineeships in a firm combined with some school attendance has proved the most effective approach in re-motivating and re-inserting dropouts.

These examples from the Nordic countries have common elements with the processes used in JPP. The main differences appear to be in the statutory framework under which the programmes operate, the requirement for schools to notify follow-up agencies, and the fact that services are provided once the young person has left school.

### **The transition to work in Australia**

The environment in which young people leave Australian schools to enter the labour market is not conducive to an easy transition. Year 12 retention rates have been in decline nationally since the early 1990s. The youth labour market in Australia over the past 20 years has changed through the collapse of full-time employment and a corresponding rise in part-time work.

The traditional pathway of school to work transition in Australia until the 1980s was through securing an apprenticeship or a full-time job for those who left school early, or through higher education, training or full-time employment for those who completed secondary school. (Wooden, 1996).

Over the past decade, there has been a change in the balance of young and older people commencing apprenticeships as employers pick from the more skilled and experienced (Spieirings, 1999). The growth in part-time and /or temporary work has been significant, but access to such employment is often not a stepping stone to more permanent better paid work, but just from one form of marginal activity followed by another. (Sweet, 1998). Marginal activity is defined as not being in education and being either employed part-time, unemployed or not in the labour force.

Long-term trends show a continuing increase in youth unemployment, and a decrease in full-time employment opportunities. The unemployment rate for 15-24 year olds is more than twice as high as that for 25-54 year olds (Sweet, 1998). Almost 15% of 15-19 year olds are not in full-time education or full-time employment. In addition to those who are unemployed, there are many who are also in low paid, part-time or temporary employment after school.

The diminishing labour market opportunities for young people has also been illustrated by McClelland, MacDonald and MacDonald (1998). They show the extent of young people's involvement in marginal activities defined as not being in education and being either in part-time employment, unemployed or not in the labour force. In 1996 there were 343,400 15 to 19 year olds not in education. Of these young people, an estimated 187,700 young people (almost 15%) were engaged in marginal activities. This included 67,800 employed only part-time, 78,200 unemployed and a further 41,700 not in the

labour force. (McClelland et al, 1998) They go on to estimate that 9% of teenagers were engaged long term in marginal activities.

Young people leaving school early are significantly worse off than are students who complete Year 12. In 1996, approximately two-thirds of Year 12 leavers progressed to further education (mainly TAFE) compared with one third of early school leavers (Ainley 1998).

Early school leavers are more likely to be unemployed. 48% of job seekers did not attain a secondary education compared with 29% of employed persons (ABS 1995). They are also unemployed for longer than other young people.

A review of national data on the transition of young people from school to initial employment by ACER in 1997 compared the outcomes for early school-leavers and those who completed school in terms of unemployment. They found that there were clear benefits in completing year 12, benefits that have increased over the past decade. Early school leaving was found to be related to family education resources, geographical location, English speaking background of parents, and socio-economic status. (Ainley, J., Malley, J. and Lamb, S.1997).

Data available from ABS, NCVER and DETYA also underlines the importance for students of developing literacy and numeracy skills and school completion if they are to make a successful transition. Between 40 and 50% of long-term unemployed have very poor literacy levels (ABS data)

Economic growth and job creation schemes do not by themselves create the skills and qualifications that young people need to compete effectively with adults in the labour market (Sweet, 1998). Sweet suggests that to deal with youth unemployment, more needs to be done to make schools more attractive to students by including more VET courses and work placements in school curriculums. In addition, early school-leavers could be entitled to be given assistance in the transition to employment, and supported to move to more secure employment through the development of action plans and mentoring activities.

Similar findings are reported by McClelland, MacDonald, and MacDonald (1998). Their recommendations to overcome labour market disadvantage for young people are to support school to work transition and early intervention programmes, improve training opportunities for people in part-time and casual employment, and stimulate employment opportunities and labour market programmes.

The general idea of a 'Pathway' from schools to employment and post-school careers generally needs to be treated with some caution. Research has shown that 30% of all 15 to 19 year olds changed their main activity at least once every 6 months. (Landt and Scott, 1998).

Young people's experience in the labour market in the initial post-school years can be quite fluid. The transition process is complex and clear and distinctive 'pathways' from school to work are often not apparent. *"The concept of a linear pathway for young people needs to be urgently rethought; a more apt metaphor might be the idea of a mosaic. Young people ... are required to put all the pieces into place and to find the answers to life's jigsaw using their own devices."* (Spierings,1999).

All young people need to be prepared both for work and for further learning. Transition policies and programmes need to be developed from a lifelong learning perspective so that young people will be capable of maintaining employability. In considering whether approaches to transition may be effective, broad indicators and a long time horizon are required.

Still, research also strongly suggests that long term employment prospects for young people improve markedly if a job is obtained soon after leaving education.

In a practical response to the issues identified by the research, the Brotherhood of St. Laurence established a Transition Project within two Victorian Secondary schools in 1997. The project was established to identify the barriers to early school leavers making the transition from school to work and to document the value of efforts to help them make a more successful transition. The resultant report documents an approach with strong similarities to JPP (MacDonald, 1999).

Two project officers appointed by the Brotherhood of St. Laurence were each based in a school three days a week. They provided vocational counselling and support within the school, school-based referral and support when the student exited the school, post-school follow-up and support; and placement into an employment or training programme. The project officers used intensive and long term case management, each working with an average of 50 students.

A formal agreement between the schools and the agency providing the service specified the aim and objectives of the project and the responsibilities of the people involved.

The key findings of the project were to highlight the importance of comprehensive career advice and counselling being available so that young people can make appropriate choices. Access to alternative education and training settings are also important for young people leaving school early.

Increased awareness in the school community of transition issues for early school leavers led to changes in school exit procedures, student monitoring, and links with TAFE.

#### 4. AN OVERVIEW OF JPP NATIONALLY

In Australia, many organisations have now been providing JPP services for over four years. Sufficient time has elapsed for reflection on the lessons that have been learnt from the delivery of JPP in that time.

An overview of JPP providers' approach to the delivery of services and the lessons that had been learnt were collected through a survey e-mailed to all brokers. The only providers not surveyed were approximately ten organisations first funded by the Commonwealth in 2000 as part of a supplementary funding round.

Of 70 JPP providers surveyed, 41 responses were obtained (59%). The survey was designed to capture an overview of their approach, whilst also allowing a general classification of providers by location, organisational type, size and experience.

In addition to capturing a snapshot of national JPP provision, the information from the survey was designed to assist in the subsequent selection of case studies.

##### Responses from JPP Providers

The national profile of the type of organisations currently delivering JPP, based on the DETYA Internet site is as follows: Community organisations and Group Training Companies represent the largest number of JPP providers. Employment services are also well represented, while educational providers in the form of schools and ASTF clusters, and TAFE Institutes and private training organisations make up the remainder of the brokers.

Responses to the survey show that all these groups responded in reasonable numbers, although less than a third of the employment service agencies participated.

##### Type of Broker

| Type of Broker         | No. of Survey Responses | DETYA contracts covered ** |
|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------------|
| Group Training Company | 9                       | 14                         |
| Community Organisation | 13                      | 13                         |
| ASTF Cluster           | 5                       | 5                          |
| School                 | 4                       | 4                          |
| Private RTO            | 3                       | 3                          |
| TAFE Institute         | 2                       | 2                          |
| Employment Agency      | 5                       | 5                          |
|                        | <b>41</b>               | <b>46</b>                  |

\*\* Some organisations have been awarded several JPP contracts to deliver projects in different regions.

A broad sample of responses from all States and Territories was received (ACT is included in the New South Wales data) as well as a balanced mix of metropolitan, regional and rural locations.

### Location of Broker

|            | Metro     | Rural     | Regional  | Total     |
|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| <b>VIC</b> | 3         | 2         | 4         | 9         |
| <b>WA</b>  | 2         | 1         | 3         | 6         |
| <b>SA</b>  | 2         | 4         | 1         | 7         |
| <b>QLD</b> | 2         | 3         | 4         | 9         |
| <b>NSW</b> | 3         | 1         | 4         | 8         |
| <b>TAS</b> | 0         | 0         | 1         | 1         |
| <b>NT</b>  | 1         | 0         | 0         | 1         |
|            | <b>13</b> | <b>11</b> | <b>17</b> | <b>41</b> |

Providers assisting relatively small numbers of schools predominate. 30% of brokers are working with less than 10 schools, and over 60% of brokers are assisting anywhere between 4 and 20 schools. However, there are some regions in which one broker assists large numbers of schools. One project is working with over 90 schools under several contracts.

### Number of Schools Serviced

| Schools project works with | Number |
|----------------------------|--------|
| Between 1-10 schools       | 13     |
| Between 11-20 schools      | 12     |
| Between 21-30 schools      | 8      |
| More than 30 schools       | 8      |

Most JPP providers responding to the survey have been involved in the programme for a number of years and as a result are in a position to reflect on the development of JPP. 79% of the responses were from providers who had been delivering JPP for at least two years.

### Broker Experience

| Time as JPP Broker | Projects |
|--------------------|----------|
| 3 years +          | 18       |
| 2 years +          | 14       |
| 1 year +           | 7        |
| Less than a year   | 2        |

The survey revealed that the experiences of JPP providers around the country were remarkably consistent. The providers were asked to identify what had been learnt about school to work transition from their experience, and the elements of a successful approach to delivering JPP. The following section summarises the experiences and views of the JPP providers.

## **Themes of Responses**

### The relationship with Schools

JPP is a service that is primarily delivered in schools. There are JPP projects delivering most services outside school, but these are in a minority. Most JPP providers consider it preferable to provide services to young people within the school setting, and accordingly, work hard to achieve this. Students at risk of leaving school early are usually assessed and referred by teachers in the school, and the presence of JPP within the school helps to strengthen and refine the referral process.

Strong links with the schools in the region are crucial for JPP providers to be able to operate effectively, because they depend on decisions within the school to gain access to young people who need the service. As a result, brokers either need to have an established relationship with the schools, or establish specific strategies to develop a good rapport and be highly flexible in the services provided to the schools.

The best results are achieved if schools develop a sense of ownership of JPP. Some of the strategies developed to increase a sense of school ownership include providing regular reports back to the schools on clients' outcomes, offering to integrate JPP with other services in the school such as curriculum development and delivery, and involving schools in the selection of JPP staff.

Some JPP providers have become an 'expert' resource for the school. As outsiders in the school, they have credibility when presenting information, especially about the job market. Through a presence within the school, some providers have established a link with parents that is an important channel for information and referral.

The level of career support available to students within the schools can vary significantly. As a result, different levels of support for students need to be provided by JPP to different schools in the same region. Most JPP providers initially relate to the schools through the careers and welfare staff, and need strong relationships with them. However, the connection to schools remains fragile while it is based on only one or two relationships, and providers find it preferable to make contact with, and give information to, as many staff within the school as possible once established within it.

There is a need to access clients independently from the school system, but the evidence suggests that few are achieving significant numbers from sources other than schools.

### Timing of Assistance to Young People

It is critical to work with students before they leave school. Contact is hard to establish and maintain if the students have already left school.

Early intervention approach in schools are favoured, and information and assistance from as early as Year 9 is provided. There are two facets to the early intervention approach.

The first is engaging at an early stage of the year with students who will leave at the end of the school year so that there is time to develop a relationship and provide appropriate information over a longer period.

The second facet is developing an approach based on the premise that transition occurs over a period of up to two years before the student actually leaves school. Involvement in the schools allows the JPP provider to assist the school develop a long-term plan involving placement, vocational training, information and advice from Year 10 onwards.

Some JPP providers suggested that students worked with over a period of time more easily achieve a successful transition than those assisted only late in the process.

### JPP Staff Profile

Irrespective of the type of organisation, JPP providers recruit staff with expertise in employment services as a priority. People with professional backgrounds in industry training are also regarded as valuable additions to the team. Employing staff that have credibility with school staff and clients based on their knowledge of the labour market, employer requirements, and job seeking skills is a high priority.

To be effective, staff need to have a positive attitude to young people, possess counselling skills, and have a sound knowledge of the particular region.

Recruitment and retention of skilled staff is challenging when JPP operates through annually tendered contracts. Relevant professional development for JPP staff is used to retain and develop the team, as well as to develop the quality of the service.

### Service Models

While JPP providers commonly refer to the "reality check" that they provide for schools and students on the requirements of employers and the labour market, there is also a perception that the services need to be responsive to and driven by the individual needs of the clients.

The emphasis is on providing an individualised service that flexibly responds to client needs based on their current knowledge and skills. The development of motivation and self esteem is considered to be as important as vocational skills and knowledge.

Community organisations in particular emphasise the need to provide students with the tools necessary to take control. Coaching and regular reassurance are used to support clients, and ways are sought to actively involve young people in the decision-making processes.

The type of organisation tendering to DETYA for JPP delivery has some influence on their approach to the programme. Schools and ASTF clusters offer a service integrated

with other school-based employment related services. Training providers easily access a range of vocational training options.

### Approaches to Service Delivery

Individual work is much more effective than group-based approaches to assisting clients. Although many use introductory group presentations and workshop formats, the key is in ultimately being responsive to diverse client needs.

To be able to meet the diverse needs, JPP providers enable young people to access a wide range of services, as the basis for providing them with flexible options. The providers supply a range of services themselves, purchase in additional services, or are able to refer to a network of other agencies and networks. It is often a combination of all of three.

The breadth of the service depends on either having, or quickly developing, an effective network with other agencies in the region. Collaboration is required with other regional and local agencies, both to ensure eligible young people are referred, and also to gain access to other relevant services. The most crucial of the networks are clearly the Job Network providers and local employers.

Subsidising JPP client access to services and training requiring fees is an option adopted by some JPP providers. Other providers that are based in training organisations or employment services are well-placed to obtain access to services within their larger organisation and its networks.

The core of the JPP service is the 'reality check', providing students with access to job market and job seeking information. Clear information on these issues also needs to be communicated to teachers and parents. There are differing views as to whether these services should be focused mainly on students identified as at risk of leaving school early, or on a much broader group including all year 12 students. Some providers consider that all students need this information, and not just those considered to be at risk. Others appear to be concentrating very much on the 'at risk' group.

Finally, an effective service is more than just placing an individual in a job. The aim is to provide young people with the necessary skills to be competitive for jobs in the long-term.

### Monitoring and Support

The importance of regular contact and long-term monitoring of clients is a consistent theme. JPP providers frequently remain in contact with former clients after they had been placed in jobs under the previous contract. The need for longer term support was illustrated by some of the case studies, in which examples of young people changing jobs and general direction sometimes occurred two or three times within the space of a year. The clients' need for continuing support to be able to access alternative programs and

employment reinforces the research suggesting the longer periods of contact required by young people.

### **Support through Mentoring**

**The Principal of Lesmurdie Senior High School attended a conference in NSW in 1999 and was impressed with the Mentoring Programme being offered through the Central Coast cluster of schools, and initiated by Central Coast Plan-It-Youth. The Central Coast JPP is developing a close relationship with Plan-It-Youth. The programme appealed because it involved training of mentors recruited from business (mainly retired) and the training provided to the mentors is a TAFE certificate programme. The outcomes that he observed in NSW were positive with students either successfully making the transition to employment or showing an improved enthusiasm to continuing in education. On his return, three schools in the Western Australian Swan District (Lesmurdie, John Forrest and Girrawheen SHS) joined forces and successfully gained funds through the Full Service Schools programme to pilot a mentoring programme based on the Central Coast model.**

**Midland TAFE are running the Mentoring certificate.**

**Early this year students were identified who were seen to be at risk of not continuing to completion of year12. Their parents were invited to attend an evening where the programme was explained as consisting of:**

- **a twelve month programme**
- **with a trained mentor**
- **aimed at encouraging and guiding the student with their choices**
- **assisting in researching jobs of interest to the student**
- **visits to workplaces**

**At the time of this interview, funding was in place, the TAFE certificate course was being made available locally, mentors were being sought and the students selected.**

### Clients

As Sweet noted in the paper on the JPP pilot projects in 1996/97, young people are poorly prepared for the job market. According to JPP providers little has changed. Young people know little about the labour market or about the Job Network services.

They confirm the findings of the Department of Employment Workplace Relations and Small Business' stage one report on the implementation and market development of the Job Network. The report indicated that young job seekers' contact with employment services has reduced with the introduction of the Job Network and the Youth Allowance.

Information designed for young people needs to be carefully pitched at the appropriate level, and many providers have developed their own information products in the absence of suitable material being available.

Students need to be given increased access to practical careers information, and to more relevant English and communications classes while they are at school. Schools are also encouraged to make vocational courses and placements, and strong school/industry programmes such as New Apprenticeships and VET in Schools more widely available. These school initiatives assist in practically preparing students for the transition to work.

The resolutions of the Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century which acknowledge that all students should have participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational learning as part of their senior secondary studies are supported by the experience of JPP providers.

Projects sometimes have to overcome mistrust and alienation when working with at risk young people. Young people need to be engaged in the process of assistance, and preferably have strong involvement in making progress. It can be a careful balancing required to be supportive to engage with the young person, whilst still ensuring that progress is made. Providing quality services and the fact that JPP works on a voluntary basis assists in creating a positive environment.

### Access for Remote Clients

JPP providers assisting young people living in remote and rural locations have had to develop particular strategies to enable students living in these areas to access the service. Creative solutions have included establishing toll-free telephone access to their service, extensive use of e-mail, and providing a fully mobile service on the road. Providers have also budgeted to provide special assistance for remote students.

Early intervention also provides opportunities to assist young people to access services. While students are still attending school, JPP providers in some rural areas ensure that young people are actively linked to the services that they will subsequently need to access after leaving school.

### **Introduction to the Case Studies**

The responses to the survey were also used as the basis for selecting the nine national case studies of JPP providers. The selection of case studies was designed to cover a broad range of organisational type, size, location, and experience. The case studies covered five States, included brokers from Group Training Companies, community organisations, ASTF clusters, TAFEs and Registered Training Organisations, and ranged in size from coverage of four schools to coverage of ninety-three schools.

The nine JPP providers selected as case studies all agreed to participate and provide information. Full case studies are reproduced in a separate publication, part C of this report.

Although the case studies essentially report the perspective of the JPP provider, other views have been obtained through meetings with schools, present and previous clients, employers, and referral agencies such as Job Network providers and other youth agencies. These views are discussed in the following section.

## 5. VIEWS OF STAKEHOLDERS

### Young People

The focus groups of young people experienced with JPP contacted through the Case Studies were uniformly positive about their experiences with JPP.

*"I couldn't stand school. I need to be told what's required and then left alone to do it. At school the teachers were always standing over my shoulder. Finally the careers counsellor told me to come down to JPP and see what could be done. I had no idea what JPP did before I turned up. At first I just wanted a job but after talking to JPP I decided to sit for year 11 at TAFE. I'll probably use JPP again near the end of the course to look for a job. If it wasn't for Jobs Pathways I'd be sitting at home watching TV."* (female participant)

Present and former clients are positive about three features of their involvement in JPP.

- The first is the practical assistance they are provided with in helping with the preparation of resumes, practice at interviewing, filling in of forms, and other basic aspects of preparation for employment.
- The second feature is the exposure to options and opportunities that the young person had not previously known about, and was of interest to them.
- The third, and probably the most striking feature for them, is the level of contact and support provided.

The regular contact and support from JPP staff is not regarded as intrusive, and is a useful sounding board and support for them. They were sometimes surprised at how effective some staff are at tracking them down despite the mobility of some seventeen and eighteen year olds. Contact is primarily made by telephone.

#### Dakabin JPP- Follow Up

**Former students using JPP, Travis and Kay finished school in 1999. Both have ended up doing traineeships. They indicate that support and contact was made regularly. Contact was reported to be 'about monthly' between January and April. Kay was impressed by the level of follow-up. "They keep contacting you. At the start they were always asking me about the TAFE course I had applied for or whether I had found a job. What really impressed me was that they actually track you down. I wasn't even at home; I was at a friend's house, and they actually found me there. I couldn't believe it."**

Former clients sometimes continue to initiate contact with the JPP staff beyond six months after leaving school, and in some cases maintain contact with JPP up to 18 months later 'ringing them up for a chat.' Students who had dropped out within the first six months of commencing tertiary courses also gravitate back to JPP for assistance.

Approximately half of the JPP providers survey their clients to obtain feedback for planning and improvement.

## Queensland University of Technology - Client Survey

Access was provided to data collected from clients of one JPP project and analysed by Professor Wendy Patton from the Queensland University of Technology. Thirty-five school leavers aged from 17 to 19 years who had participated in JPP were surveyed. Participation in the telephone survey was voluntary. The young people were surveyed on a number of issues including general psychological health and their level of commitment to work. These were young people who had gone on to employment after leaving school.

The majority of the students found out about the JPP programme during, or towards the end of year 12, as a result of assemblies or during their English class. (about 50%). Some students were told at the end of year 11 by the JPP co-ordinators (14%), some through informal contact with a teacher (11%), and some read about JPP in pamphlets and attended a two day course at the end of the year designed to increase their chances of employment (20%). The remaining students (8%) learned about JPP from an external source (such as sibling, a friend, or a family friend).

When asked how JPP had assisted them, most commented on the two day workshop provided by the JPP service which taught them job search, application and presentation skills. Students participating reported improved self-understanding and increased confidence about job seeking as a result. Some students suggested that the workshop could be improved by the provision of career guidance and vocational counselling.

Parents also endorse the programme. The parents of all surveyed students thought JPP was an important programme, and were impressed with the follow-up service provided by the coordinators. Students had been regularly contacted to find out how the jobs were progressing and whether there were any problems, which was reported to be reassuring during the early stages of apprenticeships and employment.

When asked what could have been improved about the programme to help better prepare them for employment, most responded very positively about the existing JPP arrangement. The two suggestions from students on how to improve the service were to provide more information and assistance to students in earlier years, and to provide more assistance in the decision making process about what jobs would suit their interests.

The QUT findings are consistent with those found in the case studies.

### Schools Using JPP

*"JPP has been a great support. Student feedback is excellent, and they have been able to find students work. Whatever we have asked of them to support the outcome, JPP has been prepared to do."* Patrician Brothers College staff member, Sydney.

As discussed earlier, it has taken time for most JPP providers to develop strong relationships with their schools. Careers advisers in some cases thought that the introduction of JPP was usurping their position, and in a few schools, staff were concerned that JPP were coming in to the school to 'poach students'.

The second factor retarding a faster take-up of the service by schools has been the uncertainty about the general longevity of the programme, and more particularly, the

individual JPP provider. Is it worth it to the school to build a relationship with a provider that may not be there in twelve months time?

Programme continuity continues to be a concern for schools, but over time the usefulness of JPP has become evident to groups such as careers teachers and student welfare coordinators. Awareness of and knowledge about JPP in the school can be very thin, however. Few staff beyond the careers teacher and guidance officer in a school may know much if anything about JPP. Often, there is no contact with key staff such as the VET coordinator in the school.

Given that JPP's involvement in schools is often built on personal relationships rather than structural arrangements, the link between JPP and the school can be fragile, especially early in the relationship. Dependent on developing a relationship with the careers teacher or guidance officer, changes in personnel can have a significant effect in the first year or two of involvement.

One feature of JPP which has gained widespread acceptance and comment is the perceived value of having people in the school with employment services and industry backgrounds providing this service. Students will confide in JPP staff on career and personal issues in a way that they can't with school staff due to the requirements of the teaching role.

#### **Employment Options JPP - Finding Work**

**Students from Cornerstone College will also contact JPP during holiday periods to find part-time work. The JPP staff know the needs of the students better than agencies in the Job Network, according to a school coordinator. Students tend to seek the wider services of JPP, because they become involved in the testing and counselling aspects rather than just straight job matching. *"To lose the JPP would be a "shock" because the staff and service have become important. The spread of staff skills is particularly appreciated by the school"* she says.**

The development of credibility with schools is sometimes built on the capacity of JPP projects to take on the most difficult students within that school, and make some progress with them. Giving the school staff confidence that difficult students can achieve good outcomes opens the door to broader forms of assistance. A school in the western suburbs of Melbourne where JPP maintains a presence one day a week was clearly impressed that *" every kid in year 12 from 1999 got a placement in a job or entry to a course."*

JPP possesses data on the labour market and the destination of former students that can be useful to the schools. Some schools also use the JPP provider as an information service for a range of needs, including changes to government policy, location of Job Network providers, and information on New Apprenticeship Centres and Group Training. One careers teacher, new to the position, comments...*"I use them like my Yellow Pages. Information on apprenticeships, how to identify kids at risk, you name and they had the answers."*

Schools are very positive about the flexibility of JPP and their capacity to assist the school in a wide range of activities. After a couple of years of involvement, teachers are commonly requesting JPP staff to assist in conducting classes and developing materials. The extent to which students are followed up by JPP staff is well regarded by schools as well as by the young people themselves.

### **Schools not Participating**

There are at least one or two schools in each region that do not use the JPP service at all. There was anecdotal evidence in several JPP projects of school principals attempting to charge JPP brokers to provide access to their enrolled students. The principal or the careers adviser of five schools in Western Australia, South Australia, Victoria and Queensland that had not taken up the option of the JPP service were contacted, to discuss the factors and their view of JPP.

Some saw JPP as an external service that needed to find clients to achieve their funding targets, equating the service with the Job Network. The rejection of the service was summarised by one principal: *"Why should we help them?"*

One school indicated that their exit data showed that over 90% of their students who completed year 12 go on to either university or TAFE-based training, so that JPP was not considered to be really relevant to them.

Another school now sees the JPP programme as being only for 'at risk' students rather than as a general transition service. This school was now less inclined than previously to be involved, believing that the programme is not required for their students.

Some schools use State funded programmes which provide elements of the same service as JPP. In Western Australia, Job Link is a State-funded transition service that uses an approach driven by matching various sources of data to link school exit, tertiary application and subsequent enrolment information to identify any students exiting from the schools who do not make a transition to TAFE or university. These students are then followed up, provided with job seeking and support services, and referred to a Job Network member for placement. This approach provides a link between school and the Job Network as the name implies.

In one Queensland High School, a full-time industry liaison officer is funded from within the school budget to work with all students from Year 8 providing information on the workplace, employer requirements, and recruitment. There are comprehensive career education, vocational options and employment preparation programmes operating in the school.

The schools had either made what they considered to be alternative provision for transition services, or believed that such services were unnecessary for their students.

## Employers

Employer views were provided both by representative bodies and by some employers directly involved in JPP projects.

As with many other government initiatives, general employer awareness of JPP is very low, not assisted by the loosely defined nature of the programme.

Employer representatives view the presence of non-school staff delivering transition services within the school as a positive aspect of JPP as long as the programme is clearly focused on transition from school to work. While supporting JPP delivery within the schools, involvement in school retention is considered to be essentially an educational issue that should be addressed by education systems. JPP involvement in the core business of the school such as directly providing literacy and numeracy courses is seen as a diversion from the focus of the programme on 'a jobs pathway'.

Employers are strongly of the opinion that JPP should remain broadly focused on assisting the majority of students moving from school to employment. Redirecting JPP to becoming an intervention mainly for 'at risk' students is likely to weaken employer support.

Once employers have been directly involved in recruiting young people assisted through JPP, responses are generally positive. Employers appreciate the quality control that JPP providers use to assess client 'work readiness', and as a result notice that few unsuitable candidates are sent to them. In some cases, JPP is used as a gateway by employers to manage their contact with schools and local agencies for work placement, work experience and recruitment. ASTF clusters in particular fulfill this role.

### Dakabin JPP - Links with Employers

*"The Dakabin JPP people come out and talk to you if necessary. You get a better service than going to the local employment agencies"... according to Glenn Toms, a local employer. Employers are often employing young people under JPP that they have already seen through work-placement. "Employers are prepared to support their local schools with giving employment to kids, because the schools are putting so much effort into making sure that they are work ready"... Toms agrees.*

As a general observation, JPP is said to provide employers with a 'better service' than the local employment agencies. There is support for providing young people with the skills to viably seek employment, rather than just putting them into jobs

Group Training Companies in some regions are also becoming reliant on JPP for referrals to apprenticeships. Again, one of the main reasons is level of quality control exercised by JPP providers in screening and training the applicants put forward for positions.

## 6. GOOD PRACTICE

In the absence of national benchmarks or system information on good practice, this section provides information on good practice based on research and the experience of selected providers.

This approach to good practice is based on four themes:

- building a young person's capacity to succeed in the long term
- developing strategies to provide broad access to JPP as a safety net
- building active stakeholder support through linking school and the workplace
- adopting a diagnostic approach as a basis for improving JPP and the contribution of stakeholders

### Building Client Capacity

The nature of the workforce requires young people to move into the labour market equipped for life long learning. They will be best assisted in the long term by the systematic building of confidence, skills and knowledge that enable them to make and manage the series of subsequent transitions ahead.

**Explaining WCIG's approach, the manager of JPP says...** *"We need to give young people optimal choices. They are often pushed towards employment and commence 'for the wrong reasons' because the external environment does not cater for them. We need to give the young person the chance to explore what they could do. We try to identify areas of interest of the young person, and then link that to their employment options".*

This requires staff in JPP who have the appropriate mix of skills and knowledge. They need to have empathy with young people and possess the capacity to follow through and win their trust, as well as having a good knowledge of employment services and the labour market. The use of professional external mentoring and supervision for staff can assist reflection on their approach.

Negotiation over strategies developed within the action plan can provide the young person with a choice between options, leading to a greater sense of their own 'control'. Giving the individual client a copy of their action plan also provides them with the information as a resource and a map for their own reference.

Feedback from current and former JPP clients indicates that some are seeking more counselling and vocational decision-making assistance from the programme. Approaches to guidance and counselling need to reflect the growth and complexity of jobs and careers, and the increasing flexibility of the pathways linking school and work.

Active career planning and personal and career development provide a long term basis for assistance rather than attempts at straight 'matching' of interests to jobs. Career

centres with self-directed and on-line search technologies increase the independence of young people.

Equipping young people for life long learning involves identifying their current levels of personal and social development as well as their skill levels and vocational knowledge. Background information to assist this assessment can be obtained from school staff by establishing protocols with schools. Requests for background information can be built into the documentation prepared for use by schools in the referral process.

Interventions that assist in the development of confidence and self-esteem are usually targeted towards students in Year 10 and sometimes Year 11. There are a variety of approaches to interventions of this nature. Ballarat Group Training organise anger management and self-esteem classes for selected clients; Employment Options send some of their students bike-riding for 'a day in the dirt' organised through the local JPET; Midland have developed a four-day personal development self-management program combined with work preparation for fifteen students.

However, development of this nature takes time, and may require establishing alternative learning environments operating over longer periods to allow the young person to develop and mature. Examples such as the Year 10 program involving Ballarat Group Training JPP provide a model of two days in school focusing on vocational classes, and three days a week in combinations of work, job preparation and community engagement. Forming partnerships with other agencies have allowed this program to operate for a full year on this basis.

In general, the delivery of additional vocationally-related training using an adult learning framework with appropriate support will also assist with personal and social development.

The process of transition occurs over a long period of time. Approaches that adopt an integrated approach to early preparation for transition and can identify those individuals likely to need longer-term forms of support provide a stronger safety net for clients. Linking JPP to other schools-based forms of transition preparation (i.e. work placement; part-time apprenticeships; work experience; and VET courses) provides an integrated long-term approach.

#### **Dakabin JPP**

**The JPP staff coordinate work placements and school-based apprenticeships and traineeships at the two schools, though to date the latter remain small in number.**

**As a result of these combined activities, the JPP employment officers work with many of the students for over two years and have conducted various assessments of them by the time they complete school. "I would be seeing some students in year 10 to organise work experience, then dealing with them again for workplacement in years 11 and 12, and then assisting them to find jobs through JPP" says one staff member.**

For young people identified as needing longer support than current JPP guidelines facilitate, alternative mechanisms in the community and other models need to be explored. Many providers continue to maintain contact with some individuals for up to two years. Alternative models can include establishing formal mentoring programmes and handover to other forms of support.

Quality control is exercised over the suitability of some casual and part time jobs, and if referral to them is in the long term interests of the client. Judgements about the readiness of the individual for employment based on criteria combining maturity, skills, and future options can help clarify the options.

### **Providing Broad Access**

JPP acts as both prevention strategy and as a safety net. If JPP is to function as an effective safety net for young people, then all those who need the service should be able to access it. There are changing patterns in identifying those at risk. Not only are those leaving school at an early age experiencing difficulty, but also those who have completed school to Year 12 with few vocational skills and no exposure to the workplace are also at risk.

Strategies to promote broad access for young people to the JPP safety net depend on the local context, and whether the program is located in an organisation that is inside or outside the schools.

#### **CADET JPP**

**CADET negotiates access to recruit and deliver training in the most appropriate school terms so that it won't have a negative impact on the school curriculum. Schools have built JPP into their school curriculum to increase the opportunity for students to access JPP services. For Year 10 students, the 'consultants' conduct work preparation courses for the entire cohort at the invitation of teachers. Participating students all receive a job search kit from JPP in the workshops.**

Clarifying the three strands of the service and distinguishing between them can help to promote accessibility. Information provided to school staff and parents that identifies:

- ❑ a service assisting all those who must leave school at the end of Year 12
- ❑ a service assisting all those who are leaving school at any time before the end of Year 12; and
- ❑ a service assisting those considering leaving school at any time before the end of Year 12 to be retained in education, in combination with work and/or training

establishes a clear framework that lays a foundation for systematic access.

The dependence on schools to provide access to young people demands strategies to secure the support of schools. Developing formal protocols for referral by clusters of schools has made access easier for projects such as JPP in the North. These protocols can help to define the respective roles of schools and JPP. A third party in the region, such as

an Area Consultative Committee, can help to negotiate and establish a formal protocol for referrals.

Collaborative approaches taken with schools to identifying 'at risk' students increase the effectiveness of the safety net. Access to school data and records so that JPP staff and schools jointly identify those at risk has resulted in collaborative approaches between teachers and JPP staff to identifying at risk students, rather than relying only on teaching staff. Developing and distributing clear guidelines and indicators of 'risk' strengthen the referral process.

The performance of JPP in assisting students achieve positive outcomes can also assist in promoting further access within schools. In particular, demonstrating the capacity to deal with 'difficult students' and help them to achieve positions or increased motivation within school wins support from school staff. Evidence of achievement can be reinforced by regularly providing schools with quarterly data on outcomes to help promote further access.

JPP usually gains access to the school through one or two key contacts. It is important that awareness in schools of JPP is broadened beyond one key contact so that the process of referral becomes widespread and integrated within the school.

Building student awareness of JPP once JPP is in school is also required. General group presentations on a class or year level basis help promote the availability of JPP. Building work preparation elements into regular classes and curriculum also leads to increased access.

Young people themselves are an increasing source of referral to JPP. Creating awareness for young people out of school, through parents, other youth agencies and Centrelink requires more conventional marketing strategies. Material developed for local newspaper releases; local youth agencies and venues such as cinemas, youth centres, and doctors surgeries have increased access to a limited degree. These approaches tend to be resorted to when access to some schools becomes difficult, or when there is evidence that large numbers of young people in the region have left school and 'slipped through the net'.

There are barriers to access faced by particular groups. Indigenous, rural, and migrant students in particular have specific issues to deal with. Approaches developed to help facilitate access include appointing cultural JPP staff with a background in common with the client group, arranging support via toll free telephone numbers and e-mail, establishing budgets to meet the costs of isolated students' participation in vocational courses, and establishing links with specialist programmes for refugees with specific cultural and religious needs.

### **Building stakeholder support**

The boundary between school and work is slowly becoming integrated as more students in the senior school commence some form of work and/or vocational training while they are still studying. Good practice by JPP providers not only assists young people in the

process of moving from school to work. They also assist by bridging the distance between employers and the school through strategies that link workplace experience into the school setting. Securing high levels of employer commitment benefits young people by directly supporting JPP's need for placement and employment, and links employers more closely with schools to support general vocational preparation.

Schools, parents and employers form the key stakeholders that should be actively involved in the transition process.

It has already been noted that **school support** can be positively influenced by the supply of data demonstrating student destinations, providing the outcomes achieved by JPP, and indicating the needs of the student group. The provision of useful local labour market reports on employment trends customised to school requirements can provide additional value.

Support can also be built by providing schools with links to employers who can supply other forms of assistance, as well as to other relevant youth and employment networks. Involving schools in the management of JPP also strengthens support. Including key school principals on management or advisory committees and involving them on selection panels for new JPP staff help build a collaborative environment.

The active **support of parents** is important at two levels: First, as a source of referrals, and also to ensure that they support their children in ways aligned with JPP's approach. Holding periodic parent information sessions is a common approach to promoting JPP. Employment Options JPP mails a prominently coloured envelope of materials to each clients home address as a trigger for parental involvement in their teenager's participation in the programme.

Involving parents of 'at risk' students can be an important intervention to assist the young person. A monthly program helping parents of 'at risk' student to understand their children's developmental issues and preferred learning styles is provided on a regular basis by Ballarat Group Training.

#### **Ballarat GTC**

**Regular sessions aimed at parents are organised at the JPP offices. Utilising The School of The Road (a program sub-contracted to JPP) Tony and David Davidson use material based on the Myer Briggs Type Indicator to explain and analyse students' learning programs. The intention is to assist parents understand why some students are disengaging in the classroom and why they are sometimes in conflict with parents. To develop a deeper appreciation of their relationship with their students, careers teachers are also attending these sessions. Positive responses to sessions have prompted JPP to conduct a regular program on the last Wednesday in every month throughout this year.**

**Employer support** can be developed by positioning JPP as a 'gateway' to manage various contacts with the education system. JPP can play an important role bringing employers 'into the school' to assist with work preparation activities.

Central Coast JPP is developing a close relationship with Plan-It-Youth's training of active and retired employers as mentors for 'at risk' young people in the NSW Central Coast area - a practical and innovative approach to helping young people to research, seek and retain employment. Other positive approaches have involved employers and community members in employment preparation activities, assisting with mock interviews and providing information for groups of students within the school.

Awareness of JPP is built through direct presentations to industry forums. SCISCO JPP hold business breakfasts for employers and use the occasions to promote available JPP clients to the businesses. A dinner for employers from a particular industry sector provides an opportunity for JPP staff to invite some of their clients to the function, introduce the young people to the employers, and leave their resumes with them.

JPP can generally be a catalyst for developing communities with a more supportive environment for young people.

### **A Diagnostic Approach**

JPP is in a position to collect and use various sets of information as a service that can assist stakeholders identify their requirements, and improve the links between key groups. The capacity for JPP to be used to diagnose needs and develop strategies is based on collecting, analysing and reporting data and other sources of information

There are at least three sets of information potentially available to projects.

**Client tracking and destination data** required for JPP is also of significance to schools. Use of the data has the potential to help strengthen the efficiency of JPP as a safety net, influence vocational options offered in schools, and identify unmet needs. Use of tracking and destination data on clients in presentations to schools has led to a review of vocational provision at schools serviced by Dakabin JPP.

Client feedback, conducted regularly, can assist in improving program options, delivery methods, and the positioning of service. Surveying can be carried out by the project or by a third party. Client surveys conducted by the Queensland University of Technology from one JPP project resulted in local schools identifying a need for a careers program commencing at year 10. This is now being introduced. WCIG JPP surveys identified particular issues for young males and provided feedback on young people's perceptions of their level of control over their transition.

The needs of current students can also be collected through survey, interviews or other forms of assessment. These can be used to indicate levels of need, such as literacy and numeracy skill levels, need for exposure to workplace experience, and more options for vocational exploration.

## CADET - DESTINATION REPORTS

**CADET provides detailed information on outcomes achieved for students and former students to the schools. This helps the schools with the requirement that they produce regular destination reports on student outcomes to the Queensland government and advises the school of the effectiveness of the JPP project.**

**Providing the schools with statistics about student outcomes has helped to provide JPP with greater access to some schools, because in some cases, the need for assistance to be provided to students has been evident. Initially, a lot of the schools were telling CADET staff that their students were going to university, so that using the JPP service was not a priority. *"You need to prove yourself to the schools first"*...according to David White.**

Individual assessments also progressively build a picture of needs in a region and a school, and careful documentation and dissemination can influence preparation of students for transition. It has helped to identify the need for some students at risk to move to alternative learning settings combining study, work and community experience.

Early school leavers with little vocational or employment experience have been systematically placed into work experience for a few weeks as a 'trial', with many then wanting to continue at school.

The need to expose Year 10 students to vocational training opportunities in a range of industries has led JPP in the North to purchase the delivery of tailored industry short courses. The wide range of industries for which courses have been arranged were identified through their links to the local labour market, and their capacity to negotiate specific training tailored to the needs of clients. Similarly, CADET organised tailored training in two industry sectors with high employment growth in their region for selected individuals who had left school.

Literacy and numeracy skill levels are also consistently identified as an issue that requires action to enable the client to progress. An evaluation of the number of clients requiring assistance, the quality of the available services in region, and the level of resources available determine the strategy. They either:

- refer individuals back to the schools to resolve, with some assistance from JPP
- refer individuals to other funded agencies to provide assistance
- purchase services and specialist resources on behalf of the clients
- employ staff who can deliver specialist classes in literacy and numeracy.

The systematic use of quantitative and qualitative data gathered by JPP projects form a potentially influential set of information that can be used to develop local responses that provide a stronger set of transition arrangements.

## 7. LEARNING FROM JPP

This section of the study draws together the themes emerging from the research, discussions with stakeholders, the case studies, and the information provided by JPP providers themselves. Five years experience in delivery of JPP has demonstrated and reinforced some of the key research findings:

- That individuals as young as 13 or 14 years of age sometimes need assistance, that providing one to one assistance in the transition process is effective,
- that the transition process is taking longer, and
- that much still needs to be done within the education system to provide appropriate support and pathways to assist all young people in the transition from post-compulsory education to work.

### **Suitable Agencies**

The Commonwealth has developed JPP using a wide variety of agencies to provide transition services. The different types of agency all appear more than capable of delivering JPP. Knowledge of and networks with the local labour market provide the capacity to source job vacancies without great difficulty, although some community organisations have to take specific measures to market their service to employers.

Staff with an employment services or industry background are well equipped to provide JPP services in schools. As 'consultants' or 'employment officers', they are generally regarded as credible by teachers and students and are well accepted once the JPP provider has gained access to the school.

Skills involved in working with young people within the transition process are complex and sophisticated. They require flexibility, the ability to operate in a range of environments, and sufficient empathy and skills to be able to build trust. These skills are evident within the JPP projects, but are not systematically recognised or rewarded.

Services integrating work experience, work placement, school-based New Apprenticeships and JPP appears to provide a particularly strong model. The ASTF cluster and school-based JPP projects are able to progressively build on a longer term approach to transition. While the staff in these projects are often still appointed from the employment services and private sector, the projects are strongly integrated into the activities of the schools. The depth of this model has much to recommend it.

Some of the key characteristics of the types of agencies delivering JPP are:

#### ***Schools and ASTF clusters:***

- JPP is integrated with relevant school services and the curriculum
- work with students over the long-term beginning with work placement and school based apprenticeships
- obtain a high level of school acceptance of the JPP service

- students' access to the service is relatively widespread
- delivery is strongly linked to other work preparation strategies within the school

***TAFE and private training providers:***

- options within the JJP services include a strong set of vocational training programmes in addition to other services
- purchase of additional training services for clients is common
- relevant services for clients result from being able to access TAFE infrastructure and support
- working with relatively larger numbers of clients who have left school

***Non-educational providers delivering JPP:***

- seek independence from the operation of the tendering organisation
- emphasise customising the service to build relationship with schools (producing school specific responses)
- becomes a hub for schools and other agencies to access relevant information about other services
- focus on "at risk" cohort

**Gateway to Other Services**

All these types of agencies are also often valuable to schools and employers for the access they are also able to provide to related services. Employers are able to use some JPP providers to manage their dealings with schools and students relating to work placements and work experience requirements. Schools similarly use their JPP provider to assist them to stay informed on developments in the labour market, in the provision of employment services and generally on the availability of youth support services.

By acting as a 'gateway' to these stakeholders, JPP providers help to manage a complex and changing set of programs and services that neither educators or employers are in a position to readily cope with and understand.

**Features of Assistance and Support**

The transition process commences well before the young person leaves school. Intervention and assistance provided to the young person while still at school offers the best opportunity to combine flexible programs of assistance, and retain them within school while beginning to prepare them for work, training or combinations of both.

The level of assistance provided to individuals and long-term monitoring of clients is a key feature of the JPP service and is reported by all stakeholders to be an effective approach distinguished by its supportive nature.

### Employment Options JPP - Long Term Support

Sharron completed year 12 and could have opted for university. However she had been working part time in a deli since she was thirteen and liked the retail environment. She decided "to be tested by the JPP programme" to see what her options in retail might be. Given her suitability and with the assistance and encouragement of JPP she was accepted into a Retail Traineeship. Her employment was organised through a Group Training Company who also conducted the Certificate I and II off-the-job units.

Following a negative experience with her host employer, Sharron later approached JPP for assistance. They helped arrange for a transfer of her traineeship to a more suitable employer where she has completed her Certificate III and IV.

Sharron says of JPP staff: *"They are locally based and have a good understanding of the job market. They find time to spend working out what you are suitable at doing. It's a very personal service. Even after eighteen months, I still ring them occasionally."*

Experience has shown that many young people need some support beyond the initial six month period after leaving school. Their tenure in their initial training or employment position is sometimes tenuous. Early school leavers can be relatively immature and begin moving through a series of short-term jobs interspersed with periods of unemployment. One of the features of effective support appears to be the capacity to maintain contact with the young person until they have achieved a capacity to continue to manage their own work and training needs.

Frequent changes in activity, fluidity in opportunities and the need for constant re-skilling and managing a continuing process of job seeking means that young people need transition skills that will serve them in the long-term. A strategy that simply aims to place a young person into a job is, by itself, insufficient.

### WCIG JPP - Support and Assistance

The Careers Teacher at Laverton Secondary College provides an example of a Year 12 student wanting to become an apprentice chef. The JPP staff assisted with mapping out a strategy plan and then continued to assist as it was implemented. When the student decided that he couldn't get along with the employer, JPP staff assisted with a change. When the student decided that the job was not what they expected, JPP assisted with a change of trade. The teacher reports that assistance and monitoring is still occurring.

The extent of support provided to the young person appears to provide a necessary bridge between the structured environment within schools and the less supportive environment encountered in the training and employment sectors

The experience of JPP providers has led most to conclude that working effectively with clients ultimately requires assistance to be provided on a one-to-one basis. Group activities and classes, though useful for promotion, screening and basic information provision, are not as effective as individual counselling and follow-up.

The core services consist of job search and job presentation skills training, referral to or delivery of pre-employment training and assistance, and direct or indirect referral to employment. However, the presentation and deployment of these services are quite flexible, depend on what other services are available to students in the school, and also whether the JPP provider is in a position to refer, purchase or deliver services themselves.

Flexibility is an asset in gaining the trust and support of schools, and in meeting the diverse needs of young people. However, too much flexibility risks stakeholders and JPP providers themselves becoming unclear about the core nature of the service. A teacher in one school noted that "Jobs Pathways" is not the right name for the service, because their school now sees JPP as a student retention programme.

Benchmarks are needed to establish the basis of the service and define the coverage and the features of good practice.

JPP also requires flexibility due to the varying levels of provision within schools of careers guidance, vocational coordination and student welfare. If State systems and individual schools are well resourced, the JPP provider is able to concentrate on 'core business'. In other schools where the school resources are thinner or non-existent, JPP also becomes involved in supporting aspects of these functions.

### **Pathways for Younger Students**

The experience of JPP projects suggests that many parents, teachers and other influences are not aware of the potential alternative pathways available to young people, particularly within the education system.

Federal and State Governments have made substantial contributions to developing alternative pathways linking school with non-tertiary study outcomes including work, further training and structured training. This includes increasing the vocational content of general education, introducing an apprenticeship-based pathway commencing within schools, and a general increase in vocational education at senior school level.

However, levels of awareness of these options remain low and JPP providers report a lack of awareness about the value placed on these pathways by employers.

The pathways also appear to start too late for some students who have become disengaged from school. Options such as part-time apprenticeships and VET classes are available to students in Years 11 and 12, but younger students have had fewer options available outside the general education pathway. Many JPP projects have become involved in partnerships with some of their schools trying to establish such pathways for younger students.

## JPP in the North - Vocational TAFE programs for Year 10 students

Most JPP in the North clients still at school do the "Let's Look at Work" programme which has been specifically developed for students in Year 10 who have become disaffected by school. "Lets Look at Work" are vocational preparation courses of one day a week for nine weeks, designed for year 10 students, and delivered at the various campuses of the Northern Melbourne Institute of TAFE. There are ten different industries that students can select from, ranging from joinery, engineering and furniture making through to tourism and hospitality.

180 school students can participate in these vocational preparation programmes. JPP purchase the time of the teaching staff and fund materials costs, but obtain the training facilities at no cost. As well as the opportunity to 'taste' a particular trade, these year 10 students are also given the opportunity to undertake classes in a TAFE environment.

Each nine-week course ends with students having produced a product at the end of the training. Once the students have completed "Lets Look at Work", JPP staff try to subsequently link students to ASTF funded industry placement programmes to reinforce the learning experience.

Part of the value of the "Lets Look at Work" courses are that they allow students to explore their interests and capabilities. A former participant, says *"I did the engineering "Lets Look at Work" programme, didn't like it and decided on plumbing instead. I'm nearly at the end of the pre-apprenticeship course at RMIT and now I'm using JPP to help me track down an apprenticeship."*

More systematic programs need to be developed and available to students in Years 9 and 10 that provide opportunities for them to commence exploration of alternative vocational pathways. These can help young people to clarify their options as well as providing alternative settings for learning required by some younger students.

Young people under the age of 15 are not eligible for JPP, as they are under the age at which students can leave school. Nevertheless, most JPP providers indicate a need for assistance for some under 15 years of age. Some of them just turn up at the JPP service or are referred by teachers, and they are usually given assistance, although any outcomes are not formally recognised. For younger students who are already disengaging from school, the introduction of basic information on realistic employment options, pathways and careers needs to be provided.

Formal recognition by funding agencies of the frequent need to intervene and support students younger than 15 years of age would assist in defining the extent of the needs of younger students through data collection. It could also potentially lead to the development of more structured programs to assist younger students before they become highly disengaged from school.

### **Combining study with workplace experience**

Opportunities for combining study with work based experience have been developing in the senior years of schooling over the past decade. The most substantial changes have been the introduction of part-time school based apprenticeships and traineeships, and the expansion of VET certificates available to years 11 and 12.

The availability of work placement has also been expanded through the Australian Traineeship Foundation (ASTF).

The implementation of JPP has highlighted the lack of opportunities for students in Year 9 and Year 10 to combine study with workplace experience. JPP is both identifying the need for alternative curriculum and for the curriculum to be delivered in alternative settings. Many projects are working closely with schools to develop programs combining personal development and experience in the workplace as a way of engaging and retaining at risk students in a combined school, work, and community environment.

#### **Ballarat Group Training JPP- Establishing an alternative Year 10 setting**

**Ballarat High School is a very large stand-alone high school with 1450 students and has a reputation for delivering a traditional academic curriculum. Initially, most contact between students and JPP was due to the students making contact out of school.**

**An alternative Year 10 Programme (10K) has now been set up by the school as a result of their consultation with a range of youth organisations, including JPP. It is being conducted for the first time this year for sixteen students in year 10 who have been identified as not wanting to continue school. JPP is on the Steering Committee for the project, which aims to keep the students involved in some form of education or training. The programme operates inside the school for two days a week providing literacy and numeracy classes and one mainstream year 10 elective. The other three days are spent outside the school (one day utilising a provider such as the YMCA; one day at JPP focusing on alternative pathways in education or preparation for employment; and one day on practical work placement).**

Given the number of projects independently involved in establishing similar 'alternative' programs for young students in schools, more attention needs to be directed to commencing integrated pathways creatively combining school, work and personal development for students in Years 9 and 10.

Simultaneously, the projects are also identifying that personal development and self-esteem are as important as vocational experience, particularly for the age group in the middle years of secondary schooling. These foundations for a successful transition need to be attended to as well as formal skills training and work experience. These include fostering interpersonal skills, emotional development, time management and learning to take responsibility.

#### **SCISCO JPP - Alternative Year 10 Program**

**The pilot "*Partnership Programme*", which has been introduced under the current JPP, is a six month initiative conducted one day a month. SCISCO targeted fifty year 10 boys whom the schools identified as "at risk of leaving school early" and likely to benefit from a programme addressing self-esteem and motivational issues.**

**SCISCO put the programme out to tender, and purchased services from three other organisations to assist these year 10 students with a programme one-day every month. Three organisations; Higher Ground, Peer Power, and Global Sports Ministry came together to offer a combination of a climbing**

**programme; sports development; and activities to support personal and emotional development. A JPP staff member also attends the programme each month.**

The importance for students to commence part-time work while still at school if they are to be able to compete for subsequent employment is also evident from discussion with JPP staff. Employers regard part-time work experience as an important component of preparation for the workplace, and will tend to discount applicants without such experience.

### **Information and guidance**

Good information and guidance is becoming increasingly important as the choices available and the post-school environment becomes more complex. The complexity of linkages between jobs, career patterns, and the diversifying pathways from school through to work result in an increasing need for comprehensive information and guidance systems. Systematic information and guidance are a foundation for an effective transition system.

The need for young people to be able to continue to learn and manage transitions requires approaches that emphasise career planning and personal development rather than an attempt to 'match' abilities and interests to jobs.

#### **Employment Options JPP - managing transitions**

**Tom completed a year 12 at Heathfield High School but was unsure about his future direction. He had filled in a form for JPP because it "seemed like a good idea". The staff made contact and Tom joined in on several group activities to find out more information about jobs, how to prepare his resume and improve his interview techniques. He was not impressed with using the Holland careers exploration tool and thinks that the tests "can't really tell you much". He enrolled in Certificate I and II in Mechanical Engineering but dropped out because it "wasn't challenging enough".**

**His uncle suggested that he investigate becoming a locksmith. JPP helped organise an action plan that involved work experience and a few weeks of part-time paid work.**

**JPP later assisted in locating two full-time jobs in the local area and he was successful in his first interview. Tom has since learnt from his employer that his work experience had "been the clincher". This apprenticeship was particularly highly sought after with over fifty applicants applying. Locksmith training is only available in Melbourne. Applicants have to be keen because it is costly to both the employer who has to find the cost of transport to Melbourne four times a year to attend training at NMIT and to the apprentice who has to fund his accommodation for eight weeks a year. The apprenticeship is progressing well and Tom says he "drops in for a chat from time to time".**

JPP providers have become involved in providing careers education activities in the classroom and other events within the school, but are unable to meet the need. The careers function is sometimes divided, so that JPP staff concentrate on providing employment related services, and school staff on higher education related services. Students are requesting more assistance in the area of career planning from JPP projects.

The implementation of JPP has illustrated the variation between States and Territory education systems in the provision of career information. The availability of information and guidance varies, but is generally inadequate and sometimes non-existent. Careers guidance is often provided by teaching staff, frequently on a part-time basis, and could be described as a marginal activity in many schools. The school-based careers service is reported to often predominantly focus on the higher education pathway, or be swamped by making arrangements for work placements. Students should be entitled to access a comprehensive careers service, particularly as the links between pathways, training and employment becomes more complex.

Compared to the model of the contracted Careers Service in the United Kingdom, current arrangements in Australia seem to be inadequate.

The increasing use of work-placement and vocational courses to assist in the process of career exploration suggests that there is a need for mandatory careers education within the curriculum, use of self-directed techniques using on-line technologies, and programs involving those outside the school with appropriate knowledge and expertise.

Careers education is increasingly beyond the capacity of schools to manage on their own. It requires a range of stakeholders becoming involved and sharing responsibility for provision of the service, particularly in the light of the increasing complexity of post-compulsory options and forms of assistance.

### **Literacy and Numeracy Skills**

Involvement in the process of assessing the job readiness of young people intending to leave school results in JPP providers becoming acutely aware of the level of their literacy and numeracy skills. Students, even at Year 12 level, are found to be routinely failing employer screening and aptitude tests.

Assessment carried out in JPP projects continues to identify significant needs in this area that young people have. Some State Governments have introduced major initiatives in attempt to address the issue. For example, the New South Wales Department of Education and Training has introduced Circuit Breaker to improve students' basic literacy and numeracy skills, as well as their social skills and access to educational pathways.

JPP providers' assessment processes identify that literacy and numeracy skills are a barrier to their chances of subsequently gaining employment. The strategies to address the identified needs vary a great deal. Some JPP providers adopt an approach that once the issue has been identified, it is up to schools to address student needs. Other JPP providers refer young people to specialist services, some have purchased packaged programs or specialist staff to provide literacy and numeracy training themselves.

### CADET JPP- Literacy and Numeracy needs

One of the JPP consultants, Debbie, is a qualified literacy and numeracy tutor, and has the capacity do the required assessments. If literacy and numeracy needs have been identified for young people who have already left school, they are referred through Centrelink to literacy and numeracy providers.

If the student is still at school, it is unusual for the school to provide advice that the student has problems with literacy or numeracy. Instead, JPP observe that the process of registration tends to uncover if the young person has literacy and numeracy issues (either by evident difficulty in filling out forms, or by the clients identifying the issue themselves.)

For students still enrolled at school, literacy and numeracy issues identified in this way are referred back to the school. "*We believe that it is in the best interests of the student for the school to address the issue.*" The student's school is advised, while attempting to maintain the student's privacy on the issue. Although CADET is in the process of obtaining literacy and numeracy accreditation as a provider, the view of JPP consultants is that their responsibility is to identify the need and then consult back to the school.

### Ballarat GTC JPP- Literacy and Numeracy needs

JPP tests all their clients for literacy and numeracy levels to determine the need for a suitable course of intervention and improvement. This procedure was introduced after finding that large numbers of students, even at year 12 level, were failing employer aptitude tests and pre-screening tools. 96% of one group tested were unable to calculate percentages. JPP have set up a 'maths drop in centre' that is delivered in a 'non-threatening' environment using their own staff, which is working extremely well.

The lack of reading and spelling skills is probably the most serious skill deficiency identified with the students. To overcome literacy problems, JPP is trying to encourage schools to use "Soundways". Costing \$3400 to purchase, this is a phonetically based programme developed in Australia that uses eighteen videos as a teaching resource. A number of local schools and one Registered Training Organisation are already using it; and Lindy Hamill, the manager of JPP, suggests that it is producing very good results. At the time of this report, 'Soundways' had just been acquired by JPP and delivery is about to commence.

Early intervention with students in schools provides the opportunity to address the issues of basic literacy and numeracy required in the workplace through structured programs in the senior secondary school systems. The combination of practically focused literacy and numeracy programs, combined with work placement and access to vocational pathways, are required to appropriately prepare young people for the transition to work.

### What It Means For Young People

For those young people who access and register with JPP, they are provided with skills, contacts and support that are timely, relevant, and that frequently produce good outcomes.

Schools in some regions were using JPP to provide students in Year 12 with two timetabled 'employment preparation' classes each month for all those not intending to

proceed to university. Data available from local schools indicated that the approach produced extremely good outcomes.

However, young people in school are not assured of access to information and skills programmes related to gaining employment in the same way that tertiary-bound students are. This is the result of both the role of schools in determining access for students, and the way in which brokers have been funded. In some schools, all senior students access information and services from JPP. In other schools, only a very small percentage of students access JPP despite their potential need for assistance.

At one extreme, there is evidence that some schools have no contact with JPP, while other schools enroll all year 12 students and early leavers with the JPP programme providing a full in-school service. Student access is therefore relatively 'hit and miss' depending on which school they are enrolled with. In addition, the appointment of brokers under current arrangements results in some regions being serviced by JPP providers with a ratio of one staff member per school, while in another region, six JPP workers are covering ninety three schools. As a result, in some schools every student accesses the programme before they leave school, while in other schools only those identified as most "at risk" access the service.

Students in senior school can routinely access information on tertiary options, application processes and other forms of assistance. The availability of information on employment options, application processes and other forms of support is much less certain.

#### **A Region without JPP**

**Students in Victoria's Geelong region did not have JPP services from 1997 until the current programme. JPP was available in the region four years ago but use of the service among many of the schools was low.**

**In the absence of an available JPP service, schools continued to "struggle along", with careers and vocational coordinators using the Job Network providers, The Gordon Institute of TAFE and Geelong Regional Group Training as the main sources of information and referral to vocational courses.**

**Two schools had been able to contact alternative JPP providers in neighbouring regions and access services. Another school accessed a State programme and obtained three years of funding to employ a person with a labour market background to provide the school with industry liaison and placement services. One school used a house system of student management as a mechanism for identifying 'at risk' students and providing support through teachers and welfare staff for finding them appropriate options. In short, the schools generally 'made do.'**

**A JPP provider commenced in the region this year and the schools now report significant contact and use of the services by students. Schools are using a full range of JPP services. Outcomes are being achieved with job placements, 'at risk' students are being retained, and Year 12 students are being prepared for transition. School staff are using JPP to access information on labour market conditions through curriculum development and staff development activities.**

**Having been involved in the service has made schools aware of 'what can be done'. The Careers Teacher at one High School summed up their schools' view. "It would be hard to go back. There is no way we could provide such a service within our resources."**

## **8. A STRONGER FRAMEWORK**

JPP operates across a fragmented network of support for young people in transition from school to the post-school environment in Australia. The overall infrastructure of services has been affected by a combination of privatisation, devolution of management control and the introduction of more market-based funding and regulatory approaches to service delivery.

The privatisation of the employment services sector, increased competition in the VET sector, more local management of schools, and government moves to contract services have all tended to fragment the delivery of services for young people. In addition, new pathways linking school to work have been introduced only relatively recently, such as part-time apprenticeships and vocational programs within general education certificates.

New Apprenticeship Centres have been introduced as the contracted point of co-ordination for New Apprenticeships, public employment assistance has been contracted to a variety of agencies offering parallel services, growing numbers of private training organisations have been encouraged to compete with each other and with the TAFE Institutes for enrollments and business, and the ASTF has provided seed capital for local innovation by industry education partnerships.

As well as the increasing complexity of pathways and programs, the competitive funding environment makes it difficult for agencies to cooperate at the local level. "Young people are the recipients of an uncoordinated set of initiatives and funding from federal and state governments, and non-government welfare bodies"(Business Council of Australia, 2000). There is an urgent need for a comprehensive service to assist young people over the lengthening period of time that transition now occurs.

Apart from anecdotal information on the positive impact that JPP is having, data on JPP is difficult to obtain. In Queensland where transition and destination data are able to be accessed through the school system, the evidence suggests that where JPP is provided in a comprehensive and systematic form, it is having an extremely positive impact on the outcomes achieved for young people.

However, national data on the number of young people being assisted and the outcomes achieved under JPP locally are not in the public domain. In these circumstances, the level of access that young people have to the service, the impact that provision of the service is having, or the successes of JPP can only be estimated. While information from the education sector on local enrollments, participation and tertiary applications are publicly available, data relating to the transition of young people to employment is not. Transparent and routine measurement of outcomes is a fundamental building block of a comprehensive transition system.

The importance of monitoring and tracking young people in transition is fundamental to developing a system that functions as an effective safety net.. Tracking and monitoring are important as a means of both ensuring that individuals are followed up and assisted,

and also that the effectiveness of particular approaches to service delivery can be assessed. This information is not only needed by those delivering the program and by central agencies, but also by local stakeholders that have a direct interest in the outcomes for the young people in their community. The current purchaser-provider model under which the program is presently funded make it difficult to monitor this information, with restrictions placed on information on the basis of 'commercial confidentiality.'

In Section Four of this Study, the OECD International Thematic Review was reported as having identified the elements of good transition as comprising:

- ❑ a healthy economy
- ❑ well organised pathways connecting initial education with work, further study or both
- ❑ widespread opportunities for combining study with workplace experience
- ❑ tightly knit safety nets for those at risk
- ❑ good information and guidance systems
- ❑ effective institutions and processes.

The extent to which JPP currently operates as a safety net, the linkages with other relevant authorities and policies, and the definition of those at risk is the focus of the following section.

### **JPP as a Safety Net**

Unlike some international transition programmes, JPP operates without the support of a regulatory framework, established protocols between stakeholders, or a comprehensive information system on young people.

Legislation and regulation in some countries ensures that the relevant transition service is advised of young people leaving school who may need assistance and provides a mandate for the service. Data driven systems can also quickly provide a means of identifying those needing assistance after they have left school.

There is no legislation or regulation establishing JPP. There also appear to be no formal agreements in place between the Commonwealth and States to ensure that JPP (or other equivalent service) is necessarily involved with young people at risk of leaving school. Providers have found it difficult to identify and contact eligible young people once they have left school. Based on this experience, JPP providers have increasingly focused on the school as the intermediary link to the potential client. Student access is highly dependent on the attitude of key personnel within each school to JPP.

As a result, the viability of the service depends on the JPP provider having or establishing relationships with schools to be able to access potential clients. Dependence on schools for the referral of clients means that the school acts as a filter as to whether young people access the service. Levels of access to JPP vary markedly across the country and even within a region covered by one broker.

The school not only filters whether JPP is available in the school at all, but also how widely the service is used across the school. As a result, JPP providers can come to treat the school as the client as well as the student.

#### **Westgate Community Initiatives Group (WCIG) - Approach to Dealing with Schools**

**To maintain and develop their relationship with the schools, WCIG adopt a number of basic rules:**

- They do not advertise to attract students (as schools worry about their enrollments)
- They do not advertise jobs within the school
- They do not approach students in the schools

**Once WCIG JPP is working within the school then the service develops, firstly to fill the gaps in provision and later to become an integral part of the schools planning.**

In this framework, young people who attend schools that also provide JPP or access the service through an ASTF cluster are at an advantage. JPP is already established within the school structure, and students are more likely to be able to access the service.

#### **Eligibility for the safety net**

Research, and the experience of JPP providers and comparable overseas programmes identify that younger less experienced and less skilled early school leavers are those most at risk.

JPP projects have identified that many students completing Year 12 also lack the knowledge, skills and experience to gain employment without some level of assistance. While some students completing year 12, and those commencing but discontinuing tertiary education, can also be at some risk, the level of support required by the majority of these students is generally of a lesser degree.

The focus of the JPP programme is open to interpretation. Eligibility is defined in the DETYA tender documents as "*young people between the ages of 15 and 19 who intend to make the transition from school to work within the following twelve months. This includes both those still at school who are preparing to leave school (and this includes people in years 9,10,11 and 12) and those who have left school since 1 July 1999.*"

Both JPP providers and schools interpret the eligibility in ways that produce different forms of programme. Some providers continue to target all year 12 students exiting school as well as paying attention to younger students at risk of leaving. However, there are other JPP providers who now concentrate (or think they should be concentrating) on the "at risk" group. Some principals and employers consequently report that the focus of the programme is unclear.

#### **ASI Group Training JPP - Eligibility**

**All Saints Catholic College, a senior secondary school, uses JPP to register all of the 265 students in year 12. Four out of the six JPP staff are invited to the school around August, and conduct two very intensive sessions for all year 12 students. At these sessions, JPP staff interview, assess and register each year 12 students which takes about fifteen minutes for each student.**

The school also invites students from a year 11 work-studies group, and anyone else in year 11 considered likely to leave at the end of that year, to attend the JPP session. All Saints Catholic College has used the programme in this way for the last three years.

Awareness of JPP among teachers in the school is widespread. The principal is strongly involved, and promotes the programme to the year 12 teachers. The school does its own destination survey of students twelve months later, and get positive feedback from the students about the continuity of support from JPP. Danielle Doppler, the careers adviser, says that JPP...*"is a really valuable service for us here. Students leave school with a much better awareness of what's available than we could provide."*

There are strong arguments, supported by research and the comments of employers, in favour of a transition programme focused on all those leaving school seeking work. Projects operating JPP as an inclusive transition process for all students not intending to proceed to tertiary study report that the service is seen as a 'mainstream' programme. All students need to make a transition, and most of those not proceeding to tertiary education need some level of assistance into the employment market. The advantages of keeping the focus of programme broad is that it maintains a strong link between employment and education, and positions the service as a mainstream pathway parallel to the one to higher education.

If JPP moves towards being mainly focused on 'at risk' young people in school, the programme may become a 'school retention' rather than a 'jobs pathway' service. Where the service is pitched currently appears to be at the discretion of schools and JPP providers. There is strong support from employers, educators and other stakeholders for ensuring that JPP remains a programme with broad eligibility, able to ensure that all young people not proceeding to university are able to be supported in the transition process.

Clarification of the "separate components" of the service would help both providers and stakeholders. There appear to be three core components:

- ❑ A low level service for those completing year 12 and not proceeding to tertiary study
- ❑ A high level service for those who have left school before completing year 12
- ❑ A preventative service for those identified as 'at risk' of leaving school before year 12.

### **Requirement for a Collaborative Environment**

To be fully effective, a collaborative environment needs to be established as a framework for the program to operate within. State and Commonwealth responsibilities need to be carefully aligned and complement the overall assistance provided. Collaboration is also required to ensure that agencies share relevant information and data, and full use is made of the service.

With State and Commonwealth Governments responsible for education and employment services respectively, a consistent approach to policy development is required. National transition policy can focus on the provision of broadened education-based solutions until

young people complete school, or provide bridges to employment for those leaving school early.

Even more importantly, an effective safety net requires an open collaborative approach at the local and regional level to ensure that knowledge, information and data are shared to ensure that assistance is targeted and effective. JPP has demonstrated that the current approach to contracting and funding the delivery of transition services creates a non-collaborative environment. Providers are not encouraged to share information, knowledge or experience. Agencies potentially compete to deliver a service against other agencies with which they will subsequently need to request cooperation.

On occasions, schools limit access to the service after their own submission to become a JPP provider is not successful. An approach that can establish an open and collaborative local delivery service will provide a stronger safety net.

Information sharing between JPP providers through State and national forums also supports development of good practice. JPP providers have established a National Network to help facilitate information sharing and as a mechanism for dialogue with government. The National Network is operating, but is currently unfunded. This limits its capacity and effectiveness. There is scope for either an allocation to be made to the National Network from government to allow these activities to be undertaken effectively, or for the Network to link with similar national bodies that are resourced to perform similar roles.

### **Information Requirements**

High quality information systems are required to improve the effectiveness of provision. Tracking young people's transitions from post-compulsory education is essential for a number of reasons. It is useful for building local networks, strengthening transition supports, influencing change processes within schools, and evaluating the impact of the transition service. Agencies frequently collect information that is not compatible or shared with other agencies. In other cases, information that could be routinely collected and used is currently untapped.

Some State Governments already require schools to regularly report on student destinations for all young people exiting school after 15 years of age. This requires tracking students for a period of time, and establishes base-line data that provides a context for JPP to operate within. In other States, individual schools also carry out their own destination surveys. In States where schools are required to produce destination data, some JPP projects have a base line against which to measure their intervention strategies.

State and Territory education systems providing regular tracking reports on exiting students on a school by school basis (such as is occurring in Western Australia and Queensland) would provide a starting point for a coherent system of transition. JPP providers are in a position to provide some of this data for schools and education systems, increasing their value to their key stakeholder.

### Dakabin JPP - Tracking Student Destinations

The Head of Department of Senior School at Dakabin High notes that students from the schools in this cluster have a 2% unemployment rate (compared with a 27% unemployment rate for the region). This is confirmed by the Deputy Principal and Head of Dept. Senior Schooling at Albany Creek State High School. They report that "*about 6 of the 160 students from last year's year 12 are not 'doing something'.*" Their data from students who left the school at the end of 1999 is as follows: Of 27 students leaving at the end of Year 10, one is still seeking work, out of 31 students Year 11 students leaving, one is still seeking work, and of 160 students leaving in Year 12, six are still seeking work.

The JPP data goes into the school's report. The school will track the students over a number of years to determine what the patterns are, and use the information to analyse and improve the position. The information is also having short-term impacts. According to the Head of the Senior School at Dakabin High School ,Leanne Krosch,..."*teachers in the school who take vocational education are being influenced by the information that JPP collects and provides*".

An effective national system of transition requires student tracking and information feedback at a local level to ensure that safety nets are targeted and effective.

### Formalising arrangements between Governments

Unlike the school system and the employment services system, where there are reasonably clear demarcations in State and Commonwealth responsibilities, there are overlapping responsibilities relating to school to work transition. State Governments have also established transition services focused on retention or employment placement. Western Australia has established the Job Link programme that assists young people leaving school who do not proceed to tertiary education. The Victorian Government recently announced a \$700,000 "Pathways" programme in twelve local government areas of high youth unemployment and low retention. Individual guidance will be given to young people thinking of leaving school, helping them to develop a plan for their future with the aim of retaining them in education or training.

Cooperation between governments separately responsible for the education and employment systems could result in a stronger framework for the school to work pathway nationally. Establishing more formal protocols between education and transition service providers would be one area for exploration that might help shift the systems from an approach based on personal relationship to a more systematic approach of referral and assistance.

Protocols agreed between governments need to focus on balancing national and state frameworks with the flexibility to permit local adaptation (ASTF, 2000). A national framework needs to be based on endorsing and promoting cooperation as an underlying principle to ensure secure transitions for young people. The frameworks should support partnerships between stakeholders involved, and provide both the supports required and the discretion to ensure that local arrangements can be negotiated.

### **A Regional Agreement**

**In Whittlesea north of Melbourne, an agreement was established late in 1999 between Local, State and Commonwealth Governments, local schools, employers, the Job Network, TAFE, University and Community Agencies. The Youth Commitment is an agreement between these agencies to reduce the incidence of students leaving school without having a job or training place secured.**

**As part of the Whittlesea Youth Commitment, eight secondary schools in the area currently have State Government funding for a 'transition officer' who works across these schools, identifying students at risk of leaving school. The transition officer provides preliminary assistance within the school setting, and subsequently refers these students to the JPP provider (based at Northern Institute of TAFE).**

**The JPP provider then focuses on achieving employment or a New Apprenticeship placement for the young person.**

**The State and Commonwealth Governments have separately funded in school and post school services that are linked under the protocols of the Commitment.**

Priority should be given by both Commonwealth and States to supporting arrangements based on local partnerships that can provide a platform for greater integration. (ASTF, 2000). The criteria for supporting partnerships should be evidence they are based on cooperation; participation; are outcomes-focused; have a defined structure; and have continuous improvement processes in place.

### **Resourcing**

JPP providers operate in a competitive environment. It is particularly competitive at a regional level, where a JPP provider may subsequently depend on the collaboration of other agencies also bidding to deliver the JPP contract. The resulting environment mitigates against sharing information on innovation and success, either between JPP providers or within the regions with other agencies. It does not encourage information sharing, learning, or spreading of best practice between brokers.

It also seems to result in a lot of duplicated activity across projects as JPP providers develop and distribute similar resources to young people. The materials used for assessment, job search and job seeking training, and general information packages explaining education and training pathways are quite similar.

Consideration could be given to using other approaches to contracting JPP services that could reduce the level of concern among providers and the fragmentation of the 'system'. Processes which require defined regions to collaborate and collectively put forward agencies or consortia to deliver a JPP service, reinforced by strong accountabilities and performance measures, would strengthen information sharing and development of quality services. The Area Consultative Committees could have a role to play in facilitating a collaborative process of developing proposals.

JPP is currently funded annually, although, as we have seen, it now primarily operates within an education environment. Schools are funded recurrently and operate on per capita budgets, operating on assumptions of continuity.

Schools consider the providers of JPP to be difficult to depend on in the long-term. If there is a change of provider, schools can discover that JPP is not delivered as a "standardised" service, and the targeting of the service is also under modification from year to year. Moreover, a few school principals appear to have a view that JPP is in competition for their students, and have attempted to charge for access to them.

The JPP service is increasingly being delivered in schools, in classes, and for younger students. A more stable funding base in both duration and in allocation processes would assist in building a platform for the programme in the long term. Given the time it takes for providers to develop mature relationships with schools, a three-year funding period would benefit JPP provider, schools and ultimately students.

### **Integration with Other Services**

JPP currently operates as an 'add on' to a number of other services that support young people through the transition process. Combining some of these services to provide a 'gateway' for young people, schools and employers to access information and services would simplify access and promote a more integrated approach to transition.

Linking together currently fragmented services would help to embed JPP as a key component of the transition system. Being able to relate with one agency or consortia of agencies to access a range of services relevant to the needs of young people preparing for transition from school to work could strengthen the relationships and simplify the communication processes.

If an integration with other services was pursued, the options for consideration include integration with other vocational preparation arrangements such as those provided by the ASTF; with other intensive case management youth services such as JPET; or other employment related services such as those provided by the New Apprenticeship Centres (NACs). All of these make specific contributions to particular groups within the transition process.

JPP providers sometimes work closely with local JPET provider, and the case management model used has similarities. The JPET client group is anyone up to 21 years old; while JPP clients are those intending to leave school. However, as the one manager of one JPP provider suggested "*...their skills are very different from ours. Our skill base is in training and employment whereas JPET has a social work focus. We would need to change our skill base to offer that kind of programme.*"

Integration with JPET would be likely to draw JPP further towards becoming an intervention designed primarily for young people 'at risk', and weaken the broader focus on general transition to employment. While the current relationship with JPET works

well, with JPP referring appropriate cases to them, closer integration with JPP receives little support from those involved in the delivery of JPP. Employers in particular tend to view programmes designed specifically for 'at risk' clients as being more welfare focused than a useful labour market programme.

Integration with the ASTF functions for school clusters provides a more coherent set of arrangements. Commencing with providing work experience for year 10 students, co-ordinating arrangements for work placement, school based New Apprenticeships, and culminating with transition into employment, this sequence of activity makes sense both to schools and to employers. The kind of funding arrangements under which the ASTF operate may also make the programme a more stable platform for schools to engage with.

Integration with the functions performed by the ASTF clusters would focus JPP within a staged progression of activities preparing students for transition to work, optimally designed to occur over several years. There are other clustering arrangements that could similarly deliver such an integrated approach built around similar functions.

## 9. CONCLUSIONS

Since the introduction of JPP in 1995, the programme has demonstrated that providing systematic assistance to young people leaving school can be effective in helping the transition from school to work.

However, the approach could be strengthened. Some innovative approaches and well-developed models remain confined to particular regions due to the environment in which JPP operates. The remaining section of this study develops some suggestions for how JPP could be strengthened to provide a more comprehensive and easily accessed system of transition.

This study has identified evidence of creative and innovative approaches that have been developed and are being used that could become more widespread.

As examples, the case studies identified JPP providers that were variously:

- recruiting industry mentors to work with JPP clients within a structured training approach helping them to research, seek and gain employment;
- providing fortnightly information and work readiness timetabled classes for all Year 12 students not going to university;
- working with schools under an agreement covering referral of clients;
- providing a comprehensive range of vocational course options for students in Year 10;
- providing destination data and labour market reports for schools.

There were other examples of good practice encountered. As external agents working in the school, JPP brings a set of contacts, skills and knowledge not readily available within schools. JPP is in a position to marshal resources and information that can increase student access to vocational pathways and provide a bridge to employment. School staff report that they have neither the time nor the skills and knowledge to provide the links to the range of agencies required to assist students make the transition to work.

Good practice remains localised and poorly promoted. The lack of a strong framework for a transition service is evident. The main role of the Commonwealth Government is currently that of contracting JPP services. But given the number of sectors involved in the transition process, the breadth and complexity of the agencies and services which together provide the pathways, and support for young people in transition, more is required. The environment is fragmented, crowded and relatively poorly coordinated at present.

JPP operates across these arrangements without a strong mandate, and depending on fragile relationships with schools to access clients. The current arrangements do not represent a national safety net that can guarantee a young person support when they require it.

## A Framework

The establishment of a national framework to coordinate transition across education, training and employment sectors is urgently required. Such a framework needs the support of Commonwealth, State and Territory governments and employer groups. The framework needs to bridge the separate cultures of educators and employers.

In order to establish a national framework for transition, changes are needed at both the national and local level. First a mechanism is needed to establish a collaborative national framework.

**A national body established by agreement between governments to develop a national framework for transition arrangements in Australia is required. These arrangements could be established under similar arrangements to the ASTF, or more formally constituted as a joint government authority.**

This body would develop a framework for transition arrangements that would provide a more adequate safety net for young people. The framework for a stronger safety net needs to be built on the collection and use of data, a requirement that at risk students be referred to an independent transition service, a strong balanced careers and guidance system, and a delivery system of agencies possessing the appropriate knowledge and skills. The framework requires the following elements:

- **The routine collection and exchange of information resulting from student tracking from post-compulsory schooling through to secure employment, training or higher education.**
- **Formal protocols developed between governments to establish a framework of referral for students at risk of leaving school early to a recognised transition service.**
- **Performance benchmarks including skills profiles required for transition service providers**
- **The development of a national careers information and guidance system that can equip all students in secondary schools with knowledge and information on pathways, options, and include information on workplace requirements.**
- **Regular evaluation of the impact of transition services.**

This framework then needs to be implemented at a local level through a series of formal agreements between schools, training providers, community agencies, and enterprises.

## **Contracting Transition Providers**

To date, the funding available for JPP has been of a developmental nature, and has seeded some innovative approaches producing good outcomes. The innovation needs to be encouraged and the outcomes promoted more widely.

Current approaches to funding the service leads to apparent anomalies in student access. Students in some regions have very limited access, while in other regions the service is reasonably comprehensive. Benchmarks on the cost of delivery of transition services and preventative services are needed to reduce current variations in coverage of JPP from one region to another, so that all young people who need assistance can access the transition service.

The current submission process creates a highly competitive environment between JPP providers which affects their capacity to collaborate, share information and improve their service based on the collective experience of delivering JPP. These processes can also create competition between agencies at the local level. Organisations that may bid against each other for JPP services then subsequently need to collaborate to achieve outcomes for young people. The annual funding (and re-funding) process also undermines the confidence of schools in establishing a strong dependence on the JPP service.

**Funding for the transition service should be on a basis that promotes collaboration, openness and transparency within a region, through a process managed at a regional level.**

**Services should be established for three years (subject to performance based on strong service benchmarks and accountabilities) and ensure equity of access for young people.**

**Resources should be provided to facilitate collaboration between agencies and stakeholders before development of the local proposal. Agreement on the optimal service provider or consortia in a region is likely to lead to stronger relationships between schools, JPP providers, employers and other relevant agencies. Area Consultative Committees could be used to manage or contract the facilitation stage.**

To ensure that all young people who do not intend to proceed to tertiary study can access JPP, additional resources are required for the programme. New sustainable resources should be directed towards establishing JPP as a comprehensive national transition programme. Provision needs to be established on funding allocated to regions based on the population of eligible young people. Additional weightings can be made for factors such as travel in regional locations, local youth unemployment rates, and rates of transition to higher education.

**Additional resources are required to ensure all young people in need can access JPP. Funding requirements need to be identified on a population basis, take local factors such as unemployment rates and transition to higher education into account, and allocate funds to regions where decisions on provision can be made.**

Once organisations or consortia are contracted to provide JPP services, their capacity to learn from each other would be enhanced by strengthening their national forum, which is currently the National JPP Network. The capacity of the National Network to distribute information, coordinate responses and promote good practice is currently limited by a lack of resources.

An allocation of core funding to support the operation of the National Network would allow this forum to function as a point of information distribution and communication for JPP providers. An alternative option would be to explore an alliance or merger with similar associations such as Jobs Australia.

**The National JPP Network should be adequately resourced by government to provide information, coordinate issues and promote good practice on behalf of, and between, JPP providers.**

### **Clarifying Functions**

There appear to be three functions being performed by the JPP providers under the current arrangements. The first is providing information and case management to potentially all students who are leaving school seeking employment. The second is providing a range of interventions to assist predominantly younger "students at risk" remain at school or move to alternative education and training environments. The third is involvement in identifying general careers advice, assistance in curriculum delivery, and establishing other vocational options within schools.

More clearly defining components of the service will assist both providers and stakeholders to obtain a clearer understanding of the service, and provide a stronger basis for funding and delivery of the programme. The components should be delivered by the same agency or consortia nominated as a result of the locally agreed collaborative process.

It is important that a consistent platform of service is established that guarantees a safety net assistance for those leaving school, while still allowing local flexibility to respond to particular needs in preventing young people from leaving school.

**Service benchmarks need to be developed for the preventative and placement aspects of the transition service as two distinct elements. This would encourage providers to develop creative preventative approaches while separately providing the safety net services.**

The transition process is generally taking a longer period of time for young people to complete. Some young people, particularly those at risk, need more time to make a secure transition. JPP providers continue to support some young people for extended periods of time beyond the limits of their contract. An effective transition system needs to be able to meet the requirement to support some young people for extended periods of time.

**An effective transition service needs to provide support for high risk individuals up to 12 months after leaving school, and to work with students younger than 15 on preventative approaches.**

### **Stronger local arrangements**

Integrating the service with other services directly related to school to work transition could immediately strengthen JPP. Parallel activities that directly or indirectly assist young people to successfully make a transition from school to work or other equivalent post-school outcomes would be the optimal linkage. Integrating arrangements within a region could help the main stakeholders, schools and employers, access a range of related services through the one agency or 'gateway'.

Combining the information, assessment, referral and support functions of JPP with arrangements for work placement, and part-time New Apprenticeships in schools would make sense both for schools and employers. JPP providers would be able to work with students over an extended period of time, and employers would have one point of contact to deal with for a number of school requirements.

It would be important that the service continues to be provided by non-school based staff with the appropriate profile of skills and experience.

Integration with these school-based services offers the advantages of a less competitive funding regime, and greater continuity of service provision.

**Integration of JPP with other services provided in schools preparing students for transition to employment, such as work placement and part-time apprenticeships, would strengthen access to the service within schools. Integration would need to ensure that positive current features of the service, such as the skills profile of staff, were maintained.**

The role played by JPP providing the vocationally related component of careers information services could be formalised as current arrangements for providing information in schools often appears inadequate. If funding for transition services is allocated through regional partnerships, a careers service could also be purchased for young people in and out of school. This service would be most effectively provided by a combination of transition service personnel in combination with schools and employers. The requirement for a careers service that is knowledgeable about all the pathways available to young people, and can advise young people as effectively about workplace

requirements as tertiary education requirements, is likely to require a number of organisations to be involved.

The capacity to provide career services should require that staff should meet defined skills and qualification profile requirements.

**Coordination of transition services should include contracting a comprehensive careers and guidance system for students.**

### **Sharing Information**

The national transition body could host an annual conference that include both State and Commonwealth transition programmes, and serve as a national forum to discuss and profile good practice. Content could also be provided in electronic and printed form in regularly produced newsletters or booklets under a funding allocation made by the Commonwealth.

**An Annual National Conference, providing a discrete forum within the conference, could profile examples of good practice selected by a nomination process. Presentations made could be subsequently documented and circulated to schools and providers in booklets, newsletters, or on the web.**

Duplicated effort by many JPP providers developing materials and resources is an inefficient use of funds and limits development of the programme. The competitive environment does not encourage the widespread distribution of resources. The basic information and work readiness tools used in JPP are remarkably consistent across the programme, and JPP providers could opt to use centrally commissioned resources or make their own arrangements.

**Core materials and resources for use by JPP providers could be commissioned by the national body and developed through other agencies including providers. This would help to establish a set of resources for the programme.**

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