



Transitions to Employment of Australian Young People with Disability and the Ticket to Work Initiative

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The views and opinions expressed in this document are those of the authors / project team and do not necessarily reflect the views of the Australian Government.

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Acknowledgement

In seven months from November 2013 to May 2014 the National Ticket to Work Network received Commonwealth funding through the National Disability Employment Initiative (NDEI).

Over the seven months of funding we have created over 300 Australian School-based Traineeships, work experience and workplace preparation opportunities for young Australians with disability and engaged with over 100 employers that have supported these young people.

We are thankful for the support of the Commonwealth Government for the funding we received and also to Work Focus who contract managed the funding and who were always supportive and helpful.

We are also grateful to Elena Ricciuti for her assistance in conducting the many interviews with young people, employers, parents and schools that form the basis of primary data and information in this report.

But most of all we would like to thank the hundreds of organisations that have engaged with the National Ticket to Work Network during this seven month period. Over 130 organisations are now partners in Local Ticket to Work Networks in 23 regions across metropolitan and regional Australia. A further 17 regions are in the process of investigating the introduction of Ticket to Work in their area.

We are excited by the transition to employment opportunities that Local Ticket to Work Networks have created for young people with disability, a cohort that are so often disadvantaged in the labour market. As the majority of the Local Ticket to Work Networks are still establishing their networks and partnerships we are even more excited about the opportunities that Ticket to Work could create into the future as the model matures and new Local Ticket to Work Networks develop.

We would like to thank all those organisations and individuals involved in the Local Ticket to Work Networks, who have had to go above and beyond what they are often contracted to do, they needed to commit, forgo the competitive nature of employment services and collaborate to achieve outcomes for young people in their community. Many had to challenge disability stereotypes and the pervasive culture of low expectations with regards youth disability employment that continues to persist in our community. They also had to give young people opportunity to self-determine and sometimes fail; they had to challenge themselves to not put limitations on these young people. They also had to draw together an array of partners best suited to meet the needs of the young people they were working for and on behalf of.

Ticket to Work represents a new approach to improving the post-school employment outcomes of Australian young people with disability. We thank all the young people, parents and employers who have challenged the status quo over this period and engaged with Ticket to Work and its related activities. We look forward to seeing all of these young people, and future ones, continue on in their journey to open employment and achieve a life of independence and social inclusion.

1. Introduction

‘School to work’ transition refers to the critical socio-economic life changing period between approximately 15 to 24 years of age – a period when young individuals develop and build skills, based on their initial education and training that helps them become productive members of the society (World Bank, 2009).

‘School to work’ transition is challenging for almost every young person. It is in this critical education transition period that a young person’s future can be determined, and the success (or otherwise) of the transition can have implications that last a lifetime. This is particularly true for young people with disability.

The impact of young people with disability making a successful transition from school to work and/or further study is critical as a positive one can greatly improve their long-term economic future, wellbeing and inclusion in society. Those who do not make a successful transition are at greater risk of labour-force and social exclusion, as well physical and mental health risks. Hence targeted and strategic policy and program intervention during transition provides benefit to the individual as well as our wider society and economy. Indeed, research has shown that transition points in life, or the ‘fork in the road’ periods, are important times in an individual’s life when timely resources and support investment in can assist in avoiding or minimising long-term disadvantage (Ziguras, 2005).

During the transition from school period young people often encounter great uncertainties and tremendous developmental challenges. These issues may be made more stressful by the presence of a disability, thereby increasing the risk of social exclusion amongst those young people who are transitioning and have a disability (Yu 2009; Blacher 2001; Dewson et al. 2004; Lichtenstein 1998; Winn and Hay 2009).

Research shows that Australian young people with disability are not successfully transitioning from school into further training or employment; a factor that is an indicator of long term, and often life-long, disadvantage. In Australia, young people with disability are more likely to drop out of school early, be excluded from the labour force, have fewer educational qualifications, experience poverty and be socially isolated.

Improving these outcomes is a societal imperative as well as an economic one. Societal, in that it enables all people to participate fully in society and be active citizens. Economic, because increasing the number of persons with disability in employment can contribute to mitigating some of the labour force effects imposed by an ageing population, can reduce pension dependency and improve individuals’ overall financial and wellbeing status.

Ticket to Work is an initiative that was borne out of an awareness that Australian young people were not successfully transition to employment from school and the need to provide targeted support to avoid long term disadvantage. Ticket to Work is underpinned by a philosophy that ‘every young person with disability is entitled to participate in the community, source appropriate employment and be socially included’ and, that to achieve this, a localised partnership network-driven approach increases the likelihood of achieving the philosophical goal. Ticket to Work aims to improve post-school transitions of young people with disability, not only for the benefit of the individual but also for the benefit of our wider society and economy.

In establishing Ticket to Work in 2011 scoping research (Wakeford and Waugh, 2010) was undertaken, evaluating national and international models and approaches that would best meet the overarching goals of Ticket to Work. Four key features and issues emerged, and influenced Ticket to Work’s development, structure and philosophy.

- Firstly, that there is a pervasive culture of low expectation and lack of opportunities for Australian students with disability, particularly in relation to genuine sustainable employment; a view sometimes held by the young people themselves, parents, employers, educators and government.

- Secondly, that participation in career development planning and activities, work experience and accredited training and completion of secondary schooling are among the most significant indicators of post-school success for young people with disability.
- Thirdly, that young people with disability who exit school with a job are more likely to maintain a positive career trajectory than those who do not.
- Finally, that locally-based cross sectoral partnership networks which bring together expertise from an array of sectors (education, industry, disability, employment, training, youth) who share a common interest in improving the post-school outcomes of young people with disability are able to create opportunities for these young people and their local community.

Ticket to Work's current structure is a simple one; a national overarching body (the 'National Network') that oversees and supports many local partnership networks ('Local Ticket to Work Networks' or 'Local Networks') operating across Australia.

The National Network works with local communities wanting to establish their own Local Ticket to Work Network; spotlighting research, strategies and practices that produce optimal employment and career achievement for young people with disability.

The Local Networks bring together a range of partners in local regions who work together to provide young people with access to career development, workplace preparation, work experience, vocational skills and Australian School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (ASbATs). Essentially each Local Network supports young people with disability to participate in the same 'typical' transition to employment activities that their non-disabled peers generally partake in as a matter of course. The Local Networks use their combined skills to ensure these activities are provided in a supportive manner, in a way that reflects the individual needs of students and in many cases can negate the need for specialised disability focus programs.

The poor labour-market statistics for young people with a disability suggest a critical need for more work-based learning opportunities during a student's final years of schooling. Ticket to Work aims to redress the poor employment, social and economic exclusion rates currently experienced by Australian young people with disability. It aims to raise the employment aspirations of young people with disability, improve access and break down the barriers to employment. Ticket to Work aims to ensure that young people with disability can remain in school to complete their senior schooling, participate in career development, build self determination and commence a transition to employment whilst they are in school and have the dedicated support of range of organisations. Ticket to Work is preparing young people with disability for the workplace and giving them an employment pathway that will help to ensure they move into a successful life beyond school.

1.1 Research Report Purpose and Methodology

This Report is primarily centred on an exploration of transition from school to work within the context of young people with disability. To achieve this the Report provides youth disability data, explores what factors and elements comprise a 'good transition' for this cohort and examines the benefit of utilising 'transition oriented' networked partnerships to achieve positive transition outcomes. The transition methods and approaches utilised by Ticket to Work and the outcomes achieved by participants provides companion and comparative action research data. This report draws upon a mix of Australian and international data, as well as primary data drawn from Ticket to Work participants.

It is also important to note that within this report the term 'open employment' is used which within this context means employment in the open labour market. The term 'supported employment', on the other hand, refers to employment in Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs, sometimes referred to as 'sheltered workshops').

The purpose of this report is to provide a consolidated picture of the current status of youth disability transition in Australia, identify what can be done to improve the post-school outcomes of young Australians with disability and highlight how Ticket to Work is already positively changing this landscape.

This report has some limitations. The majority of participants in the research had just started their involvement in Ticket to Work when they were interviewed, unless they were involved in the original pilot. In addition, there was no control group as we were exploring only the experiences of those stakeholders involved in Ticket to Work.

Primary research

The primary data in this report is a combination of qualitative and quantitative information collected in June 2014. The data was drawn through individual interviews held with Ticket to Work participants (young people, parents, employers, educators) using a structured combination of both multiple choice and open-ended questions. In addition, a focus group phone discussion was independently facilitated with Local Ticket to Work Network members from across Australia.

The primary research saw a total of 103 individuals participate in interviews or the focus group. This total was comprised of 46 young people, 16 employers, 22 parents, 6 schools and 23 Ticket to Work members. Data obtained through the research with participants has been analysed and summarised to contribute to aspects of this report.

Secondary research

Secondary data was collated, reviewed and synthesised utilising a range of resources such as government statistics, research publications, presentations and media content.

2. Ticket to Work

2.1 Background

In late 2010 representatives from a diverse range of organisations in Melbourne, who all shared a common desire to improve the transitions and employment outcomes of young people with intellectual disability, collaborated to explore ways that local young people with disability could be better supported by the community to initiate successful pathways to employment. This collaborative group became known as the 'Youth Disability Pathways Network (Inner Melbourne)' and tasked themselves with identifying new approaches and models that could be utilised to meet their overarching goal. The network consisted of a wide range of knowledge and expertise covering the education, training, employment and disability sectors.

Research conducted by the network showed that young people with disability benefit from frequent and continuous exposure to real work environments throughout the secondary school years and beyond. Dr Luecking (2009) said that "the most consistent predictors of post school employment success has been community-based work experience while young people are still in high school, particularly paid jobs - where students are integrated into authentic work places alongside co-workers without disabilities" and that it has also shown that "young people with disability who exit school with a job are more likely to maintain a positive career trajectory than those who do not".

On the basis of such research and practice, the network identified Australian School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (ASbAT) as an ideal approach given that ASbATs incorporate key elements of good transition practice. ASbATs allow secondary school students to spend one / two days in the workplace, one day undertaking accredited vocational training delivered by a Registered Training Organisation (RTO) and the remainder of the week at school.

ASbATs are available to students across Australia. The term ASbAT is used in some states while other terms are used in different states and jurisdictions including 'Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (ASBA)', 'School Based Apprenticeship (SBA)' or 'School based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (SBAT)'. Students that undertake an ASbAT are employed by a business and paid a training wage for time spent at work, work towards completion of accredited training in a qualification related to the employment (eg. Certificate II in Horticulture, Certificate II in Business Administration) and, in the majority of cases, the ASbAT contributes to their formal secondary schooling. A number of parties are signatories to an ASbAT – the student, the employer, the parent, the RTO and the Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC). Where a young person has a recognised and assessed disability, the student and the employer can be supported by a Disability Employment Service (DES) and the Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support (DAAWS).

In order to further assess and validate ASbATs as being an appropriate transition and employment pathway mechanism for students with disability, scoping research was undertaken before the network confirmed they would pursue this model. The final report 'Ticket to Work – A best-practice SBAT model for students with a disability' (Wakeford and Waugh, 2010) consisted of a literature review of approaches to apprenticeships and traineeships for people with a disability and recommendations for developing a best practice support model that would assist young people with a disability make an effective transition to ASbAT employment.

The network used the findings and recommendations made in this scoping report to establish a pilot ASbAT model for local students and steer the implementation of this model in the across two neighbouring regions in Melbourne. In addition, the network worked collaboratively to build partnership governance structures, develop operational materials, develop strategic marketing collateral and establish employer networks. Over the course of this period, the network was also establishing the formal structure of the ASbAT model that was to be rolled-out to students in 2012 and determined a name for the initiative; the initiative we now know as 'Ticket to Work'.

2.2 Pilot program (2012 – 2013)

The pilot period of the program took place between 2012 and 2013. Over that time a total of 28 students undertook an ASbAT in an industry area that, as close as possible, was matched to their area of career interest and capacity. These students became paid trainees employed across a mix of sole, mid, multi-national businesses and across industry areas which included business administration, hospitality, horticulture, retail and automotive. Prior to commencing an ASbAT all students participate in workplace preparation activities and periods of work experience and work trials with potential ASbAT employers.

Outstanding achievements were observed of students who took part in the pilot:

- 64 per cent in continuing employment post-school (some with their ASbAT employer while others are now employed by a different business and/or in a different industry)
- 25 per cent still completing secondary education (all of whom are continuing their ASbAT)
- 7 per cent attending TAFE post school
- 4 per cent in disability-specific support programs post-school.

During 2013, and as Ticket to Work gathered momentum and interest, organisations in other regions began to express interest in replicating the model in their local area. It became clear that the model was desirable and could address transition and employment needs for an even greater number of young people with disability in other parts of Australia. It became clear that the grass-roots nature of the model could easily accommodate up-scaling and replication in new regions.

The network that originally conceived Ticket to Work quickly mobilised in 2013 to discuss this matter and collectively saw the benefit in expansion of the model; provided that the philosophy, brand and quality was assured if introduced in other regions. A National Ticket to Work Network was established to support the accreditation of new Local Ticket to Work Networks and assist them to implement the model in their region.

2.3 National expansion (2013 – 2014)

In October 2013 the National Ticket to Work Network received Commonwealth funding through the National Disability Employment Initiative (NDEI) to further expand and grow the initiative. The modest funding allowed for the employment of a National Manager. NDEI funding was provided over a seven month period and ended on the 31st of May 2014.

An array of activities were undertaken over this period and led to significant expansion of Ticket to Work nationally. Ticket to Work expanded across Australia and presently has Local Ticket to Work Networks operating in almost all states and territories (the Australian Capital Territory being the only jurisdiction without Ticket to Work presence). Over this short period of time there has also been an extraordinary number of young people, employers, schools and organisations participating in a Local Ticket to Work Network and/or related activity. This evidences the need for a formalised model and structure to support young people with disability to successfully transition from school and into an employment pathway. It also showed that others recognised localised partnership networks (Local Ticket to Work Networks), comprised of an array of organisations committed to improving youth transition outcomes, is the best way of supporting local students with disability. Exponential expansion of the model nationally was validation that the Ticket to Work model, established by a small Melbourne collective in 2010 / 2011, did hold benefit and value and was being recognised as such in metropolitan, regional and rural areas across Australia.

During the course of the NDEI funding (October 2013 – May 2014) the following Ticket to Work specific outcomes were achieved:

Young People
99 x young people have commenced in an ASbAT
75 x young people have undertaken work experience
128 x young people have participated in 'workplace preparation' activities
Employers
127 x employers have supported or taken on a young person in their workplace (eg. work experience)
55 x employers have an ASbAT trainee in their workplace
Schools
26 x specialist disability schools involved in a Local Ticket to Work Network
67 x mainstream schools and other education providers involved in a Local Ticket to Work Network (NB. some of the mainstream schools had special education units attached to them that support the needs of students with disability.)
Local Ticket to Work Network partners
136 x Local Ticket to Work Network partners
44 x Local Ticket to Work Networks (17 x operational, 6 x under development, 19 x in consideration)

Table 1: Ticket to Work outcomes (October 2013 - May 2014)

As noted earlier, Local Ticket to Work Networks are comprised of an array of organisations committed to improving the transitions and employment outcomes of young people with disability in their community. What is also interesting to note is that, all organisations involved in these Networks go above and beyond what they are often contracted to do, some step outside of their usual work to participate and some work alongside other organisations that under other circumstances are in fact competitors. For some members of these Networks it is the first time they have worked in the disability or youth space and have had to develop an understanding of the needs of this cohort; something easily accommodated because within each Network there are disability, apprenticeship and youth employment experts to assist others' professional learning. It is fair to say that each Local Network has had to work hard in their regions to address disability stereotypes and challenge the culture of low expectations that do persist in our society; and, they have had to build aspirations and give the young people they are supporting with opportunities to self-determine and sometimes fail along the way. Some Local Network members have noted that being part of their partnership led to them to re-evaluate their own personal disability perceptions and shift their own views along the way.

While all Local Networks operate under the Ticket to Work guidelines and overarching philosophy no two Local Networks are alike. They are grass-roots, they operate in different locales, they are built around specific issues and needs particular to their cohort and are led by different Lead Agents (intermediary organisations) in each region. What is consistent, however, is that they all have the support of a National Network, have opportunities to formally connect with one another through national meetings and can gain the assistance and guidance of National Ticket to Work staff. In addition, all have access to a vast library of materials, tools and resources (housed in the 'members area' of the Ticket to Work website) to assist them in coordinating and offering Ticket to Work in their region.

The outcomes achieved in a mere seven months of NDEI funding are substantial and have directly contributed to creating more opportunities for young people with disability who, so often, are disadvantaged in the labour market. With some of the Local Ticket to Work Networks still in the partnership establishment phase (that is, not offering direct transition and employment activities to young people as yet) it is clear that even more opportunities will be created for young people, employers and educators in their regions. Furthermore, as more Local Networks come on line, and the model matures even further, Ticket to Work is well positioned to

play an even greater role in testing, trialing and improving youth disability transition and employment approaches and leading advocacy regarding these matters at a national level. Ticket to Work is well placed to play a significant role in turning around the intractably low-level of post-school employment rates currently experienced by Australian youth with disability.

3. Australian Young People with Disability and their Transitions

Australian young people with disability are a substantial, and seemingly increasing, cohort. In 2012, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) identified that 7.8 per cent of all 15 – 24 year olds in Australia had a disability; increasing from 6.6 per cent in 2009. The total population size of all young Australians aged 15 – 24 years was 2,866,471 at the last census in 2011; which means that 223,584 of these are living with disability. Put another way, the population size of young people with disability in Australia is a little over the total population size of Hobart or just under the population size of Wollongong.

It has been identified that only 38 per cent of these young people had completed Year 12 or its equivalent and that 62 per cent were not fully engaged in work or study (ABS, 2012). Only half of all students with severe disability progress past Year 10 at school, compared with 80 per cent in the general population (ABS, 2012). Seventeen per cent of young people with a disability do not enter employment over the seven year period after leaving school, compared to five per cent of counterparts without a disability (Lamb & McKenzie, 2001). This data alone infers that, for the vast many, a successful completion of school followed by a positive transition from school and into employment or further training is not achieved or not a likely outcome.

When one considers other data and information regarding the status of persons with disability in Australia, we see a very worrying picture of what may lie ahead for these (and future) young people with disability.

Australia compares poorly on the international stage when it comes to the labour force participation, poverty and social exclusion rates experienced by Australians with disability. The 2011 PricewaterhouseCoopers' report 'Disability expectations: Investing in a better life, a stronger Australia' highlights the poor employment access and relative poverty statistics for Australians with a disability: only 50 per cent of Australians with a disability are likely to be employed, compared to 60 per cent for the OECD, and 70 per cent for the top eight OECD countries; and, 45 per cent of Australians with a disability live in/near poverty, more than double the OECD average (p. 9). Furthermore, "young people are particularly at risk of being caught in welfare dependency trap. In 2010, close to 87,000 recipients of the Disability Support Pension (DSP) – over 10 per cent – were under the age of 30" (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011).

The 2009 KPMG report 'The Contemporary Disability Service System' identified that the numbers of people with disabilities in Australia is expected to continue to grow over the coming decades, while the working age population will fall. This same report also acknowledged that the critical transition points that a person with a disability experiences are: beginning school; leaving school and entering employment; beginning work; and, retiring and ageing (p.11). In light of this, a particular focus on the transition from school to work is recommended through "increasing participation for people with a disability in employment ... with a particular focus on improving transitions from school to employment ... and partnerships with the private and not-for-profit sectors" (p.4). It was further recommended that social inclusion and transitions can be enhanced through the education of young people with a disability and fostering partnerships between education and employment agencies to support the young person's school to work transition.

Overall, the importance of supporting young people with disabilities to engage with schooling and successfully transition to post-school destinations such as further training and/or employment is critical. Partnerships between education, employment and not-for profit sectors are also seen as a mechanism for supporting positive transitions. This is not only of benefit to the individual but also to their care givers and the wider community.

It is with respect to the aforementioned data and commentary that Ticket to Work was built upon. However, in developing and expanding Ticket to Work it became apparent that while some literature regarding the transitions of young people with disability was available in Australia, it was also clear that there was a dearth of data pertaining to the longitudinal transitions outcomes for this cohort.

3.1 Limited national transition from school data

Overall, there is very little consolidated data or research studies regarding youth disability transition outcomes (past, present and projected) in Australia.

In Australia 'general youth' data has been collected via research projects such as 'Longitudinal Surveys of Australian Youth (LSAY)', which has for many years provided considerable information about what happens to young people as they transition from school. Indeed, LSAY is considered the foremost research program tracking young people as they move from school to post-school destinations in Australia and has been operating since 1995. LSAY commences the surveying of students when they are in Year 9 and follows them to evaluate their post-school movements for ten years. Unfortunately LSAY has not surveyed young people with intellectual disability or physical disability since 2007. Prior to this time all Year 9 students were eligible to participate whether they had a disability or not, which meant that students with disability were routinely included. However, students attending specialist disability schools were not sampled (thus only gathering data from students with disability in mainstream schools) which has obviously skewed youth disability specific data.

Australia has, along with 70 other nations, elected to participate in the OECD coordinated 'Programme for International Student Assessment (PISA)'. PISA is a triennial international survey which aims to evaluate education systems worldwide by testing the skills and knowledge of 15-year-old students, and designed to assess to what extent students at the end of compulsory education can apply their knowledge to real-life situations and be equipped for full participation in society. PISA results can provide researchers and policy makers with information to guide planning, and also facilitates comparison against and between other nations. Unfortunately, PISA excludes students with physical and intellectual disabilities from undertaking the tests. It does raise the question as to whether exclusion of this cohort in PISA testing misrepresents the results. At the very least it can send a message to policy makers that the educational achievement of students with disability and their pathways are not important.

So, in short, at present longitudinal transition data is not readily available regarding this cohort of vulnerable young people. As a result, Australia knows little about what it happens to their population of students with disability once they leave school. One could surmise that the lack of consolidated and longitudinal research or data regarding this cohort is minimising our capacity to frame good policy and practice in Australia.

3.2 Transitions and post-school destinations

Despite there being little research into the transition outcomes of young people with disability in Australia, some has been conducted by Australian researchers. This research does provide some indicative data regarding the post-school employment transitions of young people with certain types of disability. By contrast to some international employment outcomes, young Australians with disability do not fare well in the open employment market.

A Griffith University study, 'Quality outcomes for students with a disability' led by Dr Meadows, is one of only two such ones that have tracked young people with disability, Dr Meadow tracked students for a five years period post-school. This study revealed that only 25 per cent of students with an autistic spectrum disorder, an intellectual impairment or a dual diagnosis of these two conditions, had ever held a paid 'open-employment' job in a community setting. It further revealed that 60 per cent of the remainder instead attended non-paid day programs and 13 per cent worked in Australian Disability Enterprise (often referred to as 'sheltered workshops'). Ninety-three per cent of this group was in receipt of a disability support pension; of which 78 per cent received the maximum benefit, thus indicating that their earnings were of an insufficient magnitude to affect the pension (Meadows et. al, 2006).

Open employment outcomes in the United States differ greatly from what we know to be those experienced by Australian young people with disability. Longitudinal data in the United States points to significant levels of persons with disability engaged in the open employment market. Since 1975, considerable federal, state and local effort has been placed on improving school and post-school results for youth with disabilities in the United States (Gaylord et. al, 2004). The provision of transition to employment support is actually legislated federally across the United States, which has resulted in the implementation of streamlined cross-sectoral and cross-state approaches to employment and transition preparation of persons with disability.

The success of concerted employment transition efforts in the United States is evidenced in a government-led longitudinal study conducted there. This study, the 'National Longitudinal Transition Study', has been conducted between 2000 and 2009. The results indicated the rate of open employment for young adults over an eight year period since leaving high school ranged from 63 per cent of those with autism or multiple disabilities, 76 per cent for those with intellectual disability to 96 per cent for young adults with other health impairments (Newman, L et. al, 2011).

Whilst caution must be taken when comparing Australian data against United States data, the face-value difference is striking when observing disability employment outcomes between the two countries. Despite this, it is worth considering that in the Griffith University study only 25 per cent of young people with intellectual disability engaged in open employment in the five years post-school whereas 76 per cent of such individuals in the United States did so in the eight years post-school.

In terms of all disabilities, additional longitudinal data conducted by researchers in the United States showed that 91 per cent of young adults with disabilities that had been out of high school for up to eight years reported having been employed at some time since leaving high school (Newman et. al, 2011). Similar Australian research, albeit a decade older, showed that only 69 per cent of young Australians with disability reported that they had been employed at some time in the seven years since leaving school (Lamb and McKenzie, 2001). It is important to note, however, that the Australian study did not include the surveying of young people that had attended a disability specific school. Had this cohort of young people been included it can be surmised that the employment participation rate would have been lower than the published 69 per cent.

3.3 Student destinations post-school

Given that only a small percentage of Australian young people with disability are moving into post-school employment, it is important to review the destination points that the majority do in fact transition into after leaving school.

"Many young people with disability, particularly intellectual disability, have non-vocational transitions from school that generally include 'alternatives to employment (ATE)' or 'adult day service' programs" (Cocks and Harvey, 2008). For the purpose of this report both of these types of services will be referred to as 'day services'. Simply put, day service programs are ones that are alternatives to paid employment and involve participants taking part in activities related to social, independence and skills development. Such programs can also provide the individual and their care givers with a sense of security and respite; something often seen as particularly appealing to families with a child that is preparing to transition from the security and safety of school.

As Cocks and Harvey (2008) point out day programs "generally do not have clear destinations for service users and effectively are providing lifelong support. Access to employment services or employment skills development is often very limited for those who enter into these programs, thus greatly minimising their ability to consider and/or move into open employment in the future. Indeed, clients in these programs can not simultaneously participate in the day program and in open employment support; thus gaining the benefits of being involved in two supportive environments".

As there is limited funding for day services, many Australian jurisdictions have prioritised the placement of school leavers with a disability into their adult day services. This presents a quandary for parents, schools and young people in the critical transition from school period. Should the young person move straight into a supportive and guaranteed day program placement or should they pursue employment which doesn't come with immediate guarantee of success?

In addition to these concerns, Cocks and Harvey (2008) also identified "other barriers and disincentives to participation in open employment including families steering away from open employment because of lack of safety nets, the lack of an interface between business and open disability employment services, and the silo nature of the disability support system".

In Australia, federally-funded Disability Employment Services (DES) provide specialist assistance to people with disability, illness or injury to source and sustain open employment. DES providers can assist with workplace preparation, job-search support, provision of ongoing on-the-job training to the individual and co-workers, purchase vocational training needed by the individual and gain access to workplace modifications to assist the individual to undertake their role at work.

In contrast to day programs, DES provide no safety net or guarantee of employment in an industry or role of particular appeal to the client. Of course, many DES providers work hard to source appropriate employment for their client but are limited in always achieving this by contractual parameters placed on them by their government funding contracts. So, for some young people who do choose to take the open employment pathway post-school they move from being in the very secure and safe environment of school to non-structured activities with their DES, which in many cases means attending the DES office each fortnight to participate in job-preparation and job-searching activities. This can often mean a very worrisome transition for the young person and also result in parents/carers having to spend more hours in the home caring for their son or daughter now that he/she is no longer attending school daily or participating in other structured activities in the community. To achieve this, some parents/carers have to resign from their own employment or reduce workplace hours to care for their child. As it can be seen, taking the employment pathway through DES is often seen as a risk with too few guarantees or safety nets to make it attractive.

Presently, an individual participating in a day program or in supported employment through an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) cannot engage with a DES provider. ADEs are generally not-for-profit organisations providing supported employment opportunities in a segregated setting to people with disability. If an individual wants to pursue open employment and gain the specialised support of a DES, they must give up their ADE or day program place to do so. Therefore, if a person leaves their ADE or day program to source open employment they must then find ways to fill their week while waiting to find employment. If they do find employment but are not successful in sustaining it, there is no guarantee their placement at the ADE or day program will still be available to them. If the person does find and sustain employment, but it is not for full-time working hours, they are not permitted to fill the remaining hours of their week through continued attendance at their ADE or day program. It is clear that there is thus a disincentive to move out of confirmed placements in programs and attempt to source open employment. It is evident that opportunities for program concurrency participation is not facilitated and/or allowed in most cases.

The disincentive is even greater for young people coming to the end of their schooling and making decisions about their post-school pathways. For those young people who have had limited or no exposure to authentic work (work experience, work placements, ASbATs) whilst in school the decision will be made all the harder. There is also a disincentive for DES providers to work with some young people who do not have demonstrated workplace experience, for it may be assumed that the young person will be difficult to place in employment (and within the timeframe dictated by the DES funding contracts with the federal government). Indeed, Ticket to Work has heard (from school and parent sources) examples of DES providers actually discouraging a

school-leaver from signing up to their employment service. One parent we interviewed said that *“they (the DES provider) did not think my daughter (with autism) would be able to get a job and offered little more than the use of their computers for self directed job search once a fortnight”*.

As part of the SELLEN report ‘South East Region Students with a Disability 2014’ focus groups were conducted with parents of young people that had left school the previous year. In these focus groups it was found that “parents whose young people are now in ADE or a day service feel that their young person’s skills are not being utilised and they could be doing more, the parents expressed that once in the service it is difficult to transition them out into mainstream employment”.

Many other regions around the world have taken the opposite approach and, over the past decade, the concept of ‘Employment First’ has emerged; that being the idea that employment in integrated settings within the community should be the priority service option, no matter the severity of the disability. The result has been ongoing development of a multitude of approaches pertaining to Employment First; including government legislation, policies, practice and research designed to increase integrated employment in the general workforce for citizens with disabilities. These initiatives are often directed at the transition from school stage whereby “employment is the first and preferred option when exploring goals and a life path for citizens with disabilities” and “young people with disabilities have work experiences that are typical of other teenagers and young adults” (APSE statement on Employment First, 2010).

In Australia our policy and practice encourages a young people with disability to transition to non-vocational pathways. As evidenced and outlined earlier, large percentages of students are taking pathways of dependency (that is, day programs or ADEs) rather than open employment pathways. Indeed, the Asquith Group (2009) reported that 23 per cent of students assessed at Support Needs Assessment (SNA) Levels 1 and 2 in Victoria, levels that indicate a relative low level of disability support need, transition from school and into day programs rather than into employment.

In the United States a Bill has just been passed that ensure vocational rehabilitation agencies (DES equivalent organisations) work with schools to provide “pre-employment transition services” to all students with disabilities and that most students with disabilities to try competitive employment before they can be employed in sheltered workshops. The ‘Workforce Innovation and Opportunity Act’ will provide significant changes for students with disabilities transitioning to adulthood and likely contribute to increased levels of employment destination outcomes for students there.

Chiefly, the Act will prohibit individuals with disabilities (aged 24 and younger) from working in jobs paying less than the federal minimum of \$7.25 per hour unless they first try vocational rehabilitation services (equivalent to Australia’s DES) among other requirements including “access employment, education, job-driven training and support services that give them the chance to advance their careers and secure the good jobs of the future” (President Obama, Press Release, 2014). Beyond limiting who can work for less than minimum wage, the legislation will also mandate that DES equivalent providers must dedicate at least 15 per cent of their federal funding to help those with disabilities transition from school to work.

In an interview Senator Tom Harkin (D-Iowa), said that the Act “will help prepare a new generation of young people with disabilities to prepare for, to obtain and succeed in competitive, integrated employment, not sub-standard, sub-minimum wage, dead-end jobs, but jobs in which people with disabilities can learn and grow to their maximum potential” (Disability Scoop, 2014).

With the introduction of Australian National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) there will be more resources and opportunities for people with disability to achieve their goals. However, if the current frameworks, policy, practices and prevailing culture are not examined the NDIS is unlikely to better support transition to

employment. Australia could benefit from examining international practices that are delivering improved disability employment outcomes for young people.

3.4 Early school leaving

A student with disability is less likely than their non-disabled peers to complete their secondary education. As noted earlier, 2012 ABS data revealed that only 36 per cent of all Australians with disability aged 15 to 64 years had completed secondary school (Year 12 or equivalent) which was nearly half that of their non-disabled peers. That same data showed that the figure is not much greater (38 per cent) for those in the 18 – 25 years of age category, despite that fact that this cohort are part of the generation of youth who have experienced increased rates of school completion and post-school education overall.

The 2014 Brotherhood of St Laurence ‘Investing in our Future’ report, which provided recommendations for boosting youth employment in Australia, singled out school completion as the critical factor associated with improving life chances. This report noted that around one in five young people leave school before completing Year 12 and almost half of those find themselves on the margins of the labour force, either in part-time employment or out of work. Furthermore, this report also noted that early school leavers are two and a half times more likely to experience deep social exclusion than those who complete Year 12.

This same report stated that “While schooling is often understood as an area of responsibility for state and territory governments, the consequences of limited school attainment are felt nationally through lower productivity, lower tax revenues, higher unemployment and higher demand for social services”.

The specific effects of early school leaving on young Australians with disability is unavailable due to lack of data however we can surmise these young people would experience the same, or likely worse, levels of disadvantage as their non-disabled peers that leave school early.

Whilst we do not have this data in Australia, the link between level of education and paid employment for those with disability has been measured elsewhere. In the ‘National Longitudinal Transition Study’ conducted in the United States it was clearly noted that increasing levels of education directly correlate with increasing levels of paid employment for young people with disability. Seventy-eight per cent of ‘high school non-completers’ were engaged in paid employment; this increased to 88.7 per cent amongst ‘high school completers’; this increased even further to 92.4 per cent from those with ‘some post secondary schooling’; and, saw 98.7 per cent of young people with disabilities that had attained ‘post-secondary school completion’ in paid employment. (Newman, L et. al, 2011).

“Ticket to Work is a fantastic plan, the school based traineeships are great for these kids because it's hard enough for them as it is and it gives them confidence and life skills they may not have been able to find on their own. In comparison to my other son also has ADHD and left school a year and a half ago but he still hasn't found work and is still struggling. If this program was around earlier it would have helped him in the way it is helping my other son”

(Parent, Ticket to Work)

4. Transition Modelling and Ticket to Work

Research has identified the following as the three proponents of a good quality of life for a person with disability (regardless of the disability type):

- being engaged in employment, on-going learning and/or training;
- living in and participating in your local community in a way *similar* to same age peers; and,
- having active social networks with family and friends (Halpern, 1985).

A 'good transition' from school and into a successful post-school life can assist in achieving the aforementioned quality of life elements.

Ticket to Work is predicated on providing young people with disability the opportunity to experience a 'good transition' from school and into post-school employment. Ticket to Work aims to replicate the 'typical' transition and careers pathways that young people without disability take during their final years of schooling and offer it to young people with disability. This is achieved through the provision of career planning and workplace preparation, work experience, access to accredited training (also known as VET training), access to ASbATs; but, with the support of a Local Network that can ensure these offerings are accompanied by targeted and strategic interventions to suit the individual needs and goals of each young person. Ticket to Work is centered on building the employment aspirations of young people with disability and preparing them for employment.

Previous research has shown that quickly moving youth into real jobs that are well-matched to their interests and have growth potential positively impacts job retention (Cook et al. 2005; Luecking and Fabian 2000). Put simply, the best way to get someone 'job ready' is to get them into a job. At a recent conference Peter Symonds (CEO, Ability Employment Australia) said that "if a young person with a disability wants a job, they are job ready".

As noted earlier, many young people with disability enter into day programs or ADEs upon leaving school in the hope they will be 'trained up' to move on to employment related activities. In a speech by Dr Meadows from Griffith University (2012), he noted that this flow-through model is not a reality as individuals who follow this course rarely move on. Instead he suggests that a placement accompanied with supported training in a real world context is preferable; that 'place and train' is much more successful than a 'train and place' model.

This approach is particularly useful for those with autism and intellectual disability where generic skills development is not easily transferred from the classroom and into the workplace. Many young people with intellectual disability can struggle with classroom-based vocational training, and learn better through practical, hands-on experience. With this in mind, resources can be better utilised by training the person in the specific role, for a specific employer and on-the-job; rather than spending years 'waiting' for someone to become 'work ready'. This also works to support the needs of employers when implementing a 'demand-led' approach to employment; an approach which begins with the need of the employer and works backwards to involve that employer in the design and delivery of the training (on-the-job accredited training, mentoring, DES support).

For many young people with disability, particularly those with more moderate or severe disability, often their pathway involves only disability-specific programs and organisations rather than participation in 'typical' or 'good transition' activities. This can create difficulties in any future transition to open employment, because if young people spend considerable time in programs to become 'job ready' and do not gain access to authentic on-the-job experience they can become unappealing to employers.

Ticket to Work challenges this because it doesn't place the young people in disability-specific programs and introduces them to individualised 'typical' transition activities prior to leaving secondary school. Local Ticket to Work Networks bring an array of sectors together and encourages collaboration between mainstream services and disability-specific ones. The mainstream Ticket to Work services are centred on those with expertise in vocational training, apprenticeships, career development and work experience. The disability-specific ones are those centred on disability education, disability employment and general disability services that have the expertise to support with customisation, adaptation, task breakdown, and the provision of ongoing disability support. Ticket to Work brings these differing competencies and expertise together through localised partnership networks who work collaboratively (rather than in silos) to meet the needs of the individual students and employers they supporting.

The value of the provision of mainstream employment opportunities to all young people with disability regardless of the disability severity is noted in the below quote from the Principal of a special school involved in Ticket to Work.

"Employment used to be aimed at those 'top edge' students particularly for those that can read and write. What we are now doing is moving that down the IQ scale, these kids do have employability skills. So, in our school we are raising the employment aspirations of all students in our school. We discuss careers and all types of employment such as paid full time, part time and casual employment as well as voluntary and supported employment..... It means that those students that used to do training and recreation programs at day services once leaving school can consider paid and volunteer employment also. It's a real recognition of what they can do and that they are all employable."

(Principal, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

By introducing and offering a range of authentic workplace experiences and 'good transition' activities during the final years of schooling, Ticket to Work assists young people to develop skills, confidence, training and exposure to potential career pathways before they leave school. In addition to providing students with experiences, it also empowers the young person and their family with knowledge to make sound decisions regarding post-school pathways. Furthermore, because each Ticket to Work is supported by a Local Network the young person and their family build connections with mainstream and disability-specific organisations that can assist them into the future; organisations that, absent of Ticket to Work, may not have been introduced to these individuals.

"Through Ticket to Work we are introducing the agencies to the students while they are at school and they are key agencies that the students can access post-school which to me is a huge advantage."

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

Ticket to Work is reducing the time that students are spending between completing school and moving into post-school employment; often because that employment pathway has already been created whilst the young person is still in school. This is particularly true for those students who undertake an ASbAT and, through Ticket to Work, we have many examples of young people remaining with their ASbAT employer post-school. Ticket to Work also has many examples of young people moving quickly into alternative open employment, in new roles or industries, because the young person has developed transferable employability skills and an established relationship with a local organisation (typically a DES provider) to assist them to source new employment.

“Participation in ASbATs has really promoted the idea that they need to be working and doing something rather than receiving pension benefits only. This is something that has been evolving over the last four years, since Ticket to Work’s inception, and I really can now see an immense shift in parental perceptions.”

(Principal, special school and part of the original Ticket to Work pilot)

A 2005 report ‘Improved VET Outcomes for People with a Disability’ found that the wait time between leaving school and finding employment led to a subsequent erosion of the students VET skills gained at school (DETNAC, 2005). In other words, the longer one is out of school and not in employment, education or vocational training, the skills gained in school deplete and make the transition to employment even more difficult.

Ticket to Work takes a student and employer-centred approach to successfully transitioning young people with disability into employment, with all members of Local Networks playing a part in this. For young people this support is afforded through the provision of workplace preparation, work experience, employment and vocational training. Individualised support for employers is offered through the provision of disability awareness training, guidance and the appropriate matching of students to work experience or employment positions in their business. Ticket to Work connects young people with disability to training and employment opportunities in their community whilst they are still in school; making the likelihood of a seamless transition from school and into employment more attainable for these young people.

“I believe Ticket to Work really is the best way to go. It gives kids the work ethic and experience they need; in essence it teaches them how to work. I also think that having that transition from ASbAT into work once they finish school is the best pathway for our students. If they don’t go down that pathway they sometimes get lost and never find work. I think showing them the seamless transition from school to work is probably the best method. We are seeing that happen with our students, more and more. We have more students involved in paid employment than we’ve ever had and that’s really impressive. The whole attitude of our students is now about having a career, it is just discussed as a natural thing whereas the word career was never previously used with our students before. I think we’ve changed the perception of this amongst the students.”

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

The ‘Guidelines for Facilitating the Career Development of Young People with Disability’ report indicates that “individual’s beliefs and expectations for the future are heavily influenced by the attitudes of their immediate support network” (2012, p.3). An effective personal support network can play a significant part in supporting and encouraging young people’s hopes and dreams, while avoiding becoming overly protective and stifling their potential (Benz 2001; Kendall & Murphy 2003). On the other hand, prolonged exposure to “horizon-limiting views and experiences” may see these beliefs become internalised and the person’s capacity to recognise their potential diminished (PwC 2011, p.33). The earlier young people gain access to experiences and to support networks that positively influence their views of themselves as workers and active citizens, the better the long term outcomes will be. Ticket to Work, above all, is about changing the culture of low expectations and increasing aspirations.

In summary, Ticket to Work provides for a ‘good transition’ approach through a mix of provision of ‘typical’ pathways planning and transition activities underpinned by partnership networks comprised of both mainstream and disability-specific agencies. The next section discusses the key elements that comprise a ‘good transition’ in more detail and the ways in which Ticket to Work is contributing to these.

4.1 'Good Transition' elements

As noted above, it has been found that five key elements comprise a 'good transition'; these being 'career development and workplace preparation', 'work experience', vocational training' 'Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship' (ASbAT) and 'part-time work'. These are the options generally made routinely available to all other mainstream students / young people in Australia. Considerable research attests to the value and importance of all of these contributing to a successful post-school transition, particularly for young people with disability. On the basis of this, Ticket to Work has built each of these elements (excepting part-time work) into the overarching transition model.

4.1.1 Career development and workplace preparation

The 'Guidelines for Facilitating the Career Development of Young People with Disability' report, prepared by Miles Morgan and on behalf of the Career Industry Council of Australia (CICA) said that "Every young person needs the opportunity to transition successfully from school to ongoing learning, work and community life. To do this successfully, young people and particularly those with disability, need information, support and guidance from an array of people that may directly or indirectly influence their career development and pathways planning" (2012).

Bowman (2004) suggests that a lack of access to suitable user-friendly information about training options and poor career guidance for those with a disability make it difficult for them to make informed choices about VET and apprenticeships during periods of transition (e.g. beginning senior secondary school, when leaving school).

"Young people with disability face the same barriers and challenges as all young people entering the workforce. Many of these can be exacerbated by their disability and they may also face a number of additional barriers, such as negative misconceptions about their ability, a lack of easily accessible information, and limited workplace experience" (Miles Morgan, 2012).

In some areas of the education and transition system there is still a prevailing culture that these actors 'know best' and are best placed to determine post-school options for young people with disability. In maintaining this approach, young people are missing out on moderating and engaging in self-determination when it comes to career development and workplace exploration.

"Making the initial transition from secondary schooling into further education and training or work can be particularly difficult and challenging for young people with disability who often have not had access to services and experiences designed to facilitate their career development" (Miles Morgan, 2012).

Dr Meadows said, in his presentation 'Post School Transition for Students with a Disability' 2012, that "For students with additional educational needs planning for post-school life should begin at around 14 years of age as early planning allows students to familiarise themselves with the post-school environment, set goals for the future, learn the skills that will assist towards meeting those goals, and make adjustments if goals or desires change. It's a self-determined process where students, supported by their parents and family make choices about what they wish to do and achieve when they leave school".

Put simply, experience must precede choice, something often not made available to young people with disability preparing to transition from school and into a life beyond school. In these instances, the young people have not had opportunity to experience authentic employment or career development activities to ensure they make informed decisions about their post-school pathways.

To achieve these quality outcomes and career development, five key areas of transition practice were identified by Paula Kohler and her colleagues, with their model known as 'Kohler's Taxonomy for Transition Programming' (1996). This taxonomy is based on effective practices that have the goal of improving post-

school outcomes and transition for students with disabilities. The categories and practices (which were identified through literature reviews, evaluations, meta-evaluation and concept mapping) are:

- **Student-Focused Planning** practices that use assessment information, student self-determination, and student postsecondary goals to develop Individual Plans
- **Student Development** practices that emphasize life, employment, and occupational skill development via school-based and work-based learning in addition to student assessments and accommodations
- **Interagency Collaboration** practices that facilitate involvement of community businesses, organisations, and agencies in transition education including interagency agreements that articulate roles, responsibilities, communications, and other strategies to foster collaboration and enhance curriculum and program development
- **Program Structure** practices that relate to efficient and effective delivery of transition-focused education and services including philosophy, planning, policy, evaluation, human resource development, and the structures and attributes of schools
- **Family Involvement** practices that increase the ability of family members to work effectively with educators and service providers in planning and delivering education and transition services.

Kohler is clear that transitional focused curriculum and education experiences should:

- begin at age 14
- Not be in addition to
- Nor an adaptation of
- But the fundamental basis of the final years of secondary school (Kohler and Field, 2003).

Research confirms that a curriculum firmly based in teaching these skills in the context of the student's community is effective in promoting positive post school outcomes (Falvey, 1989).

Career preparation and work-based learning experiences are essential in order to form and develop aspirations and to make informed choices about careers. These experiences can be provided during the school day, through after-school programs, through work experience and through collaborations with other services and organisations (Wills, 2003). It is clear that career development should not and cannot just be the domain of schools.

"If the onus is put on the schools to find work placements for the students with disability, they simply do not have the expertise and time to do this on their own. We schools need support. If we are serious about kids receiving training and work experiences then we need to continue this with external partners and support. We need to have these employment agencies that offer the contacts and additional support to the students."

(Teacher, mainstream secondary school, Ticket to Work partner)

4.1.2 Work experience

Ticket to Work research, evaluation and stakeholder discussions attest to important and positive role that work experience can play in improving the transition outcomes of student with disability.

For decades, research has shown the strong relationship between the experience of work during secondary school and higher post-school employment for youth with disabilities (Benz, Yovanoff & Doren, 1997; Colley & Jamison, 1998). "Consistently, the most prominent factors shown to be associated with successful postschool employment outcomes are paid and unpaid work experiences during the last years of secondary school and the completion of a high school diploma" (Luecking 2009). However, as the continuing disappointing post-school employment rates for young people with disabilities suggest, there remains a critical need to expand

quality work-based learning opportunities for these young people and to integrate these experiences into secondary education. Indeed, Luecking (2010) states that “while work experiences are beneficial to all youth, it has been found they are particularly valuable for young people with disabilities”.

In the original scoping research conducted prior to piloting Ticket to Work it was shown that many students with disability in Australia are not undertaking work experience during their school years; whereas their non-disability peers are routinely taking part in work experience in Years 9 or 10. It has been said that schools often feel that they are ill-equipped (in terms of knowledge, skills and resources) to arrange and support work experience for students with disability. Presently, there is no dedicated service to provide work experience support to special schools wanting assistance with work experience provision to their students. In Australia DES providers are prohibited from using their disability employment expertise to assist students with disability source appropriate and supportive work experience opportunities during Year 9 and 10 when work experience is usually undertaken. It is interesting to note that in the United States their DES equivalent organisations are penalised (in funding terms) if they do not engage with schools and support a student’s transition, including the supporting and brokering of work experience.

In information from the Department of Employment workplace surveys, employers routinely rank work experience as one of the most important attributes when recruiting staff (Brotherhood of St Laurence, 2014). Employers are reluctant to interview young people without relevant experience, but there are few available opportunities for young people to acquire it, particularly if a young person has a disability.

“We offer work experience and community access when the students turn 14 because we know that the program is teaching them how to work. It allows the students to learn from making mistakes in the workplace. It also allows them to go somewhere and if they don’t like it then they can give it a go and do their best. If it still doesn’t work out then we can find somewhere else for them to do work experience.”

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

4.1.3 Vocational Education and Training (VET)

Cocks and Thoresen (2013), in their three-year national longitudinal study into social and economic outcomes for apprenticeship and traineeship graduates with disabilities, found that VET and VET in Schools (VETiS) are strong vocational pathways with good employment outcomes for young people with disability, particularly VET or VETiS which includes some form of work-based training such as apprenticeships and traineeships.

It has been found that students with a disability enrolled in an apprenticeship or traineeship have better employment outcomes, when compared against other types of VET courses (Barnett 2004; Clark 2007). This may be because of the employment or on-the-job relationship embedded in the apprenticeship and traineeship models. Therefore a student undertaking an ASbAT is more likely to have long term employment prospects. Likewise, training that involves practical experience in the workplace is more likely to lead to employment for young people with a disability (Dawe 2004; Clark 2007).

Many young people with Intellectual disability have not been successful in institutionalised training, and work better through practical, hands-on experience. Wherever possible, Ticket to Work blends formal learning with direct workplace experience and on-the-job training. Ticket to Work builds on this and many participants are undertaking the majority of their vocational training component on the job, demonstrating competency by actually undertaking tasks in the workplace setting. We have found that this contributes to better employment outcomes for this cohort of young people.

Cocks and Thoresen (2013) said that VETiS is advantageous for young people with disabilities as support can be provided by the school, as well as other involved stakeholders which may include the employer, DES, Group Training Organisations (GTOs), Registered Training Organisations (RTOs) including technical and further education (TAFE) institutes, as well as family, friends, and work colleagues. They found that “VETiS can be a successful vocational pathway in the transition from school for young people with disabilities” (2013, p.8).

Polidano (2010) also confirms that completing a VET qualification not only helps people with a disability to find work, but it also increases their chances of sustaining employment into the future.

4.1.4 Australian School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (ASbATs)

Australian School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (ASbATs) allow students over 15 years of age to work as paid part-time apprentices or trainees while still at school. ASbATs enable young people to gain a vocational qualification and paid workplace experience while also completing their senior school studies. ASbATs are an increasingly popular applied learning option for senior school students in Years 11 and 12, and in some cases are also available to Year 10 students. ASbATs prepare students for the world of work and assist employers to attract young employees into their business and industry.

With specific regards to ASbATs a submission to the 2005 National Inquiry on Employment and Disability stated the following “... it becomes complicated when it is not clear to the parties involved who [is] responsible for the disabled student's additional support needs. The issue of fragmentation of funding arises again when the student moves from the infrastructure of school to the RTO, to the workplace” (2005, p.9).

As ASbATs merge school education, employment and vocational training a number of stakeholders must be involved in the arrangement. Additional stakeholders must be involved if the young person pursuing an ASbAT has a disability. The primary stakeholders include: the student, the employer, the parent/carer, the school, Registered Training Organisations (RTO); the Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC); and, the Disability Employment Service (DES). Additional secondary stakeholders include: state training services; education department regions; school teachers and staff; and, Workplace Learning Coordinators (WLCs) / ASbAT Brokers. The sheer number of ASbAT stakeholders with key roles means that a clearly articulated strategy to implement and coordinate any ASbAT arrangement or program is required (Wakeford and Waugh, 2010).

Ticket to Work choose ASbAT as its key strategy in improving school to work transition as it ticked many of the boxes around what is considered best practice. It was also evident, in the original Ticket to Work scoping research, that ASbATs were not being offered to young people with disability to the same extent as it was being offered to their non-disability peers. Additionally, research has shown that the probability of apprenticeship or traineeship completion is only marginally less than those who partake in this pathway and have no reported disability; and that there is equal graduate employment rates among apprentices and trainees with and without disability (Ball, 2005). This research indicated that a young person’s disability does not necessarily affect their capacity to complete an apprenticeship or traineeship nor post-employment rates. This further validated incorporating ASbATs in the overall Ticket to Work model.

Furthermore, the original Ticket to Work scoping research also identified that it was not the person’s disability that affects successful completion rates but often other personality traits. These included a strong sense of self efficacy, personal agency; positive attitude and commitment to the industry and/or the job. It was evident in this research that, with support, each of these quality traits can be taught and developed (Wakeford and Waugh, 2010).

ASbATs, because they combine the mix of employment and accredited training whilst still in school, also increase the propensity of participating young people completing their education, continuing into ongoing

employment, developing a mix of technical and generic employability skills and developing relationships with a number of mainstream and disability-specific services that they may draw upon for ongoing assistance post-school.

Cocks and Thoresen (2013), in their longitudinal study, found benefits both socially and economically in participating in apprenticeship and traineeship for people with a disability. “Social outcomes included formal memberships of community groups and clubs as well as informal relationships with friends and acquaintances in the workplace. Economic outcomes in participating in apprenticeship and traineeship for people with a disability included high workforce participation and employment rates and income, comparable to similarly aged Australians without disability” (2013, p.8). This is unlike other forms of employment where there is an ‘unexplained’ income gap between people with disability and those without disability (Mavromaras, 2009).

“In your ASbAT you learn lots of information and good skills for work and also you make good friends.”

(Young person, Ticket to Work participant)

4.1.5 Part-time work at school

Though Ticket to Work currently does not support participation in part time work at school we feel it is an area of focus as research has demonstrated that a young person participating in part-time work whilst still at school is more likely, than student peers who do not work, to experience higher levels of full-time employment and substantially lower unemployment post-school (Wakeford, 2009).

Increasing numbers of young people are engaged in paid employment on a casual or part-time basis while still attending secondary school. Australian Bureau of Statistics data in 2006 found that around 52 per cent of young people between the ages of 15 to 19 years are employed (ABS, 2006).

Existing research suggests that part-time work can help facilitate the transition from school to work. Studies from within Australia and internationally have found a clear relationship between part-time employment while at school and a lower incidence of unemployment following completion of school.

In Australia, the Australian Centre for Educational Research (ACER) 2001 has found that students who work part-time during Years 11 and 12 are less likely to be unemployed at the age of 19 than those who did not work during secondary school (NCVER, 2001).

Currently DES providers are not able to support students with disability into an after school job. As it is well acknowledged that students who participate in part-time work have higher percentages of post-school employment throughout their lives one would suspect this would be the same for students with disability. A part-time job is a rite of passage that is often not available for young people with significant disability and can deliver vital employability skills and lead to employment post-school. A number of schools involved in Ticket to Work commented on the changes to DES guidelines which now limit part-time employment support for students.

“The funding hasn’t changed as such but the criteria (DES guidelines) has changed in terms of who they can assist with finding part time work. We used to be able to work with our DES to target students that wanted part-time work and needed assistance but now this has changed, therefore ruling out quite a few students that want jobs after school and require assistance to do this.”

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

5. The 'Partnership Approach' and Ticket to Work

The poor post-school labour force outcomes experienced by the vast majority of Australian young people with disability suggests that the interface between the school system and employment system need investigation. It is apparent, and evident, that there is a need for more interagency collaboration at both government and non-government levels to better prepare these young people for a positive post-school employment transition.

Dr Meadows (2012) stated that "The setting and achievement of goals for post-school life pre-supposes a collaborative relationship between the school and post-school service providers, educational institutions, training agencies, workplaces, and businesses with which students will eventually engage. Unfortunately, the human rights and equal opportunity commission study noted poor links between schools and post-school systems. Interagency collaboration is viewed as a key component in any transition process for without it the preparation of students for the post-school world becomes problematic".

With this in mind, ideally the curriculum for all young people during the last three to four years of school (middle to final years of schooling) should incorporate elements that resemble the post-school worlds in which the students will eventually reside. It is well established, and noted throughout this report, that the level of frequency within which a student with disability engages in work and other out-of-school experiences whilst still at school, the greater the likelihood they will source and sustain employment upon school departure. The number of work experiences participated in whilst still attending school is highly predictive of post-school employment post-school. Student engagement in School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships and the undertaking of accredited vocational training (such as those offered by TAFEs and other Registered Training Organisations) are also factors that contribute to a greater likelihood of post-school success. As these experiences rely on use of services and supporters located outside of the school, the opportunity for students to participate in these thus rely heavily on the establishment and maintenance of good collaborative relationships between schools, businesses and external employment and training sectors.

"Transition should be allowed to start early; we should not wait starting until the last year of school in Grade 12 as there is too much pressure. If we start earlier the pressure would be off in Grade 12 and they can concentrate on their ASbAT and on their last year of schooling ... Ticket to Work should be for all students and built into their transition plan in Grade 9, that way they will be able to work with an employment agency to get some sort of work experience under their belt while they are still at school."

(Principal, Special School, Ticket to Work partner)

When reflecting on the needs of students with disability and integral role that collaborative partnerships can play in addressing their transition and workplace preparation needs Dr Meadows (2012) said that "Interagency collaboration can also be addressed on a wider basis than an individual school collaborating with individual businesses, post-school service and educational providers. Community transition teams consisting of secondary school transition personnel, post-school providers, employer groups, parents, chambers of commerce can identify common goals, address local transition issues and work together to solve the transition problems that exist in local communities. As the wider community becomes more aware of the skills these students can bring to the workforce and the supports schools can provide in learning and teaching in the workplace, the more they will be willing to provide opportunity".

Ticket to Work is indeed predicated on this notion of collaborative and community wide partnerships and planning and led to the development of the Local Ticket to Work Network partnership model. Ticket to Work recognises that to improve outcomes for young people with disability a partnership-driven, multi-sectoral approach is required. Ticket to Work believes and has evidence that partnerships comprised of schools,

employers, employment services, disability agencies and youth services do create more pathways opportunities for young people collectively than they do if working individually or discretely.

5.1 Local Ticket to Work Networks

Dr Luecking's research found that "in many school-to-work transition programs, partners operate as disparate service systems, and coordinating services into a more holistic approach is often difficult" (Luecking et al. 2004).

Local Ticket to Work Networks are built around a holistic partnership approach, which draws together key agencies via a coordinating Lead Agent body. It is also built around drawing together key local agencies that share a common desire to improve the post-school outcomes of young people with disability and have a likely stake in that goal being achieved. Collaboration between *all* partners is necessary to make Local Ticket to Work Networks successful and each partner plays a critical role in this.

The Lead Agent organisation is the one that usually initiates conversations regarding the need for Ticket to Work activities in a local community. The Lead Agents (referred to as Intermediators) are generally neutral parties and often ones that do not deliver direct service delivery to participating students (such as LLENs, Partnership Brokers, National Disability Coordination Officers) however we also have some Networks led by a service provider organisation such as a DES.

Intermediators play a critical role in promoting the initiative, sourcing potential partners and gaining buy-in from all partners at the very beginning to ensure that all have a stake in the project's success and are thus motivated to work together. In some cases, partners in Local Ticket to Work Networks could be considered competitive organisations but under the Ticket to Work banner, a genuine commitment to youth outcomes and through the guidance of the intermediators can easily work collaboratively and together. The National Network provides guidance and support to Lead Agents and Local networks through direct advice and the provision of partnership establishment guides and tools (initial stakeholder meeting resources, generic Ticket to Work PowerPoint, introductory video), governance tools (Terms of Reference, Memorandum of Understanding), marketing collateral (logo, brochures, promotional materials) and operational resources (various and directed at key project beneficiaries such as students, parents, employers and educators).

The complexity of school-to-work transition requires collaboration between all sectors that can collectively identify and address gaps in provision for the students and employers that Ticket to Work is oriented towards. Local Ticket to Work Networks encourages partners to work beyond 'just' what they are funded for and step outside of the sector that they represent to look at the issue of youth transition needs in a cross-sectoral manner. In doing so, these partnership networks can innovatively explore what is needed in their local community and how they can combine their skills, knowledge and resources to develop a strategies, structures and approaches aimed at providing a seamless transition to employment for their local students with disability. The grass-roots nature of Local Ticket to Work Networks means that each differ from one another; whether that is the composition or the strategies and activities they are rolling out for students and employers in their region. Provided that each Local Ticket to Work Network meets the three criteria that allow them to be accredited as one, they have considerable space within which to develop as a local partnership. Regular liaison with the National Manager, with one another via National Ticket to Work Meetings and other communiqués Local Networks are able to share difficulties, highlights and innovations at a national level.

The Ticket to Work model presents a refreshing alternative to the usual lack of service coordination for transition-age young people with disability for two key reasons. First, because at a local level it draws together a diverse range of partners that, absent of Ticket to Work, would often operate in isolation from one another. Second, because the Local Networks can connect with and learn from one another via formalised meetings and other informal mechanisms facilitated by the National Ticket to Work body.

5.2 Partnership composition

To facilitate successful cross-sectoral provision of transitions and pathways planning activities to young people with disability in Australia a mix of local, state and federal resources and agencies are required. Where possible, Local Ticket to Work Network aims to incorporate most, if not all of these, in their partnership group.

The following table outlines the key essential ‘good transition’ elements required to improve the post-school outcomes of young people with disability and matches these against the key agencies or bodies that can support or contribute to each element. Please note, that because each Local Ticket to Work Network is location-based not all services or agencies may be available in each region or additional other ones may be available that are not noted below.

Essential ‘good transition’ elements		Related or connected agencies or bodies									
		School	Disability Employment Services (DES)	Registered Training Organisation (RTO)	Workplace Learning Coordinator (WLC)	Group Training Organisation (GTO)	National Disability Coordinator Officer (NDCCO)	Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC)	LLEN / Partnership Broker	Employers (local)	Industry bodies
Career development & planning	Career discovery, preparation and learning experiences										
	Parent engagement and support										
	Pathways / employment planning										
Work Experience & ASbAT	Work preparation										
	Work-based learning experiences										
	Work experience sourcing and monitoring										
	Source work experience and ASbAT suit individual young people.										
Employment support	Employer support										
	Trainee on the Job support										
	Apprenticeship and traineeship										
	SBAT sign up										
Vocational Education & Training	Accredited training										
	Training adaptation and modification										
	Mentoring and tutoring										
Collaboration & partnership	Challenge cultural of low expectations and opportunities										
	Intermediary organisations										
	Governance										

Table 2: Good transition elements and related agencies

The table outlines just how complex 'good transition' is and just how many agencies and bodies should form part of the delivery of transition elements.

Local Ticket to Work Networks determine which agency should 'take the lead' when organising or delivering a specific transition element which might be based on the specific skills of the agency, the local situation and any specific needs an individual may have.

Within each Local Ticket to Work Network each member contributes to the overall goal and the intermediary organisation (Lead Agent) monitors and project manages the process, strategic planning and the formal partnership meetings.

The role held by the intermediary body is a critical role and, as such, is discussed in more detail in a separate section of this report. However, before doing so, it is valuable to identify the specific roles and contributions by some of the agencies or bodies that generally form part of a Local Ticket to Work Network.

"The Ticket to Work partnership is upskilling schools staff about employment agencies that are available to their students in the same way that the other partners are learning about the school system – it's accommodating a mutual way of understanding what each partner is doing and can be doing."

(Intermediary, Ticket to Work)

"Schools/teachers can't do it themselves and there are lots of expectations put on them. The partnerships approach allows for the external supports to come into the school and wrap support around not only the students but the teachers too."

(Intermediary, Ticket to Work)

5.3 Partnership members

A wide variety of organisations and agencies comprise part of a Local Ticket to Work Network. This partnership is driven by a need for a mix of mainstream and disability-specific organisations.

5.3.1 Schools

Schools, whether they are special disability schools or mainstream secondary schools, are the key educators in the partnership. They possess the specific education knowledge and expertise that is critical to ensuring the education needs of each student is being met. Schools can conduct and offer career development, pathways planning and access to external workplace learning opportunities for their student cohort. Schools are also the ones with the already established relationships with parents and care-givers. Schools very much sit in the middle of Ticket to Work and are the ones that open the door to student participation in Ticket to Work activities and partners.

5.3.2 Disability Employment Services (DES)

DES providers promote and assist the employment of people with disability by assisting persons with disability to find and sustain open employment and assist and support employers to employ people with disability. Within the context of Ticket to Work, DES providers share their disability employment specific knowledge and expertise. They have proved invaluable in supporting other members to better understand the needs of young people with disability in an employment situation. DES providers play a role in assisting with the sourcing of work experience, assisting young people to source ASbATs, providing ongoing mentoring and support to student trainees and to the employer and co-workers of that young person, and can continue to

support the young person to maintain employment with their ASbAT employer at the conclusion of that arrangement or source alternative open-employment.

5.3.3 Registered Training Organisations (RTOs)

RTOs are training providers that are nationally registered to deliver vocational education and training (VET) programs which allow a student to achieve a full qualification or statements of attainment for competency study undertaken. RTOs, within the context of Ticket to Work, play a part in providing accredited training to students undertaking an ASbAT. These RTOs ensure that the training is modified to accommodate the needs and capacities of students with disability, and also receive funding to ensure that the student receives additional mentoring and learning assistance during the period of their training. At times the training is delivered to students in a classroom setting or 'on-the-job' whereby students conduct their training and are assessed in the workplace.

5.3.4 State Funded Supports (WLCs and School to Work Apprenticeship Brokers)

Different jurisdictions have allocated support and resources to enable workplace learning and ASbATs; these include 'Workplace Learning Coordinators (WLCs)' in Victoria and 'School to Work Apprenticeship Broker' in South Australia. Local Ticket to Work Networks draws on this experience and knowledge in their partnerships. Workplace Learning Coordinators (WLCs) help to source and coordinate work experience and work placement opportunities for secondary students. Their support is made available to all students but they are also funded to work with specific equity groups that may need additional assistance to source work experiences whilst still at school. WLCs play a role in Ticket to Work as they can assist in sourcing and coordinating work experience in industries identified by students as being of interest. School to Work Apprenticeship Brokers provide a service within a cluster of public secondary schools. Their role is to facilitate School-based Apprenticeships between students, parents/caregivers, employers, schools and Registered Training Organisations. This involves negotiation of work day(s) or hours and a review of students' school timetables and secondary qualification completion. In Ticket to Work the brokers liaise between all parties to facilitate the School-based Traineeship.

5.3.5 Group Training Organisations (GTOs)

GTOs provide an alternative employment apprenticeship or traineeship arrangement between employers and workers. Under this arrangement, the GTO employs the trainee or apprentice and places them with a 'host' employer while they undertake their training. The GTO is the employer and, given this makes it administratively simple, it is of particular appeal to small to medium sized enterprises wanting to have a trainee or apprentice work in their business. Within the context of Ticket to Work, GTOs can assist individual students by employing them as a trainee and then place them with a 'host' employer for the duration of the ASbAT. GTOs also play an important role in the overall Local Ticket to Work Network as they have considerable knowledge of the wider apprenticeship and traineeship system, vocational training and overall legalities that come with being an employer to (often) hundreds of trainees and apprentices. As noted in the Group Training Association of Victoria's 'Budget Statement 2014' GTOs collectively represent the largest employer of young people with a disability.

5.3.6 Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs)

AACs are federally funded and assist employers seeking to employ a trainee or apprentice and assist those seeking such employment to find traineeships or apprenticeships in their local area. AACs sign up all parties to a traineeship or apprenticeship, administer any payments or incentives available to employers or workers and liaise closely with related organisations such as RTOs, GTOs, schools and DES providers. Within the context of Ticket to Work, AACs assist in the sign-up of any young people who take up an ASbAT and also assist the wider partnership through their good knowledge of the overall traineeship and apprenticeship system in Australia.

5.3.7 Employers (local)

Employers are the local businesses that provide support, assistance and employment to local young people with disability. Within the context of Ticket to Work, local employers might provide workplace and career planning assistance through activities such as student presentations or mock interviews. Some may offer work experience to students, allowing these young people to learn more about a specific role or industry and gain general awareness of employer requirements. Employers may also offer traineeship opportunities to young people with disability seeking an ASbATs pathway into a specific role or industry. Employers that take part in Ticket to Work activities or actively employ a young person gain considerable support from a number of Local Network members.

5.3.8 Industry bodies

Industry bodies may be peak associations for specific industries, may be a Chamber of Commerce representing the voice of multiple industries or another local collective representing businesses in a local organisation (in some cases this may be the Local Council, through their economic development or related department). Within the context of Ticket to Work, industry bodies bring the voice of employers and industries to the table and can suggest ways of liaising with specific business segments, identify key skills shortage needs and provide introductions to local employers that may be able to offer work experience or ASbATs to local Ticket to Work students.

5.3.9 Intermediary organisations – LLENs, Partnership Brokers and NDCOs

Intermediary organisations include Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), Partnership Brokers and National Disability Coordination Officers (NDCOs) and their role as intermediaries are described in more detail in [Section 5.8](#). This section specifically outlines the term intermediary and the nature and roles that these organisations play within the context of an intermediary Ticket to Work partner. It is important to note that in some Local Ticket to Work Networks DES providers also act as the intermediary (Lead Agent) role.

Intermediaries in Ticket to work include:

School Business Community Partnership Brokers (Partnership Brokers) and Local Learning and Employment Network (LLENs)

The School Business Community Partnership Brokers program in Victoria is delivered through the LLEN, jointly funded by the Australian and Victorian Governments under the 'National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions'.

The Schools Business Community Partnership Brokers (Partnership Brokers) program is focused on building partnerships to help young people to achieve Year 12 or equivalent qualifications and reach their full potential. Partnership Brokers have been funded by the Australian Government and managed by independent organisations across Australia.

The Partnership Brokers program encourages a whole-of-community approach to improving education and transition outcomes for all young people; involving partnerships with education and training providers, business and industry, parents and families and, community groups. This obviously includes young people with disability. Partnership Brokers help these groups to form locally relevant partnerships that harness community resources and share responsibility for young people's learning and development.

Within the context of Ticket to Work, LLENs and Partnership Brokers often act in the intermediary (or Lead Agent) role. Funding for Partnership Brokers and LLEN is due to expire on the 31st of December 2014.

National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO) Program

The Australian Government's NDCO Program works strategically to assist people with disability access and participate in tertiary education and employment, through a national network of regionally based NDCOs.

The NDCOs work with stakeholders at the local level to reduce systemic barriers, facilitate smooth transitions, build links and coordinate services between the education, training and employment sectors.

The NDCO Program objectives are to: improve linkages between schools, tertiary education providers, employment service providers and providers of disability programs and assistance at all government levels; improve transitions for people with disability between school / community and tertiary education, and then to subsequent employment; and, improve participation by people with disability in tertiary education and subsequent employment. Funding for the NDCO program is currently set to expire in mid-2016.

5.4 Collective benefits and synergies

In reflecting on the various organisations and bodies that are Ticket to Work partnership members it is worth examining the benefits and synergies that bringing disparate sectors can, and does, deliver.

In discussions with Local Ticket to Work Networks it would appear that many of the involved mainstream services previously had limited experience working with young people with disability, and in particular young people intellectual disability. However, through Ticket to Work they have been able to learn from the 'disability experts' in the room, develop capacity in their own organisation so as to work effectively for young people with intellectual disability and in some cases have had to challenge and amend their own perceptions regarding the capacity of young people with disability. In some regions that have established Ticket to Work, previously there was little relationship or communication between the disability services (such as DES and specialist schools) and those services that support mainstream youth transitions (GTOs, AACs, WLCs, ASbAT Brokers). Ticket to Work became the platform through which these previously disparate sectors convened for collective action on behalf of the young people with disability in their region.

"I think there is immense positivity in having partnerships and spreading the word further afield. What our students need is the support of all those different agencies and when we first began Ticket to Work I didn't even know what half those things (acronyms within the training sector/employment services) meant, it was like speaking a different language! Simply I think, having that support of those outside school agencies was really, really good because from the time a student leaves school there is still a support wrapped around them for the future and they are agencies that don't stop offering the support once the child stops going to school."

(Principal, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

Ticket to Work also provided for cross-fertilisation of ideas and professional development between differing sectors. For example, in some regions the DES has conducted formal 'disability awareness training' to the Local Network, enabling all to develop more skills and knowledge with regards disability employment. In another region, a specific partnership between a GTO and an RTO allowed for the development of a unique Certificate II in Horticulture program to provide students with intellectual disability attain a mix of technical, employability and transferability skills.

This capacity building has been reciprocal as DES providers have benefited through the network, expanding their capacity and knowledge around VET, apprenticeship and traineeship and school systems. Most of the DES providers did not have any significant involvement in the vocational education and training sector. As such, these agencies are often not skilled or inclined to actively seek apprenticeship placements for their clients with disabilities nor learn about apprenticeship arrangements or operations. Similarly few DES providers have extensive understanding and knowledge of the secondary school system and therefore are unable to form effective partnerships required to support school to work transition.

The knock-on effect of mixing sectors under a formal partnership such as Ticket to Work means that all members become advocates for the employment of persons (not just young people) with disability.

"I did not know what to expect from the trainees and was nervous about joining the Ticket to Work Network as I had not had much experience of people with intellectual disability. But the kids were all so engaging, articulate and capable. It blew me away when found out later most of our trainees had IQs under 60. Glad I did not know that at the beginning as I may have had reservations about if they could succeed. Any reservations I may have had are well and truly gone".

(Intermediary, Ticket to Work)

One of the most interesting and beneficial synergies evidenced through Ticket to Work has been the connectivity built between the Disability Employment Service sector and the apprenticeship sector (such as GTOs and AACs). Building connections between these two, often disparate, sectors is something that was addressed as challenge in research previously. Greg Lewis (2002) found that 'the greatest obstacle confronting people with disability securing apprenticeships of their choice is sourcing a suitable agency that is willing and able to provide the necessary placement and post-placement assistance'.

It has been noted that many employment support providers, such as Disability Employment Services and Job Services Australia, do not generally operate within the vocational education and training sector. That is, they are more focussed on the sourcing of employment in the first instance rather than in sourcing a mix of vocation training and employment. As such, these agencies are often not skilled or lack awareness to seek apprenticeship placements for their clients with disabilities and often lack the time to learn more about apprenticeship arrangements or operations.

Conversely, Group Training Organisations (GTOs), Apprenticeship Field Officers and Australian Apprenticeship Centres operate extensively and effectively within the VET sector. However, most claim to lack the expertise, skills or resources to recruit, indenture, place and support apprentices and trainees with a disability (Lewis, 2002).

There are obvious synergies in disability employment sector and the apprenticeship / traineeship sectors collaborating to pool their expertise and resources for mutual advantage. This has been made for feasible through Ticket to Work; in that representation of both sectors generally form part of a Local Ticket to Work Network.

5.5 Partnership challenges

'Good collaboration requires high levels of connectivity, trust, and sharing of resources and staff. It can be high risk but produce excellent outcomes for students as good collaboration can result in more closely accommodating to student needs, skill levels and learning styles' Meadows (2012).

However, partnership and cross-sectoral collaboration can present some challenges. For some individuals and organisations, particularly those that work exclusively within one sector, partnership-driven approaches to delivering support and a service can seem new and foreign.

Whilst the establishment of Local Ticket to Work Networks have presented some challenges, having access to the National Network and the National Manager has greatly assisting in addressing challenges or difficulties, particularly in the development stage.

“Our school was hesitant to participate in Ticket to Work at first due to prior job agency experiences we’ve had. Unfortunately quite a few other agencies/organisations have never delivered on their promises they have made to our students. Our Ticket to Work DES is the first agency to really step up. The Group Training Organisation has also been great, signing the students up and been very supportive with any technical issues we’ve had. The communication between all the agencies has been great.”

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

5.6 Disability Employment Services (DES) role

As noted throughout, DES providers play a very critical role within the Ticket to Work model. As the leading sector funded by the Commonwealth to provide specific disability employment assistance, to both persons with disability and employers, their involvement in Ticket to Work is an imperative.

In addition to providing direct support to individuals with disability and employers, they are also organisations with considerable knowledge and expertise regarding the arrangement of sound disability employment practices. Within the context of Ticket to Work they also play a leading professional development role increasing the knowledge and awareness of those members, often from mainstream services, that have limited disability employment awareness or expertise. In addition, DES providers play important roles in the provision of employment support to students and employers taking part in Ticket to Work activities; be that work experience or the commencement and ongoing monitoring of a Ticket to Work ASbAT. They can also continue working with such young people and employers to sustain an ASbAT beyond the completion and/or source new open employment should the employer not be able to employ the young person after the ASbAT is finished.

Whilst many DES providers are engaged in a Local Ticket to Work Network, some regions have struggled to engage with and involve a DES provider in their locale. In many cases this has been because some DES providers, that have seen considerable recent changes to their guidelines with respect to support for young people with disability, are reticent to participate for fear that they will be penalised for working with this cohort. The structural changes to DES guidelines and contracts have seen a number of changes with regard to supporting the employment of young people with disability who also still attend secondary school. Most notably, in late 2012 guidelines changed from DES providers being able to support ASbAT students in both Year 11 and Year 12 to them only being allowed to do so in the ‘final year of school’ (that is, generally Year 12). It has subsequently been returned to the previous arrangement, however many providers are still cautious as engaging in ASbAT arrangements are seen as an area where changes may be re-instituted at a moment’s notice and providers could be penalised for doing so. It is understandable that some DES providers are fearful and thus reticent to engage in their Local Ticket to Work Network.

It is important to note, however, that in many Ticket to Work regions DES providers are heavily involved in the initiative and work collaboratively with other DES providers also ‘sitting at the table’. This evidences an overall desire for DES providers to engage in Ticket to Work and even collaborate with fellow regionally-located DES providers who, in many cases, compete with one another for business. Indeed, where DES providers have engaged with a Local Ticket to Work Network we have witnessed impressive numbers of students commencing in their transition to employment pathways in such a short period of time.

It is interesting to note that in the United States their DES equivalent organisations are penalised (in funding terms) if they do not engage with schools and support a student’s transition, including the supporting/brokering work experience, work preparation and or open employment. It should be noted that DES equivalent providers in the United States work with schools to provide preparation services and these agencies must dedicate at least 15 per cent of their federal funding to help those with disabilities transition from school to work under the measure.

The following key issues that have restricted the involvement of DES providers in some Local Ticket to Work Networks can be summarised as the following:

- The complete nature of DES provision makes collaboration difficult
- DES providers do not want to work with other DES providers due to 'commercial in confidence' concerns
- Ticket to Work members need to go above and beyond their contracts in order to provide the support that is required by the individual young person. Some DES providers have shown reluctance to do so, often noting that strict nature of their contracts limit their ability to provide resource or support that sit outside of their government contractual requirements
- Due to past DES contracts and guidelines that have limited DES ability to support school transition to being only in the last year of a student's schooling, some are now reluctant to engage with any students for fear of real or imagined contractual restrictions
- Some schools have expressed reluctance to engage with a DES provider in their region due to negative past experience (which in many cases related to DES guidelines that prevented them from providing adequate support to students in the school and / or staff changes)
- Many DES provider mention the star rating as not want to engage with students with intellectual disability as they were not seen as easy to place in period of time. Put simply, the star rating dictates whether or not a DES provider will have to tender for a future contract (that is, a higher star rating generally means that contracts will be upheld whereas a lower star rating means that a full tender application will be required to sustain the DES service in their business)
- Schools identified the definition of 'students with disability' in the DES guidelines as problematic. They identified students with disability and significant barriers to employment that could benefit from Ticket to Work that were not eligible for employment support under the 'eligible school leavers' DES guidelines
- Staff turnover in DES was identified as a problem by both schools and Local Network members.
- Some Local Ticket to Work Networks expressed difficulty in gaining traction and partnership development in some jurisdictions; it was suggested this was due to state based ASbAT structures as well as existing state based post school programs
- Many aspects of the DES guidelines restrict the ability of a DES provider to support effective transition to young people with disability who, as already noted, require an array of support and servicing to achieve a 'good transition'.

"The biggest barrier for us is that complying with the ESL funding guidelines in NSW is almost impossible, as the majority of young people are protecting their access to funding to post-school services and they are mostly following the route to Transition to Work. It's changed the landscape. As a result schools have shown very little interested in engaging. Our ability to assist young people (through Ticket to Work) in this region is very minimal and as a result the numbers are very small in NSW."

(DES, Ticket to Work partner)

It has been noted that the current DES guidelines do not have school students or transition from school at the heart of their development; rather they have been predominately designed around an unemployed adult with mild disability. As such there are elements we have identified which make ASbAT development difficult. The Local Networks are often adapting their service delivery to meet the guidelines rather than the needs of the employee or employer. Some examples of this include:

- DES providers are not funded to register and commence full-time student job seekers looking for part-time work. A part-time job is a rite of passage that is often not available for young people with disability and can deliver vital employability skills and lead to employment post-school

- DES providers have informed us they are neither able nor funded to support young people to access work experience placements.
- The Employment Service Area (ESA) restrictions can impact on the support provided to students and the DES provider commitment to develop school partnership. As there are limited numbers of special schools some students must travel considerable distance to attend their closest school. This can mean that while their school is located in a specific ESA region the student's home is located in another, and the DES that has developed the partnership with the school cannot support 'out-of-region' students, therefore affecting the student's opportunity to participate in Ticket to Work.
- DES providers are unable to register a student unless they are in their final year of school; therefore the DES cannot work with students in the critical transitioning and pathways planning years. Decisions regarding pathways post-school are often established by the final year of schooling and the DES are thus unable to contribute to counteracting the culture of low expectations often held by families and educators. The exception to the above is if the student is in Year 11 and is or intending to participate in an ASbAT.
- DES Guidelines are not compatible with the ASbAT guidelines and the general structure of an ASbAT. In most jurisdictions an ASbAT student usually undertakes 13 hours a week of combined training and employment. Most ASbATs are structured around 7 hours of employment and 6 hours of training per week. This arrangement supports the student to successfully complete their ASbAT as well as their school studies. The DES Guidelines require that any student undertaking an ASbAT must work for a full 7 paid hours of work per week. As this amount is not inclusive of a lunch break, if a student does take a break during their work day they will then not meet the eight paid hours of employment they must as a DES client.
- DES providers are not additionally funded at the end of the ASbAT, when the student is finishing school, to support the transition in to full time, extended hours or transfer the ASbAT to a straight traineeship or apprenticeship. This has been a problem in a few established Ticket to Work regions as the young person is left with just the eight hrs work per week with no support to increase hours. This is indicative that for some DES providers there is little incentive to support ongoing career planning to match the changing needs of the young person.

"The difficulty lies in the DES provider going through a number of employees of their own - high staff turnover within the agency. It's hard to build a rapport or good relationship if staff turnover is high in employment agencies. Also the changes with DES guidelines makes it very difficult as DES can only work with our students in Grade 12, this is far too late to make a difference. It's great that our DES has been so good in this regard as staff have been constant. I think the partnership works as long as the people working there are stable."

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

In late 2013, the National Ticket to Work Network prepared a Position Paper outlining youth support and employment issues that were brought to our attention by DES providers. The Position Paper outlined key issues and recommendations for changes.

The National Ticket to Work Network is keen to see increased opportunities for disability employment specialists such as DES providers, to work with other mainstream services and offered greater scope to work directly with students commencing their employment transition during their final years of schooling. We believe that DES providers are well positioned to support students into employment, support employers offering genuine and sustainable employment to students with disability and, in doing so, and greatly increase the likelihood that these supported students will remain active labour market participants into the future.

When DES providers do engage in Ticket to Work the results are impressive and extremely well regarded by stakeholders.

"We really couldn't be happier, it's been fantastic and that's also due to staff at our DES - there is nothing they won't do for our kids. They go above and beyond. We have some very disadvantaged students with disability at our school. Our DES even helps with getting interview clothes for students that cannot afford it themselves. If something needs doing they are there. These little things are often what makes a difference and the students feel confident and supported."

(Teacher, special school, Ticket to Work partner)

"We started working with a DES last year and it has been really successful. So, when Ticket to Work came on board it all just fit in nicely."

(Employer, Ticket to Work partner)

5.7 Braiding and blending funding via Ticket to Work

The division between state and federal government with regards the transition and support for young people with disability is problematic. Individual states are responsible for disability supports and the provision of education whereas the federal government is responsible for disability employment and income support.

Dr Meadows has outlined in his 2009 paper *'Where Have All Our Students Gone?'* that "people with a disability are under-represented in employment, but they are under-represented in vocational educational and training systems and that this situation is exacerbated by poor links between state-administered disability school and post-school programs, and Commonwealth-funded disability employment options. The identification of this problem associated with 'flow through' models of post-school options is not of recent origin and was identified by Tom Bellamy and his group in Oregon nearly 30 years ago".

As noted earlier program concurrency is limited or not allowed in many cases, resulting in young people having to stop or exit one program before commencing in another; despite the fact that they are complementary ones all focused on the provision of transition and/or overall personal development. Indeed, the issue of program concurrency prevention is a key factor preventing mainstream transition services from working with disability-specific transition services. Similarly, this issue has also made the streamlining of multiple programs or activities to meet the transition needs of an individual very difficult. As noted earlier, a person already undertaking a day program or involved in an ADE must give up their place in these if they want to engage with a DES provider and pursue open employment. They cannot engage in all of these elements concurrently. Some DES providers have noted that it is a disincentive to work with young people wanting to transition to open employment for fear that the young person will be directed into day programs or ADEs and thus unable to continue working with the DES provider.

Ticket to Work acknowledges and recognises the importance of using disability employment and transition support funding wisely. However, Ticket to Work also recognises that the complexity of transition and open employment preparation for young people is such that it requires cross-jurisdiction and collaborative service provision that at times must be facilitated through flexible and response funding approaches.

To overcome this issue, some countries have initiated 'blending and braiding strategies'. These strategies allow for funds to be used in more flexible, coordinated and sustainable ways as the funds are seen as critical to the success of efforts to improve the coordination and impact of services to young people with disability.

'Blended funding' is used to describe mechanisms that pool dollars from multiple sources and make them in some ways indistinguishable. 'Braiding funding' is a funding and resource allocation strategy that taps into

existing categorical funding streams and uses those to support unified initiatives in flexible and integrated manners (NCWD, 2006).

In the United States it was noted that “Neither schools, nor workforce investment programs, human service agencies, or any other single system alone can pay for and provide the array of services needed to effectively meet the often complex needs of youth with disabilities. When collectively pooled, however, these resources can produce positive outcomes for youth, well beyond the scope of what any single system can hope to mobilise on its own” (National Governors’ Association Center for Best Practice, 2004).

It has been demonstrated that blending and braiding strategies offer local flexibility and allow providers to focus on outcomes for young people and provide support to employers without the frequent restrictions that categorical funding streams impose. Both strategies allow funds to be used more easily and creatively at the point of service delivery. These strategies encourage partnerships, demand-led approaches with employers and deliver effective school-to-work transitions.

It could be said that Ticket to Work mirrors a ‘braided funding’ approach. Local Ticket to Work Networks, comprised of various partners whose organisations are themselves funded via multiple sources and across jurisdictions, utilise funds from these varying funding sources to deliver components of Ticket to Work transition activities customised to suit the needs of individual young people.

“Including the DES and the Apprenticeship Centre at the table we are all able to gain a broader understanding of the ASbAT funding available and discuss various funding models available thus making it more beneficial for employers.”

(Intermediary, Ticket to Work)

5.8 Ticket to Work intermediaries

The Office of Disability Employment Policy (ODEP) within the United States Department of Labor (DOL), recognise ‘intermediaries’ as a mechanism that provide for more effective linkages between the supply and demand sides of workforce development. The OEDP have identified that, by aligning and brokering multiple services across institutional and funding sources, intermediary organisations can play an important role in improving employment outcomes for youth with disabilities (Kruger et. Al. 2006).

The ODEP defines an intermediary as an entity that “convenes leadership and brokers relationships with multiple partners across multiple funding streams; brings together workforce development systems, vocational rehabilitation providers, businesses, labor unions, educational institutions, social service organisations, faith based organisations, transportation entities, health providers, and other Federal, State, and community resources which youth with disabilities need to transition to employment successfully” (Kruger et. Al. 2006).

Ticket to Work recognises the role of intermediaries as an important way of bringing together multiple parties to collaboratively ensure effective transitions for young people with disability. Indeed, the Ticket to Work model is underpinned by the use of an intermediary to broker the partnership and develop Local Ticket to Work Networks. Often these intermediary bodies are independent ones that do not deliver any direct services. Rather, their roles have been to coordinate effective partnerships between all members of a Local Ticket to Work Network and it has often been one of these bodies to initiate discussions and build interest in Ticket to Work in their respective regions. In some regions a DES provider has acted as the intermediary, coordinating the youth transition and employment efforts in their region.

At July 2014, Partnership Broker funding (provided by the Commonwealth) will conclude at the end of the year. As Commonwealth funding for NDCOs is guaranteed until mid-2016 and DES providers are funded

beyond this period, many intermediary Partnership Brokers and LLENs are currently negotiating with these to take on the Lead Agent role upon their departure and ensure continuation of Ticket to Work in their regions.

6. Young People Involved in Ticket to Work

Young people with disability, particularly intellectual disability, are unlikely to have a smooth transition from school to open employment. This equates to greater risk of dropping out of school, unemployment or underemployment, social isolation, dependence on others or even involvement in the criminal justice system.

Certainly, some young people with disability have attained successful transition and subsequent careers. Some of these young people have benefited from well delivered transition services, while others have received timely and appropriately delivered youth employment services including excellent DES support; many of these successes reflect both circumstances. Unfortunately, however, these successes are not the norm.

Ticket to Work aims to address this with evidence-based practice and support that ensures that young people's aspirations and goals are met.

The following profiles the reflections of young people that have taken part in Ticket to Work related work experience and/or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (ASbAT) and clearly highlights the transition and employment benefits they are deriving through participation in this initiative.

This data is based on interviews conducted with 46 young people in various parts of Australia who have been undertaking Ticket to Work activities between 2013 and 2014. Interviews were conducted by Ticket to Work staff in June and July 2014. The age of these young people varied from between 15 and 21 years of age, with 6 per cent also identifying as being of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander descent. All of these young people have a recognised disability (Intellectual Disability, Autism Spectrum Disorder) and attend either a special school or mainstream school. Those attending a mainstream secondary school are receiving additional funding and receiving specific educational support to reflect their disability needs.

6.1 Work experience and ASbAT participation

6.1.1 Work experience participation

Of the 46 young people that took part in an interview, 91.3 per cent had taken part in one or more work experience placements while the remaining 8.7 per cent had not.

Respondent young people advised that they had participated in a total of 72 different work experience placements whilst at school, with many of these undertaken as part of the Ticket to Work process. These young people undertook work experience across a wide range of industry areas with retail, hospitality and horticulture being the most popular areas. The full list of work experience industry areas are noted in the table overleaf:

Work experience industry	Number of students	Proportion of total work experience industry areas (per cent)
Retail	19	26.4
Hospitality	13	18.1
Horticulture	11	15.3
Childcare	4	5.6
Warehousing	3	4.2
Aged Care	3	4.2
Automotive	2	2.8
Business Administration	2	2.8
Plumbing	2	2.8
Sport and Recreation	2	2.8
Transport and Logistics	2	2.8
Volunteering	2	2.8
Agriculture	1	1.4
Animal Care	1	1.4
Butchery	1	1.4
Community Services	1	1.4
Construction	1	1.4
Information Technology	1	1.4
Manufacturing	1	1.4
Totals	72	100.0

Table 3: Young people, work experience industry areas

6.1.2 ASbAT participation

As the young people are at different stages in their Ticket to Work transition journey some students are yet to commence in an ASbAT, but presently undertaking work experience and other workplace development activities in preparation for transition to an ASbAT.

Of the 46 young people interviewed, 76.1 per cent had commenced in one ASbAT, 21.7 per cent have not yet commenced in an ASbAT and the remaining 2.2 per cent had commenced and/or completed two ASbATs. Students undertook ASbATs across a range of industry certificate areas with retail, horticulture and hospitality being the most highly represented areas. The full list of ASbAT certificate industry areas are noted in the table below:

ASbAT Certificate	Number of students	Proportion of total ASbAT certificate areas (per cent)
Certificate II in Retail	20	51.3
Certificate II in Horticulture	7	17.9
Certificate II in Hospitality	4	10.3
Certificate II in Automotive	2	5.1
Certificate II in Warehousing	2	5.1
Certificate II in Business Administration	1	2.6
Certificate II in Community Services	1	2.6
Certificate II in Fashion / Clothing Production	1	2.6
Certificate III in Hospitality	1	2.6
Totals	39	100.0

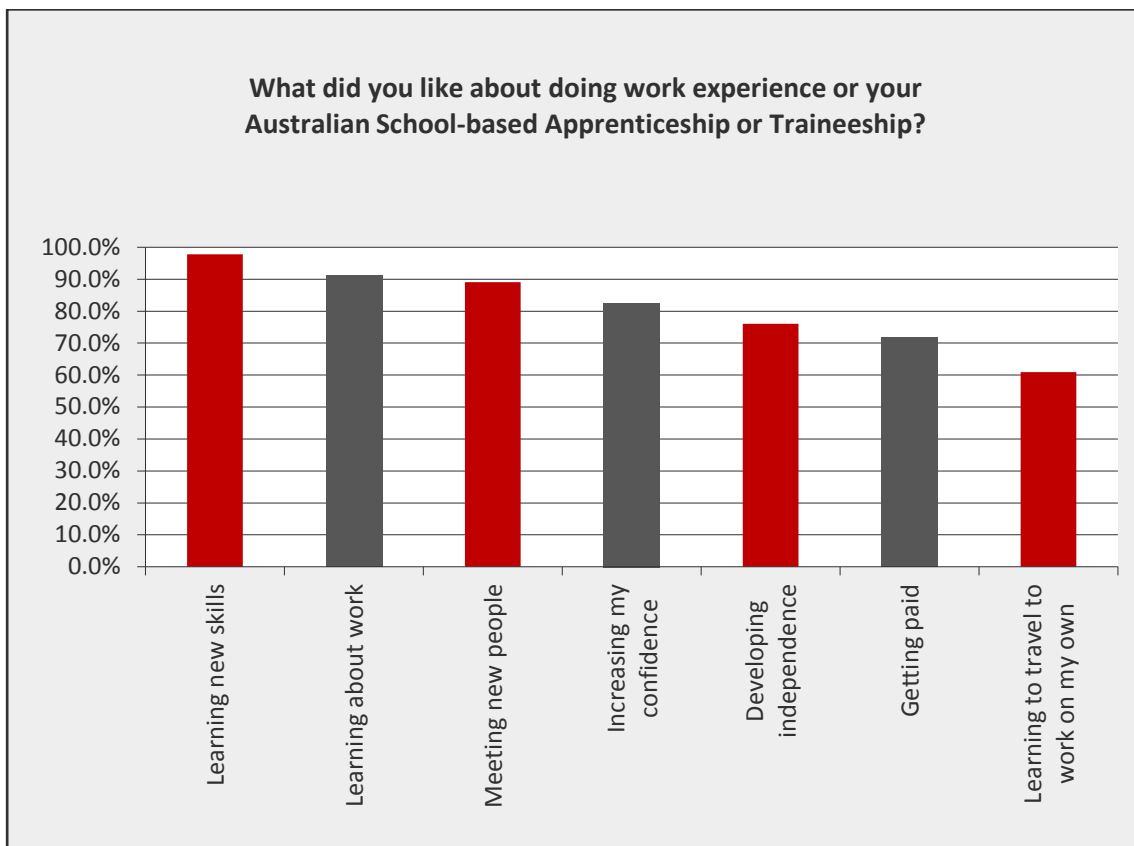
Table 4: Young people, ASbAT industry certificate areas

At the time of surveying 30.4 per cent had completed their ASbAT. Of those that had completed, 85.7 per cent remain in ongoing employment. The remaining 14.3 per cent are continuing their vocational training at TAFE.

6.2 Benefits and effects of work experience and ASbAT participation

6.2.1 Satisfaction with work experience and ASbAT

When asked *“What did you like about doing your work experience or ASbAT?”* respondent young people were asked to select from seven options and could select as many as were relevant. All 46 students responded to this question and all available options rated quite highly. The highest three selected options were ‘learning new skills’, ‘learning about work’ and ‘meeting new people’. The options ‘increasing my confidence’ and ‘developing independence’ were mid-range selections. ‘Getting paid’ and ‘learning to travel to work’ were the least selected options.



Graph 1: Young people, work experience and ASbAT satisfaction

Young people who saw their placement as something that had provided them with skill development and workplace awareness often identified it to be so because they were engaged in an industry or role that they were interested in and provided for on-the-job, rather than academic, learning. One young person said that he liked it *“because there is not much writing involved”* and *“I like learning new things”*. Another intimated that it accommodated a mix a technical learning and within an industry area of interest in saying that *“I like using the whipper snipper the ride-on mower and I am so much more confident using them now and I've enjoyed learning about new plants”*.

Meeting new people was also noted by some students as a key benefit of participation in work experience or an ASbAT with one young person saying that *“meeting people has been a highlight and at work I've met a lot of different and friendly people who work with me and are customers”*.

In thinking about the impact that participation has had, many young people noted that with support from their workplace and employer their confidence has increased over time. This was clearly articulated by one

respondent who said that “if I have any problems I just ask my employer so that means my confidence has increased”. When reflecting on increasing independence the majority of those who commented advised that attending work has had a positive impact on their ability to access and use public transportation with one young person saying that “travelling is easy now and I know when the train comes”.

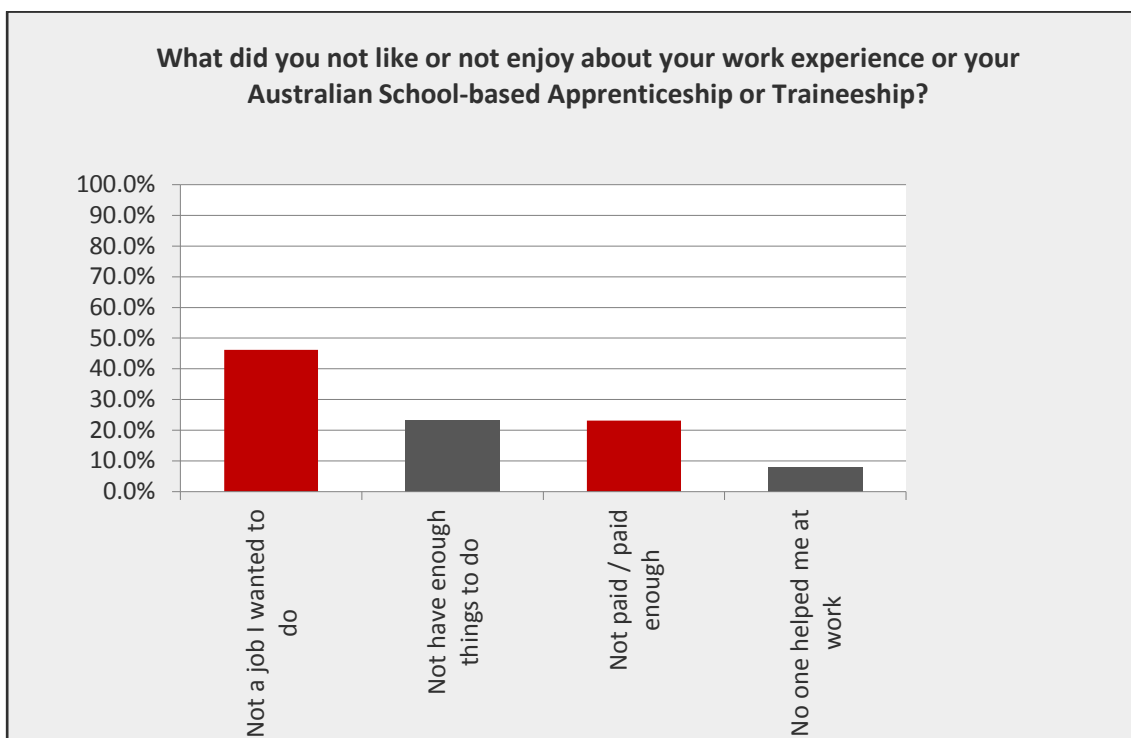
Interestingly, being paid a wage was of a slightly lesser importance to the young people than other aspects such as learning, collaboration or building confidence and independence, though still important. A number did note the importance and value of receiving a wage. One young person said that “I want to save money for buying stuff so getting paid has been great” while another said “I’m going to start saving for a car now that I am getting money for my work every week”. We also know of one young person, from a disadvantaged background, that uses his wage to contribute to his family budget. Overall responses regarding wages evidence an understanding that work does allow for future planning and personal material benefit; motivating factors for most employees regardless of whether they have a disability or do not.

The responses here evidence that the development of technical, sort-skills and establishing relationships with colleagues are of foremost concern to the majority of respondent young people. The development of personal agency and the acquisition of payment seem to be of lesser concerns to students undertaking work experience or ASbATs.

6.2.2 Dissatisfaction with work experience and ASbAT

When asked “What did you not like or enjoy about your work experience or ASbAT?” young people were presented with six options and could select as many as were relevant. Two presented options, ‘I did not like my co-workers’ and ‘I did not learn anything’ were not selected by any of the interviewees.

Of the remaining options, ‘it was not a job I wanted to do’ was most selected reason for why a young person did not enjoy their work experience or ASbAT. ‘Not enough to do’ or ‘I was not paid or paid enough’ were selected to a lesser degree and ‘no one helped me at work’ was the least selected option. Unlike the question regarding the enjoyable aspects of this workplace learning, only 30.4 per cent responded to this opposing question, evidencing that the participation in work experience and ASbATs is considered more beneficial, than it is not, to this cohort.



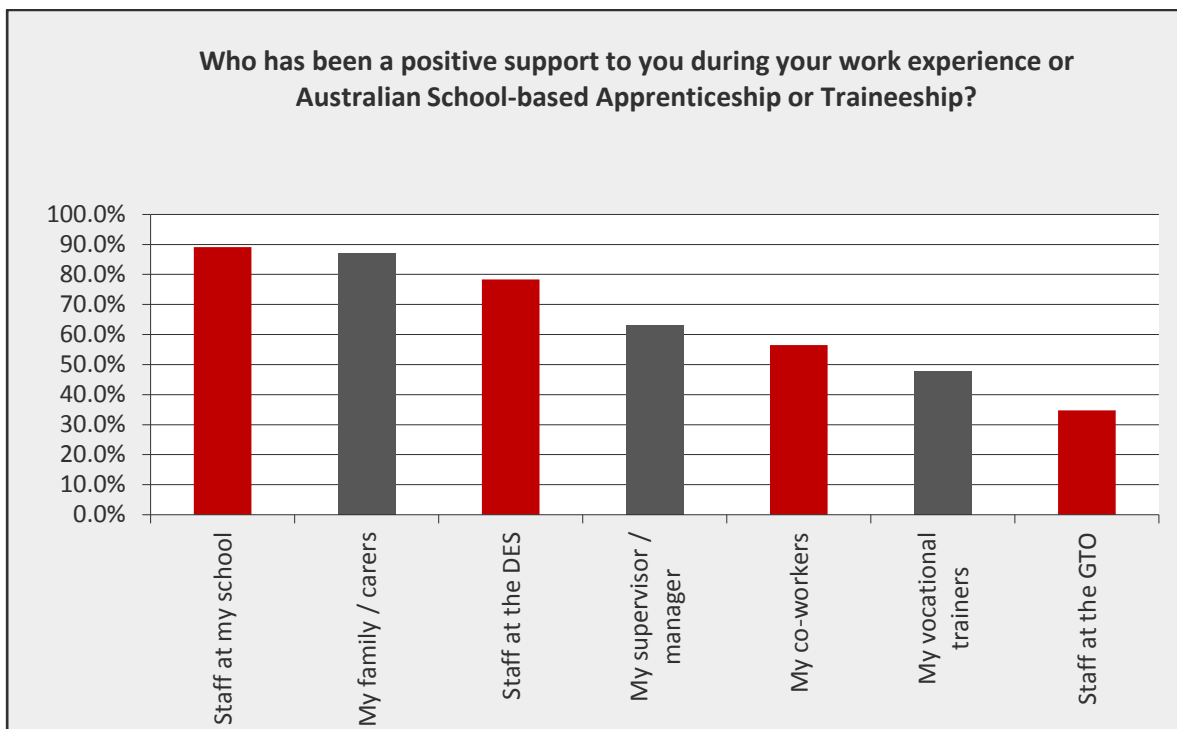
Graph 2: Young people, work experience and ASbAT dissatisfaction

The responses here evidence that the most significant reason that a students might express dissatisfaction with their work experience or ASbAT placement is largely related to career discovery. This is not necessarily a negative situation in that work experience is designed to provide young people with opportunities to explore and investigate various career pathways, and in turn direct their transition goals in industry-related directions. However, that some young people discovered that they were not suited to their ASbAT after commencing in it may point to a need for more career exploration and work trials well in advance of a student entering into a formal employment arrangement.

6.2.3 Positive supports during work experience and ASbAT

When asked *“Who has been a positive support to you during your work experience or ASbAT?”* young people respondents were asked to select from seven options and could select as many as were relevant. All 46 interviewees responded to this question and all options rated quite highly.

The top three highest selected positive supports were ‘staff at my school’, ‘my family / carers’ and ‘staff at the Disability Employment Service (DES)’. ‘My supervisor / manager’, ‘my co-workers’ and ‘my vocational trainers’ were selected to lesser degrees. ‘Staff at the Group Training Organisation (GTO)’ was the least selected option, however as the majority of young people who took part in this research were not employed under this arrangement this is not an unexpected response.



Graph 3: Young people, positive transition supports

The comments made by young people attest to the trusting and supportive relationships they have established with the array of education, training, work experience and ASbAT stakeholders that have been part of their Ticket to Work journey.

In reflecting on a teacher one young person said that *“My high school teacher is really supportive – he knows that sometimes I need some help”*. Another highlighted the role that a DES consultant plays in their transition activities in saying that *“My DES lady set my ASbAT up for me – I couldn’t have done that on my own”*. The importance of a supportive and understanding workplace was also frequently commented on by young people as evidenced in the comment *“my co-workers are all really good people to work with and they help me to understand things, even when it takes me a little bit of time to get it right”*.

The responses here indicate that all these formal and informal supports do play an important role during a young person’s period of workplace learning, whether that is a work experience or ASbAT placement, and that the involvement of each stakeholder provide young people with a mix of technical, generic and personal support throughout.

6.2.4 Overall benefits and effects of work experience and ASbAT

When asked **“Do you think that your participation in work experience and/or an Australian School based Apprenticeship and Traineeship has had any of the following effects / benefits?”** interviewees were provided with six options and could select as many as were relevant.

The options provided young people with an opportunity to identify any effects or benefits that they believed were specifically attributable to their participation in work experience or an ASbAT. The value and benefit of each was rated on a three point likert sliding scale (‘a lot’, ‘a little’, ‘not at all’) and allocated a value based on the selected response, with three being the highest rating value that could be achieved.

All presented options were selected by the young people as having had a positive effect; that is ‘a lot’ or ‘a little’ effect. Very few respondents identified that participation in work experience or an ASbAT had neutral or negative effect or benefit. The summary data and rating per each option is presented below:

Effect or Benefit of participating in work experience or an ASbAT on:	"A lot"	"A little"	"Not at all"	Total	Weighted average
Increased my confidence	63.04% 29	34.78% 16	2.17% 1	46	2.61
Understanding instructions	60.87% 28	36.96% 17	2.17% 1	46	2.59
Getting on better with co-workers / others in the workplace	54.35% 25	45.65% 21	0.00% 0	46	2.54
Understanding the world of work	56.52% 26	41.30% 19	2.17% 1	46	2.54
Managing my time	47.83% 22	50.00% 23	2.17% 1	46	2.46
Ability to use transport independently to get to work	62.22% 28	20.00% 9	17.78% 8	46	2.44

Table 5: Young people, effect and benefit of work experience and ASbAT

Young people were very forthcoming when identifying the ways in which participation in work has increased their levels of confidence and ability to understand instructions. One young person said that *“Learning to manage my time has improved a lot because I’ve learnt not to go too slow as we need to get to the next job and this was learnt by not having to make everything 100 per cent perfect. It is making me feel more confident and less scared at work”*.

Establishing sound workplace relationships and understanding the world of work was also noted as a benefit for young people. One young person drew these two elements together in saying that *“Sometimes I get a bit nervous and I’m still trying to get used to working with other people and the work environment. Everything is very different from when I’m at school, but I think I am getting better every day”*.

A number of young people noted that they have, or were still, struggling to manage their time in the workplace and during their accredited training. With reference to the workplace one young person said that *“in my ASbAT I would like to practice more on managing my time and with following tasks I’m given to do”*

while another said *“sometimes in training everyone is talking over each other so it's hard for me to concentrate and manage my tasks in training”*.

Very few young people commented on their capacity to independently use transport to attend the workplace which may be due to a number of factors. For some students independent transport is not an issue as they have already achieved this skill or are transported to their workplace by a parent or carer. Others are developing travel independence through their ASbAT, as noted by one young person who said *“My family were happy and proud about me getting the bus to my work. At first they wanted me to call when I got to work but they don't need me to do that now. Mum says I'm confident”*. However, travel training is an important aspect of preparing some young people for future work and independence because as one young person said *“I'm not confident using transport on my own”*.

6.3 Future employment and life goals

6.3.1 Future employment and school completion

Respondent young people were asked to consider their participation in work experience or an ASbAT and whether they believe this ‘will help them to get a job in the future’ and whether it has contributed to them ‘feeling good about finishing school’. The impact of these workplace development activities on future work and school completion was rated on a three point likert sliding scale (‘a lot’, ‘a little’, ‘not at all’) and allocated a value based on the selected response, with three being the highest rating value that could be achieved.

Overall, almost 80 per cent of all young people indicated that participation in work experience or an ASbAT has greatly (‘a lot’) contributed to them feeling that these activities will assist them to source employment in the future and feeling positive about completing school and moving into a life beyond school. The summary data and rating per each option is presented below:

Impact of participating in work experience or an ASbAT on future outcomes	"A lot"	"A little"	"Not at all"	Total	Weighted average
Do you think this will get you a job in the future?	77.78% 35	17.78% 8	4.44% 2	45	2.73
Do you feel good about finishing school?	80.00% 36	15.56% 7	4.44% 2	45	2.76

Table 6: Young people, impact of work experience and ASbAT on future outcomes

Young people could clearly identify that participation in work experience and ASbAT whilst in school would improve their candidacy for post-school employment and personal independence. This was noted by one young person who said, *“there is a supervisor at my ASbAT and he gives me the confidence and if I continue working it will give me more confidence and I won't need a supervisor in life”*. Another comment pointed to the preparatory role that participation in an ASbAT is having in saying that *“it helps to get me working, thinking about the future and future work because I start early at 8.30am and finish at 4pm. Just like other people go to work”*.

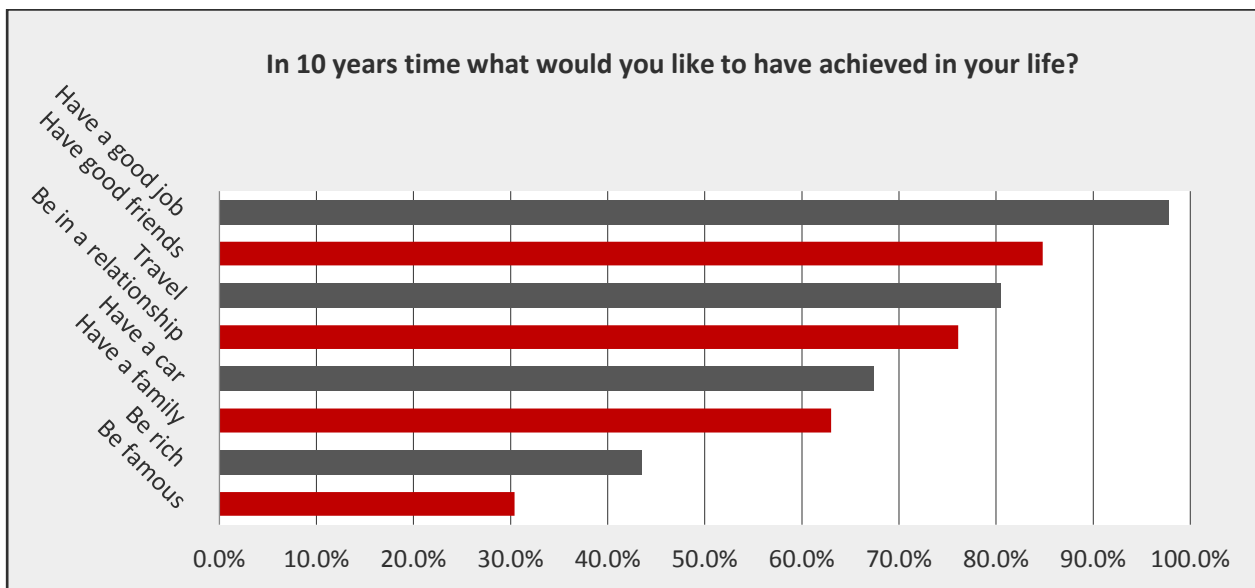
Some were also able to distinguish their own capacity for future employment against other peers that have not participated in transition activities whilst in school with one saying that *“I noticed with friends that hand in a resume they can't list they have a job or some sort of experience and so they don't get a job. I have ASbAT experience on my resume and it will help a lot”*.

While the majority of young people indicated that they were looking forward to completing school, some comments also hinted at some of these young people feeling a sense of trepidation and reservation about finishing school. One young person demonstrated the confidence he feels regarding school completion in saying that *“Yes I'm really pumped about finishing school, school has been great but I'm ready to move on. I'm*

confident about finishing my traineeship and excited. It could lead to really big things!”. Whereas another indicated that she has some concern about completing school but the participation in a horticulture ASbAT is a somewhat mitigating factor for her. *“I don't want to leave school because it makes me nervous but I'm very excited about the future especially if it involves working with gardening!”*

6.3.2 Life goals

When asked **“In 10 years time, what would you have liked to have achieved in your life”** young people were asked to select from eight options and could select as many as were relevant. All 46 students responded to this question and most options rated quite highly. The top three highest selected options were ‘have a good job’, ‘have good friends’ and ‘travel’. ‘Be in a relationship’, ‘have a car’ and ‘have a family’ were selected to lesser degrees. ‘Be rich’ and ‘be famous’ were the two least selected future goals.



Graph 4: Young people, life goals in ten years time

The selections made by young people when presented with this question demonstrate that they are no different from their peers without disability. One young person wants to *“Be working full time in travel or admin”*, another wants to *“travel overseas, I want to get a job and save money”* and yet another wants *“buy a commodore, get a job, get a house, have a girlfriend (someone special)”*.

The fact that ‘have a good job’ was most selected future goal is indicative that young people with disability, and particularly ones that have been exposed to employment via work experience or an ASbAT, do see a future that includes labour force participation for themselves.

6.4 Participants’ recommendations

6.4.1 Work experience and ASbAT recommendation

When asked the open-ended question **“Would you recommend work experience or Australian School based Apprenticeship or Traineeships to other students and why?”** respondent students presented an array of recommendations.

These can be broadly categorised as relating to ‘increasing employment opportunities in the future’, ‘being an interesting personal confidence and employment development opportunity’, ‘improving one’s future’, ‘providing an opportunity to earn money while still at school’, ‘providing accredited training’, ‘an encouragement to stay at school’, ‘building workplace knowledge and awareness’, ‘building connections with a Disability Employment Service (DES)’, ‘meeting new people’ and ‘providing an opportunity to try different roles before committing to a post-school pathway’.

Comments made by some of the interviewees illustrate and further articulate why these young people are strong advocates and supporters of using work experience and ASbATs as an integral part of transition and pathways planning.

'Increasing employment opportunities in the future' is demonstrated in the quote by one young man who said *"I told my sister, it's really good because there's someone there to help and after you go a long time you gain more confidence to do other work stuff"*.

'Being an interesting personal confidence and employment development opportunity' is highlighted in the comment by one young person who said *"I would tell students and parents that ASbATs can be really fun and interesting and they shouldn't be nervous about them. If I could get to all schools and tell them about ASbATs I would"*.

'Improving one's future' is evident in the comment made by one respondent who wanted to *"tell other students to do it, if they don't know what to do in their lives, they can do what I'm doing (ASbAT) and hopefully have a better future"*.

'Providing an opportunity to earn money while still at school' was highlighted in one comment whereby a young interviewee said that *"I would recommend ASbATs to other students because you get a good job and get paid to do it. It also helps them look to the future and work out what they want to do"*.

'Providing accredited training' as a means of building workplace skills was noted by one young person who said that *"the training helped me to know what to do at work and I knew what to do if I was speaking to a client and they had a question."*

'An encouragement to stay at school' can be said no more clearly than the comment *"because an ASbAT helps you get a job and experience and to stay at school"* made by one young person.

'Building workplace knowledge and awareness' was noted by one young person who, when reflecting on her ASbAT experience, said that *"it's fantastic and a good way to learn about work and what you have to do"*.

'Building connections with a Disability Employment Service (DES)' was commented on by a number of students. The assistance provided to them during an ASbAT and awareness of support that a DES can offer post the ASbAT period was also well understood by many of the respondents. One young person succinctly summarised this in saying that *"the people from the DES are really good and can help me in the future"*.

'Meeting new people' in the workplace was noted by some young people as an additional, and sometimes unexpected, benefit of ASbAT or work experience participation. When one young person was asked whether she would recommend an ASbAT to other students, she said *"Yes I would because it's a good experience and I hope it will allow others to meet new people just like I did with my work and also it's a great way to learn to about work"*.

'Providing an opportunity to try different roles before committing to a post-school pathway' was also noted as a beneficial aspect of workplace learning by respondent young people. When thinking about the provision of work experience and ASbATs to other students one interviewee said that *"Yes they should do it before they get a full time job, to get practice and learning to deal with different bits of work. It's also good to try it out so they can see if they like being that job"*.

6.4.2 Suggested improvements to work experience and ASbATs

When asked the open-ended question *"What improvements / changes would you make to work experience or Australian School based Apprenticeships or Traineeships?"* some respondent students presented suggested improvements or changes. While 41 students responded to this question, 78 per cent stated that

Ticket to Work related work experience or ASbATs do not require modification. As one young person said *“it is fine just the way it is”*.

Of those that did provide suggestions for change, theirs can be broadly categorised as relating to ‘the provision of more support and mentoring whilst completing training workbooks’, ‘increasing school awareness of ASbATs’, ‘learning about the post-school apprenticeship system’, ‘gaining a better understanding of how Disability Employment Services (DES) operate’ and ‘opportunities to undertake ASbATs on weekends rather than just during the school week’.

The comment made by one young person consolidates that overall satisfaction and appreciation that respondent students have for being provided access to workplace learning whilst in their final years of schooling. This young man’s recommendation was that we *“make sure all schools and especially special schools know about ASbATs. Everyone should know about them, not just me”*.

6.4.3 Overall feedback

At the conclusion of the interview young people were asked to make any final comments. Some of these responses were a reiteration of feedback already presented however a few pointed to the overall benefit that Ticket to Work related work experience and ASbATs has delivered to these young people and their families.

“The ASBAT has really helped me physically and mentally. My family have been proud of me and other family members such as uncles and cousins have been real proud of me as some of them have never had a job in their life.”

“I was sad about leaving school but now I feel positive about the future because I am sure I will get a job after I leave school because I know what working means.”

“Because of this I won't miss any days at work or school because I like it so much and I will keep working and doing my book work for the training.”

7. Parents and Carers involved in Ticket to Work

Parents and carers are a huge part of successful transition for students with disabilities. They are often going to be there for 'the long haul'. Their support, engagement and belief that their child should and can be in employment is evidenced in the large number of students permitted to take part in Ticket to Work related activities across Australia.

Because post-school pathways for this student population are typically complex and constrained, family involvement continues to be considered an essential component of the transition process (Kohler & Field, 2003; Ludlow, Turnbull, & Luckasson, 1988).

For many parents, there is no road map or clear pathway; and there are few parental examples or role models showing what is possible. Through the course of Ticket to Work expansion we have heard, all too frequently, that many parents are often told not to have too high workplace expectations when it comes to their child.

As one parent stated after learning about Ticket to Work, *"this is the first time someone has talked about employment in the context of my child"*.

A study by Whitney-Thomas & Hanley-Maxwell (1996) compared two parental cohorts and their experiences during the period their children were preparing to leave high school. One cohort was parents of children without disability and the other included parents of those with disability. The study examined factors of parents' comfort with the transition to post-school, their vision for their child's future and their response to the schooling process. The results indicate that parents of young people with disability experience greater levels of discomfort and pessimism than parents of young people without disability.

One of the few Australian longitudinal studies, conducted by Griffith University (Meadows et al 2006), surveyed parents on their experience of transition. Parental feelings about these issues, drawn as part of this study, are illustrated in the following selection of direct quotes:

One parent expressed concerns and about the lack of employment opportunities for young people with disability. *"He is stagnating and I can see him spending his life as a blimp in front of the computer or TV, from this point on there are very, very few employment opportunities these days for our special young adults. Very, very distressing!!"* Another parent similarly outlined her child's day in saying that *"everyday our son gets up and says 'what video today?'"*

Parents often have to pick up the pieces after an unsuccessful transition from school, pieces that can often last a lifetime. As discussed earlier, an unsuccessful post-school transition can result in considerable family adjustments when expected post-school outcomes related to employment, community participation, and social networks are not realised.

Tracey Christian, the mother of Jayden (who has a mild intellectual disability and diagnosed with Asperger Syndrome) who was involved in pilot Ticket to Work initiative, wrote an article in 2014 for The Association of Children with Disability which was then published in their Notice Board Magazine (p.6).

"I'm writing this as a very proud mother who has watched her son's adversity for years and seen him come out on top, a 'winner'. Jayden would say his biggest achievement was being offered a commercial cookery traineeship through his school involvement in the Ticket to Work program. After 18 months Jayden was then offered an apprenticeship in commercial cookery ... The transition to full-time employment is hard for any young person leaving school and for Jayden it has meant learning to cope with change (working shift work), reading social cues and working as part of a team in a pressured environment ... The journey for Jayden has not been without its ups and downs but thanks to the dedication of his school and others, Jayden now has a fabulous support network"

The following reviews feedback provided by the parents / carers of young people that have taken part in Ticket to Work related work experience and/or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (ASbAT) and clearly highlights the transition and employment benefits that their child (and their family) are deriving through participation in this initiative.

7.1 Parent / carer interview participants

Twenty-two parents or carers of a child participating in Ticket to Work participated in a telephone interview to gather their perspective on the initiative.

All children of these parents have a recognised disability and attend either a special school or mainstream school. Those attending a mainstream secondary school are receiving additional funding and receiving specific educational support to reflect their disability needs.

Not all parent respondents disclosed their child’s disability. Of the seventeen that did, four different disabilities were noted; with some of these children having more than one type of disability.

Disability	Number	Proportion (per cent)
Intellectual disability	7	41.2
Intellectual disability and Autism Spectrum Disorder	2	11.8
Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD)	4	23.5
Autism Spectrum Disorder and Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	2	11.8
Cerebral Palsy	1	5.9
Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD)	1	5.9
TOTAL	17	100.00

Table 7: Parents, child's disability type

7.2 Work experience and ASbAT participation of their child

7.2.1 Work experience participation of their child

Of the 22 parent survey respondents, 86.4 per cent advised that their child had taken part of one or more work experience placements while the remaining 13.4 per cent of parents advised that their child had not.

Having said that, almost all parent respondents indicated their child had commenced in an ASbAT. It may be the case that some parents have not indicated that their child undertook work experience prior to ASbAT commencement because the work experience was also conducted with the ASbAT employer. The majority of parent respondents advised that these work experience placements were undertaken as part of the Ticket to Work process.

7.2.2 ASbAT participation of their child

Of the 22 parent survey respondents, 91.0 per cent indicated that their child has commenced in an ASbAT, 4.5 per cent had commenced and/or completed two ASbATs and 4.5 per cent have not commenced an ASbAT.

Seventeen parent respondents advised that their child had not yet completed their ASbAT at the time of surveying and five indicated that their child had completed their ASbAT. Of those five young people that had completed their ASbAT, 40 per cent moved into ongoing employment with their ASbAT employer, 40 per cent moved into ongoing employment but with a different employer and the remaining student has not yet moved into ongoing employment.

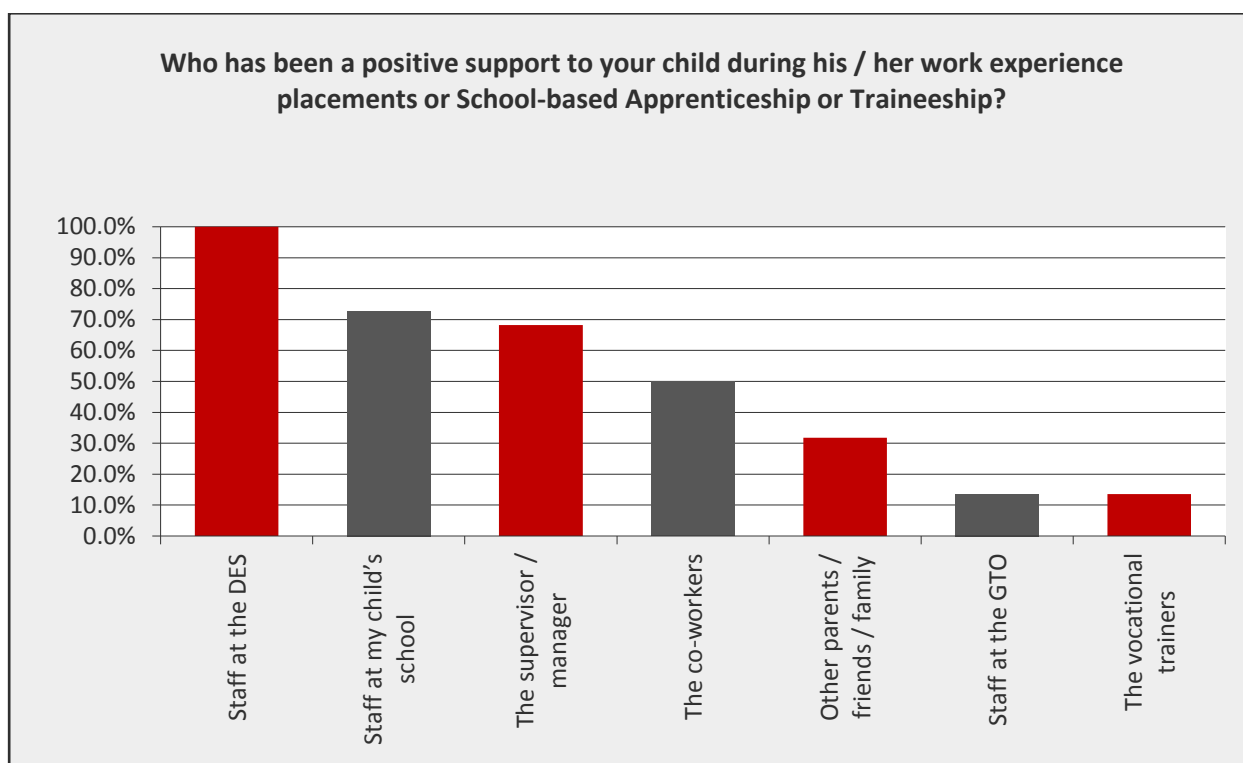
With regards those that had completed an ASbAT, the fact that 80 per cent moved into ongoing open employment post completion is indicative of ASbATs playing a significant role in these young people developing skills that have made them attractive to their existing or another employer.

7.3 Benefits and effects of work experience and ASbAT participation for child

7.3.1 Positive supports provided to the child and family during work experience and ASbAT

When asked *“Who has been a positive support to your child during his / her work experience or ASbAT?”* parent respondents were asked to select from seven options and could select as many were relevant. All 22 parents responded to this question.

The top three highest selected options were ‘staff at the Disability Employment Service (DES)’, ‘staff at my child’s school’ and ‘the supervisor / manager’. ‘Co-workers’ and ‘other parents / friends / family members’ were selected to lesser degrees. ‘Staff at the Group Training Organisation (GTO)’ and ‘the vocational trainers’ were the least selected options however as very few students were employed under a GTO arrangement and parents often have little direct involvement with the vocational trainers, these being the least selected supports is not an unexpected result.



Graph 5: Parents, positive transition supports to child and family

The responses to this question indicate that the support provided by DES providers, school staff and the young person’s manager are seen by parents as the most significant ones during their child’s work experience or ASbAT period. As one parent noted *“it’s wonderful that through the DES they have offered a support worker to assist and even they are able to pick him up to give me a hand sometimes too”*.

Other supports, such as the young person’s co-workers and family members, are recognised as providing assistance although to a lesser extent. In reflecting on their child’s workplace experience one parent said that *“he is having a ball and they’ve given him extra hours on top of the ASbAT”* and another said *“her colleagues are such nice people and helpful to her”*.

While it is well understood the critical role that GTOs and vocational trainers play in the provision of ASbATs their role is lesser understood by parents and is reflected in their responses to this question. In some cases this may be because their child was not employed under a GTO arrangement however their response

regarding vocational trainers may indicate that parents would benefit from increased exposure the accredited training aspect of an ASbAT and/or be provided with more opportunities to engage directly with trainers.

One parent recognised the integrated aspect of supports in saying that *“they all supply a piece to the puzzle”*.

7.3.2 Overall benefits and effects of work experience and ASbAT for the child

When asked ***“Do you think that your child’s participation in work experience and/or Australian School based Apprenticeship and Traineeship has had any of the following effects / benefits?”*** parent respondents were asked to select from six options and could select as many as were relevant.

Respondent parents were asked to consider their child’s participation in work experience or an ASbAT and whether they believe this has contributed ‘understanding the world of work’, ‘increased confidence’, ‘getting on better with co-workers / others in the workplace’, ‘taking instructions in the workplace’, ‘managing time better’ and ‘ability to use transport independently to get to work’. The value and benefit of each was rated on a three point likert sliding scale (‘improvement’, ‘no change’, ‘decline’) and allocated a value based on the selected response, with three being the highest rating value that could be achieved. The summary data and ratings per each option is presented below:

Effect or Benefit of participating in work experience or an ASbAT on:	"Improvement"	"No change"	"Decline"	Total	Weighted average
Understanding the world of work	95.45% 21	4.55% 1	0.00% 0	22	2.95
Increased confidence	95.45% 21	4.55% 1	0.00% 0	22	2.95
Getting on better with co-workers / others in the workplace	90.91% 20	9.09% 2	0.00% 0	22	2.91
Taking instructions in the workplace	86.36% 19	13.64% 3	0.00% 0	22	2.86
Managing time better	68.18% 15	31.82% 7	0.00% 0	22	2.68
Ability to use transport independently to get to work	47.62% 11	52.38% 11	0.00% 0	22	2.54

Table 8: Parents, effects and benefits of work experience and ASbAT on child

Overall, all presented options were selected as having contributed to improvements in their child’s skills or knowledge. No parent indicated that any decline had been noticed in their child during their workplace experiences however some did indicate that no change had been detected in some areas.

Overall, the responses indicate that a significant number of parents noticed improvements in their child’s awareness of work, confidence, ability to work with others and understand workplace instructions. An increased understanding of the workplace was articulated by one parent who said *“he now understands how the fortnightly pay works - we’ve tried explaining it to him but actually receiving his pay means he now gets it”*. In reflecting on the confidence raising aspect of an ASbAT one parent said that *“his confidence has made him outgoing while he is at work – he really enjoys being with a team and he is enjoying the job there more and more”*. An increased ability to work with others and understand instructions is well surmised in the comment by one parent who said that *“I thought he’d be really scared about doing work but surprised he got on so well with others in the workplace as he usually freaks out in large crowds. He was always willing to do the work and his instruction taking is very good”*.

While just over two thirds noticed improvements in their child’s ability to manage time the remainder did not notice any change in this regard. But many comments do indicate that being in a consistent workplace

environment is contributing to improved time management skills, with one parent highlighting that *“his time management is better as he has more independence and being at work for a whole day and longer than at school he is coping well with it”*.

Just over half all parent respondents indicated that there had not been any change in their child’s ability to use transport independently, however comments regarding this matter indicate that some young people were already versed in the use of public transportation prior to commencing in their work experience placement or ASbAT and may account for these parents indicating that there had been no change in this regard.

7.3.3 Work experience and ASbAT highlights experienced by child

Parents who took part in the survey interviews welcomed the opportunity to share specific highlights experienced by their child during their work experience or ASbAT placement. The comments below illustrate just how valuable participation in workplace transition activities can be in terms of assisting young people with disability to develop technical and generic employability skills, build personal confidence, model work ethic, foster friendships and relationships and learn about potential career pathways. The value of work experience and ASbAT, and the experiential highlights of these workplace learning activities, were shared in a significant number of comments made by parents:

“He’s made great relationships with people at work and with others in class too. He is a role model for his own family and peers. Other siblings in the family don’t work and most would think he wouldn’t either but since he started working he is setting an example to them.”

“It’s made him more confident and social, and he’s motivated him to go to work. He’s willing to learn about the products that he is working with and he is taking it upon himself to learn about the products, off his own volition. They are also offering him extra hours to work (outside of the ASbAT) so that has given his self-esteem a boost.”

“It’s given him confidence, it’s still building, the confidence to participate as part of a team, show up on time, not call in sick, developing some work ethic ... Also, he obviously enjoys work a lot more than school so he’s motivated to go.”

“He is very happy with using the meat slicer at work! Up until now the most he is ever done for himself is making a sandwich, he’s been really scared of doing it/cooking so it’s giving him that confidence so it’s inspired him to help out at home even with cooking.”

“He did his work experience at a plumbing company and he totally loved it. He’s now keen to head in that direction.”

7.3.4 Challenges experienced by the child during work experience or ASbAT

When asked whether their child experienced any challenges during their work experience or ASbAT placement very few parents responded to the question; indicating that workplace-related challenges were not a significant issue for the child and/or their care giver. Of those that did respond the key challenges or issues included: their child being tired as a result of working a full work day; experiencing difficulties with understanding and fulfilling instructions; struggling to feel ‘part of the team’; and, learning to adapt to constructive criticism in the workplace and some supervisors.

Some parents also saw a challenge as a learning opportunity for their child. One such parent said *“my son had some trouble at work when he did something wrong and got criticised about it from his supervisor (something he is not used to), but he has learned that when you do things wrong in the workplace advice from your supervisor is normal”*.

7.4 Future employment and life goals

7.4.1 Child's future employment opportunities, school completion and independence

Parent respondents were asked to consider whether their child's participation in work experience or an ASbAT is likely to have an effect or benefit on their child's future employment opportunities. In addition, parents were asked to identify whether participation in work experience or an ASbAT has made them feel more positive about their child finishing school and more confident about their child's personal independence.

A likert sliding scale ('improvement', 'no change', 'decline') was used to measure parental feelings about these matters. A value was allocated on the basis of the response, with three being the highest rating value that could be achieved. The summary data and ratings per each option is presented below:

Effect or Benefit of participating in work experience or an ASbAT on:	"Improvement"	"No change"	"Decline"	Total	Weighted average
Improved his / her employment opportunities in the future	100.00% 22	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22	3.00
Made you feel more positive about him / her finishing school	100.00% 21	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	22	3.00
Made you feel more confident about his / her personal independence	90.91% 20	4.55% 1	4.55% 1	22	2.86

Table 9: Parents, future employment opportunities for child

All respondents indicated that their feelings regarding the likelihood of their child entering into the labour force and completing school had improved. One parent saw significant employability skill development in her child when saying that *"I'm sure the ASbAT will help in the future. We were quite concerned whether he would fit in at work as he withdraws quite a bit and internalises everything, but we are seeing this change because he is being supported to be more open at work"*. The connection between ASbAT and school participation was noted by one parent who said that *"he loves his ASbAT and knows he can only do it if he is still going to school, which has made him more motivated to go to school"*.

Parental confidence regarding their child's personal independence had also largely improved, however a mere five per cent did indicate that their child's participation in work experience or an ASbAT made no difference or had reduced confidence in their child's independence. One parent that does feel more confidence about her child's personal independence as a direct result of participation in an ASbAT said that *"I do think it's helping with his motivation and it's due to the fact he knows that if he works he can get money and he can do more things with money so it's good for his independence"*.

The parent of one child undertaking an ASbAT did express concern about her child's future independence, largely because he is still struggling with to separate the institution of school from the institution of work and needed prompts to attend work each week. Critically, her child's participation in an ASbAT has brought these issues to her attention for the first time and is now allowing the parent, school, DES and workplace to address the needs and issues of this young man. However, this parent did identify hope for her child in saying that *"although he needs to be dragged to work once he is there he enjoys it, so it has given me some optimism that there is light at the end of the tunnel but unfortunate that he still sees it as an extension of school"*.

7.5 Parent recommendations

7.5.1 Benefit of work experience and ASbATs for young people

When asked the open-ended question ***“Do you believe work experience and Australian School based Apprenticeship or Traineeships are beneficial for students with disability?”*** respondent parents presented an array of reasons as to why they believe this model of workplace transition is useful.

These can be broadly categorised as relating to ‘building self-confidence and independence’, ‘gaining workplace knowledge and improving employability’, ‘building connections to disability employment support organisations’, ‘assisting with career pathway identification’ and ‘providing work-related training and development’. In addition, some noted that the personal pressure and fear, felt as the parent of a child with disability, has also been reduced through their child’s participation in this program.

Comments made by some of the interviewees illustrate and further articulate why parents see the use of work experience and ASbATs as being an integral part of transition and pathways planning for their child and just how it is contributing to them feeling more confident about their child’s post-school outcomes.

‘Building self-confidence and independence’ was highlighted as being a critical aspect of participation in work experience and ASbATs by many parent interviewees. Notably, one parent said that *“Yes I do it gives them more of a chance as it gives them an opportunity to get up to other students’ level and give them an extra boost. And their confidence values from it too. By doing this it makes them feel better and shows the other students in the school that they are not just students with disability but they can do something, it’s very difficult for them getting put down all the time by their peers.”* Another said that *“Yes, sometimes those with disability are overlooked in the workforce so it’s good for students to have this option. It’s important that they learn that even though they have a disability they cannot sit back and wait for things to happen – you get no confidence or independence if it’s always done for you”.*

‘Gaining workplace knowledge and improving employability’ was also identified by parents as being a critical outcome of the workplace learning delivered via work experience and ASbATs. One parent said that *“I think it’s given her some insight into the world of work that out’s there”* and another said that *“for my child it’s been a very positive move as he wasn’t enjoying school like he used to so the traineeship is helping him by gaining more skills and knowledge in the workforce.”*

‘Building connections to disability employment support organisations’ was seen as something that has not only been beneficial during a child’s ASbAT but also means relationships with supportive organisations are now established prior to children leaving school. DES providers were particularly signalled out by a number of parents. One parent said that *“I can’t see how he would have got a job independently without the additional assistance, however now he’s got a job he can go and get one more easily”.* Another reflected on the ubiquity of ASbATs and the support around it in saying that *“because all students can do an ASbAT it allows students with disability to have that opportunity without them feeling that they are only employed because they have a disability. The support team around the ASbAT is great, positive, and given by qualified people. I’m so impressed with the DES and their staff and I can ask them anything anytime and they check on her regularly”.* Another parent commented on the collaborative nature of ASbATs when she said that *“I got to know other people involved in the ASbAT process so there is a great partnership approach to the whole program”.*

‘Reducing parental fear, pressure and increasing optimism for their child’s future’ was highlighted as a beneficial aspect of their child’s participation in work experience and ASbATs by many interviewed parents. In many ways this parent’s comment, *“It’s also good for other parents because you have some time to yourself and you feel relieved that you know they can do certain things on their own”*, summarises this very succinctly.

In conclusion, one parent stated that *“all students with disabilities should get a chance to do this program”.*

7.5.2 Overall feedback

When asked about the role that Ticket to Work, and its related activities and partner organisations, has parents were overwhelming grateful that such an initiative has been made available to their child.

In some cases, parents noted that the program should be made available to students of a younger age. Others noted that, without it, students will not receive access to a program specifically devised to create pathways to work and a life of independence. A couple of other parents also noted that had it been made available to their other children with disability they would not be out of employment and despondent now.

In essence, parents see and appreciate the contribution that Ticket to Work is making to the life of their child and their own families and a handful of comments regarding this are presented below:

"Thank you for working with our son it has given us hope for his future."

"I wouldn't know what to do without this program because it's helped my son a lot. I was worried he won't get a job in the future or be independent but with this program I now feel more confident he will."

"I'm really happy with the Ticket to Work process and how it's handled. The way the school has worked with the DES and I haven't been left out of it – a real partnership approach. My daughter wasn't just popped into any old work – there was the lead up, the work trial, the learning process throughout and the paperwork."

"Very excited to have this opportunity and it's a real privilege. It feels like it's a whole package being delivered, not just the ASbAT training but the support with transport use, addressing literacy and numeracy deficits and the support from the DES."

"I do really think Ticket to Work is a wonderful program, and I wish my other two boys had done it if it was around back then."

"I would start this program a lot earlier. At least in preparation for work and/ or the ASbAT in younger year levels."

"All students with disabilities should get a chance to do this Ticket to Work program. They can work, should be able to work and the community and government need to be behind supporting it."

8. Employers involved in Ticket to Work

As indicated earlier work experience (particularly paid ones such as ASbATs) for young people with disability whilst still in school is one of the most critical factors that sets the stage for these young people's post secondary employment success. The frequent and continuous exposure to real work environments, throughout the secondary school years, shapes a young person's image of themselves as 'worker' and provides the skills, experience and confidence to successfully take an employment pathway. These experiences, however, occur only when employers are available, willing and prepared.

As indicated in the report 'In their own words - an employer's perspective' employers have operational and economic stakes in the success of programs that connect them with youth with disabilities. Employers must consider both the costs and the benefits associated with having youth with disabilities in their workplaces. Thus, it is essential for educators, transition specialists, workforce development professionals, family members and youth to understand employers' needs, circumstances, and perspectives as they establish work experiences (Luecking 2004, p.1).

Unfortunately, in Australia there is a widespread reluctance of employers to employ a person with a disability, and even more so a young person with a disability as they often lack the vital work experience to 'get a foot in the door'. In 2013, the Australian Human Resources Institute surveyed 20,000 human resources practitioner members asking a question regarding where their organisation would prefer to source labour if they were limited to choosing from one of five target groups. Only seven per cent advised that they would choose an Australian with a disability (Serge Sardo, 2013).

Ticket to Work has demonstrated a strong capacity to engage with employers in various locales across Australia, largely due to the excellent employment engagement activity that Local Networks have undertaken. However, for the model to expand even further more must be done on the 'employer demand side' to both ensure greater employment opportunities and best meet the needs of the employers.

Ticket to Work's model is a 'demand-led approach' which starts with the identification of a specific workforce need in a specific business, this need is then matched against students that have expressed or demonstrated interest in this role and the Ticket to Work partners then work with the young people to meet the identified employer need. Many DES providers involved in Ticket to Work operate this way; in that they ensure good matching between the career aspirations of the young person and the business needs of the employer, and then spend significant time and resources to ensure the placement is successful and meets the needs of all parties.

The 2012 Australian 'Demand-Led Employment Services Roundtable Report' advised that demand-led approaches work best when employers and employment service providers are able to work in partnership, often over long periods of time and when vocational training is seamlessly integrated with the employment and training provided by employment service providers and the participating employers (ACOSS, BCA and ACTU, 2012).

Often, the best way to improve 'job readiness' is to place people into a paid job as soon as possible, taking care to ensure that the 'match' is the right one. Care needs to be taken to ensure that the job is customised to the needs of both the employee and employer, as this approach can assist in negating the effects of the individual's disability on the success of the employment. Toni Wren, a leading expert in demand-led employment approaches, indicates that a customised approach is one which is both demand and supply sensitive. Demand-led sensitive in that it starts with the needs of employers and works backwards and involves them in the design and delivery of the training (more work experience, on the job training, offers of jobs at the end). Supply-sensitive in that it offers smarter ways to engage, educate and employ people who have not succeeded in traditional school or training environments (Wren 2011).

The following reviews feedback provided by the employers of young people that have taken part in Ticket to Work related work experience and/or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship (ASbAT). Responses and feedback provided by employers attest to the value of workplace learning for students with disability in open employment settings and also highlight the utility of demand-led approaches when placing students with disability in their workplace. Interviews with employers also helped to identify some common issues and challenges and provide recommendations for continuation and expansion of the Ticket to Work model.

8.1 Employer interview participants

Sixteen employers that have provided Ticket to Work related work experience and/or ASbAT placements of young people with disability participated in a telephone interview to gather their perspective on this initiative.

The positions held by employer respondents were largely senior roles and included roles such as Director, National Business Development Manager, Owner, Operations Manager, Project Manager and Store Manager. The industries represented by respondent employers covered horticulture, retail, trade, information technology, sport and recreation, group training, community services and aged care.

The size of respondent employer businesses ranged from sole operations through to large multinationals. Fifty per cent of employers worked within a business that employed 50 to 200 persons, 25 per cent worked in a business that employed one to five staff, 18.7 per cent worked a business staffed by between five and 20 employees and 6.3 per cent worked in a business staffed by 200 or more employees.

When asked whether the business had previously employed people with disability, 68.75 per cent said that they had done so, 25 per cent said that they had not and the remaining 6.25 per cent were unsure.

8.2 Work experience and ASbAT participation

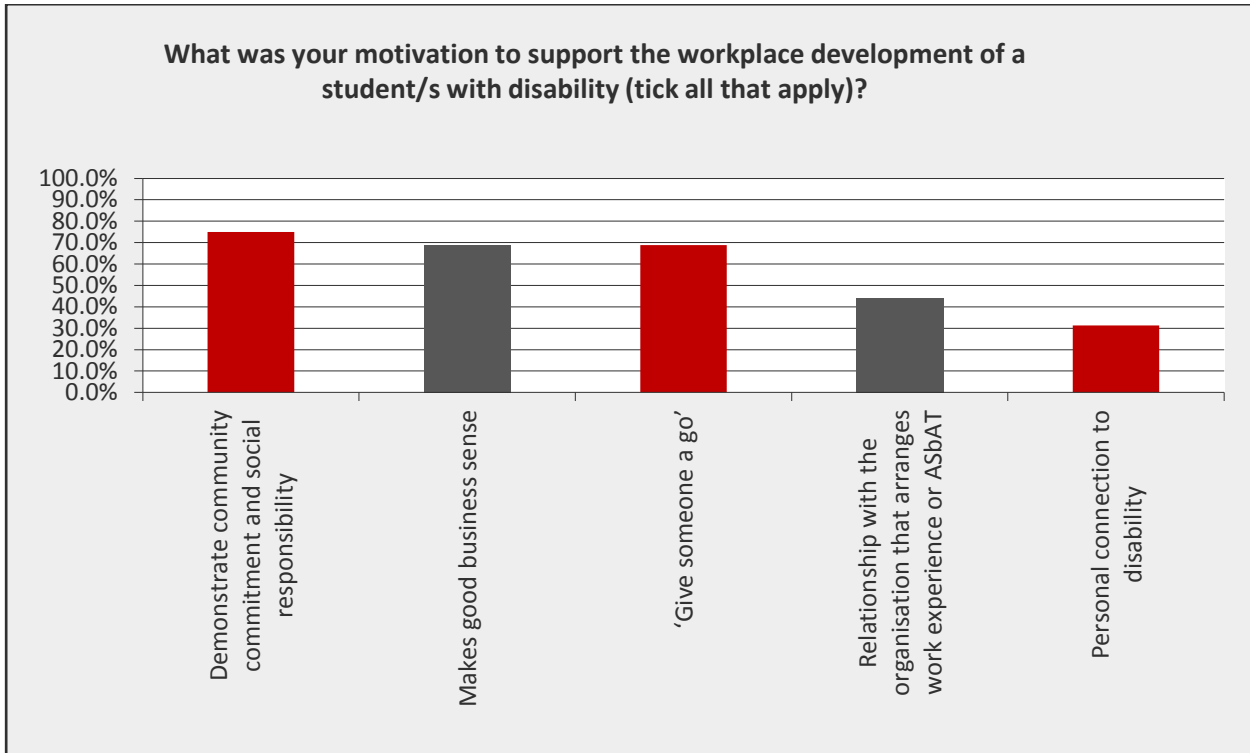
The majority of respondent employers indicated they had supported the development of students with disability through both work experience and ASbATs. Eighty-seven percent of employers indicated that they have employed a young person under an ASbAT arrangement and 75 per cent had offered one or more work experience placements.

In many cases, employers noted that the work experience placement undertaken by a student in their business then led into an ongoing paid ASbAT arrangement between that business and the young person. Indeed the age of business is no barrier to involvement as indicated by one employer who advised that *“We started out with work experience students but now progressed to ASbATs. We are a new business and have operated for 12 months only”*.

8.3 Rationale for providing workplace learning to students with disability

When asked *“What was your motivation to support the workplace development of a student/s with disability?”* employer respondents were asked to select from five options and could select as many as were relevant.

‘Demonstrate our community commitment and social responsibility’, ‘makes good business sense’ and ‘give someone a go’ were the most highly rated reasons for offering workplace opportunities to students in their business. ‘Relationship with the organisation that arranges work experience or Australian School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship’ and ‘personal connection to disability (eg. family member/friend with a disability)’ was selected to lesser degrees.



Graph 6: Employers, motivation for supporting student workplace development

Community commitment and past experience in employing persons with disability were elucidated upon through comments made by some employer interviewees. One indicated that the main reason for their involvement in work experience and ASbATs is because of *“community involvement and we already have people employed here with disability so that made sense employing students with disability. No family connection but I’m all about the people - the human element - I’m about giving people opportunity”*. Another said that he wants to increase employment opportunities for persons with disability advising that *“I employed someone 20 years ago with a slight disability and he’s still working for me today. I love giving these kids a go. In fact I’ve scaled back my business as it gives me the opportunity to assist those with a disability more in the workplace”*.

A genuine desire to provide a young person with an opportunity to engage in authentic employment was also noted by some employers. This was clearly stated by one employer who said that *“Giving someone a go is the number one reason why I support these students with disability in the workplace. No one gives these kids a go”*.

An established relationship with a disability employment organisation was also noted as a motivating factor for some employers. In some cases it was the relationship with a DES provider and in other cases a relationship with a GTO. One employer said that *“we started working with a DES last year and it has been really successful. So, when Ticket to Work came on board it all just fitted in nicely”*.

A personal connection to disability drew some employers into a model of offering work experience of ASbATs to students with disability also. One employer noted that *“the owner has a son with a disability so they understand what people with disabilities go through and how much of a struggle it can be to find work. The owner himself also has a slight disability and as such knows how students with disability can get a future if they are given an opportunity”*.

Overall, the responses indicate that employers have a genuine desire to support local young people while simultaneously gaining business and workplace productivity benefits in doing so. As one employer said, *“Ticket to Work meant I was able to employ an enthusiastic and reliable worker.”*

8.4 Support and assistance provided to ASbAT employers

8.4.1 Student information and disclosure

When placing a student into an ASbAT role, students generally undertake a work trial period in that workplace which allows for both parties to ascertain whether they are suited to the position on offer. In many cases, in fact, the student has undertaken work experience, which then progresses to a work trial and the offer of a paid ASbAT position. This approach brings together a mix of both demand-led and supply-sensitive employment models.

In many cases this is coordinated by the DES or by the GTO if the employment is a hosted GTO employment arrangement. In most cases the young person's disability and specific workplace needs are confidentially discussed with the employer to facilitate the necessary workplace modifications and supervision arrangements and coordination of disability awareness preparation with co-workers.

When respondent employers were asked ***“were you adequately briefed about your ASbAT student/s prior to starting with you?”*** 87.5 per cent answered in the affirmative and the remaining 12.5 per cent said they had not been adequately briefed.

Those that felt they had been adequately briefed indicated that appropriate and relevant information about their ASbAT student had been provided and disclosed by partner organisations. One business noted that *“I got a lot of information and support”* while another said *“We had plenty of heads up about what to expect from him”*. Another employer advised that within their business they took it upon themselves to make a student assessment, saying that *“I like to meet the students first, I'd rather see them first and see their personality first, I don't go off stories and I basically get to know the student on their own”*. One also advised that initially some information regarding the student's need had not been provided however after liaison with the parents and partners this matter *“has since been rectified”*.

Of those that did feel the student ASbAT information was inadequate, one related to specific workplace administration requirements (such as the need to provide copies of payslips to DES providers) or that the decision to employ a student was made at a higher organisation level and student needs were not sufficiently shared with the student's direct supervisor and colleagues.

8.4.2 Employer support and assistance

The provision of support throughout the ASbAT arrangement was something that was also investigated with respondent employers. When asked the question ***“Do you feel that you were adequately supported while your ASbAT student/s were in your workplace?”*** three quarters of respondents felt that they did receive sound support by partner organisations.

Comments made by those that felt they received adequate support largely centred around the assistance and guidance provided by the DES they are working with. One employer noted that *“Our DES is fantastic, they have helped us through providing training and any changes needed to be made to the workplace”* while another said that *“the DES was great because they came to shadow the student and check to see that we were all OK regularly”*.

Comments made by those employers who felt that had not received support actually indicated that the reason for a lack of support at this stage was either because they are in the very early stages of the ASbAT arrangement and not needing any assistance at present or because they feel sufficiently prepared and do not need to call upon external support at this stage.

One employer did note, however, that *“I'm unsure of what support there will be”*, which may indicate that some employers, and particularly those that have not been involved in student ASbAT arrangements

previously, may need more information about support entitlements from the key disability employment partner organisations such as DES providers or GTOs.

8.5 Outcomes for students placed in employer’s businesses

8.5.1 Student development in the workplace

When asked **“How much improvement / decline did you notice in your student employee during their employment?”** employer respondents were asked to select from six options and could select as many as relevant.

Employer respondents were asked to consider whether they had identified workplace-related changes in their young employee whilst they were under their guidance. The six areas that employers were asked to consider, when reflecting on the young person, were ‘ability to get along with others in the workplace / on-site’, ‘ability to adhere to workplace practices and policies’, level of confidence’, ‘productivity level’, ability to adhere to / manage time for set tasks’ and ‘ability to follow / understand instructions in the workplace’.

The value and benefit of each was rated on a three point likert sliding scale (‘improvement’, ‘no change’, ‘decline’) and allocated a value based on the selected response, with three being the highest rating value that could be achieved. The summary data and ratings per each option is presented below:

Improvements or decline noticed in young person/s participating in work experience or ASbAT	"Improvement"	"No change"	"Decline"	Total	Weighted average
Ability to get along with others in the workplace / on-site	100.00% 16	0.00% 0	0.00% 0	16	3.00
Ability to adhere to workplace practices and policies	93.75% 15	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16	2.94
Level of confidence	93.75% 15	6.25% 1	0.00% 0	16	2.94
Productivity level	81.25% 13	18.75% 3	0.00% 0	16	2.81
Ability to adhere to / manage time for set tasks	75.00% 12	25.00% 4	0.00% 0	16	2.75
Ability to follow / understand instructions in the workplace	81.25% 13	12.50% 2	6.25% 1	16	2.75

Table 10: Employers, student improvements during work experience or ASbAT

The ‘ability to get along with others in the workplace or on-site’ received the highest rating, with 100 per cent of respondents advising that improvement in this area had been noticed in their student. Improvements in ‘ability to adhere to workplace practices and policies’, ‘level of confidence’ and ‘productivity level’ followed closely behind.

The comment made by one employer not only articulates overall improvements noticed in his young employee but also highlights an approach introduced by this employer to increase output productivity and quality. *“The student has gained more confidence in himself since beginning work here. He is now at a point where he can talk to customers and sit down and show them and go through a game with them. We are still working on his ability to understand and follow instructions. The productivity level of this student is amazing as he was quickly given an incentive to completing tasks - if the tasks are completed then he can play some games (computer games) and as such in the beginning he was working very quickly and completed all tasks to get them done! However we have since discussed moving at a better pace to ensure the tasks are completed properly.”*

Pleasingly, the majority of employers have noticed productivity increases in their student. ASbATs can be arranged in a number of ways, generally when a student works one or two days per week in the business. One employer commented on this matter in saying that *“if the students are employed two days per week this is better and you see more improvement because it's enough time to enhance skills whereas one day per week is not enough time”*. Another employer spoke in a similar vein about this issue and highlighted how it is being addressed in his business. *“One issue is that the students do eight hours and this is quite tiring for young people who have never worked before ... So, we have negotiated with our DES that the two students do four hour shifts over two days. There is no point doing a long shift as they are too tired and not as productive, this way they are more fresher.”*

Not unlike comments made by students and parents (outlined earlier), the two areas where improvements were not as great were in the areas of ‘time management’ and ‘instructional understanding’. One employer noted this to be an issue for the young person in his business but in commenting also revealed the commitment and investment they are making to assist this young person to overcome these issues. *“Sometimes our student gets easily distracted and forget things. We are still working through time management. What he does get done, he gets done to a very high standard and he wants it 100 per cent perfect but it's over the top. This is due to the nature of the student's disability. So we need to work on time management and not having to get the task/area done so perfectly to be able to move on to the next job”*.

The care and respect that these employers give to their young employees is evident in the comment *“he copes well but we are all just careful to watch when he gets confused and make sure we help him through it”*.

8.5.2 Challenges in the workplace

When asked whether employers had experienced any challenges whilst supporting students in their workplace a number of key challenges emerged, as did approaches that employers have used to overcome some of these.

A number of employers identified that not having sufficient understanding of the student’s disability, at times, prevented them from aligning tasks to the individual. This was highlighted by one employer who said that he would *“like to get a better understanding of my employee’s disability”*.

A number of others indicated that the time required to align students with relevant tasks and provide ongoing training in that area can, at times, be a resource drain; however most recognised that whilst this is challenging they are prepared to invest in the employee to ensure they are building skills and are happy in the workplace.

One also noted that their DES has been a critical player in providing task training saying that *“having the DES support my student has meant the training challenge has been quickly fixed”*.

A couple of respondent employers noted that, at times, it has been a struggle to keep students motivated and interested in the workplace but they are committed to overcoming such issues, with one employer saying *“we do face challenges but we are ready for them - students can lose interest but then we try and motivate them and they don't give in!”*.

8.5.3 Ongoing employment offerings to students

In the open-ended question, ***“Will you consider ongoing employment to your ASbAT student once he or she has completed?”*** the vast majority of respondent employers advised that they already have made such an offer or plan on doing so.

A number of employers advised that they have already offered ongoing employment to their past or present Ticket to Work ASbAT students with one advising that *“both students we had as ASbATs are now employees of the business”* and another saying that *“our ASbAT student is now an ongoing employee with our business but*

has just been relocated to another store”. Another employer advised that “with the ASbAT students with disability we are looking to take them on permanently once they have completed their training”.

Of those employers that said ongoing employment may not be available to their current ASbAT student, two employers advised that this only because their businesses are very new ones, another noted that the parent of their ASbAT student declined the offer of ongoing employment to their child and another wanted to spend more time involved in Ticket to Work ASbATs before committing to post-ASbAT employment. As one recently established business said, “We are very small business and also very new, but perhaps in one to two years when we have operated longer we will be able to”.

The overall feedback provided as part of this question attests to ASbATs providing employers with a supported and mediated approach to the employment of young people with disability which in turn is seeing a significant proportion of these employers already offering or considering ongoing open employment for their ASbAT employee.

8.6 Benefits and effects of work experience and ASbATs in the business

8.6.1 Business outcomes and effects

When asked “What effects did providing work experience or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship to student/s with disability have on your business?” employer respondents were asked to select from six options and could select as many as relevant.

Employer respondents were asked to identify the effects that provision of workplace development to young people with disability had on their business. Improvements in ‘workplace diversity’ and ‘community social responsibility’ received the highest ratings. This was closely followed by an increase in ‘workplace morale’ and ‘awareness of disability’. Improvements in ‘workplace efficiency’ and ‘customer / client satisfaction’ was slightly lower, and a small number noted no change or a decline, but overall responses evidenced that the involvement of students with disability in the business generally did contribute to improvements in these areas.

The value and benefit of each was rated on a three point likert sliding scale (‘improvement’, ‘no change’, ‘decline’) and allocated a value based on the selected response, with three being the highest rating value that could be achieved. The summary data and ratings per each option is presented below:

Effects that provision of work experience or ASbAT has had on the business	"Improvement"	"No change"	"Decline"	Total	Weighted average
Workplace diversity	81.25% 13	18.75% 3	0.00% 0	16	2.82
Community social responsibility	81.25% 13	18.75% 3	0.00% 0	16	2.82
Workplace morale	68.75% 11	18.75% 3	0.00% 0	16	2.68
Awareness of disability	75.00% 12	18.75% 3	6.25% 1	16	2.68
Workplace efficiency	62.50% 10	21.43% 3	21.43% 3	16	2.44
Customer / client satisfaction	50.00% 8	43.75% 3	6.25% 1	16	2.44

Table 11: Employers, business effect of ASbAT or work experience participation

Despite employers identifying that the involvement of young people in work experience or ASbATs led to improvements in 'community social responsibility', 'workplace morale' and 'awareness of disability' few provided specific comments about these areas. One employer did touch on a number of areas in saying that *"we get lots of calls from schools because they are aware of the program and the opportunity. Students get the confidence and the workplace morale is lifted because they are now not as shy. We try to line up where the students' strengths fit and we find that we receive good feedback from customers"*.

'Workplace diversity' was commented on, however not with specific reference to the young work experience or ASbAT employees under their guidance. Rather, a number of employees advised the employment of any persons with disability is a feature of employment in their business *"so as such there has been no change to workplace diversity"*.

While nearly two-thirds of employer respondents noted improvements in 'workplace efficiency' a small number also indicated that there had been no change or a decline in this area whilst providing a workplace learning opportunity to a student. One employer noted that efficiency had reduced due to their ASbAT employee not fulfilling a specific duty but, since modifying the task, efficiency is now on the rise. Another employer advised that employing young people with disability does make business sense because *"as a small business, the more staff we have, the more ideas we generate"*.

In a broader statement one employer stated that in order to better support his ASbAT student it would be beneficial for him to better understand the nature of his employee's disability but that no partner organisation, or the young person himself, has disclosed this information. This employer said that *"I've never asked for risk of discrimination or offending but I should be informed of the nature of their disability to be able to match their suitability to the work"*. This comment may indicate that some employers could benefit from participation in formal disability awareness training which would help to reduce discrimination fears and provide tips for ways in which they can legally encourage such discussion with any, not just an ASbAT, employee.

8.6.2 Business benefits

When asked the open-ended question ***"How did your business benefit from providing work experience or an Australian School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship to student/s with disability?"*** respondent employers presented an array of workplace benefits derived through their participation.

These can be broadly categorised as relating to 'increasing workplace efficiency and productivity', 'teaching and mentoring a young person', 'contributing to the development of a young employee', 'modelling the importance and benefits of disability employment within the community', 'gaining an understanding of disability within a workplace context' and 'building partnerships with local special schools'.

'Increasing workplace efficiency and productivity' was commented on by many employers. Two simply stated that *"ASbATs are economical labour and with the student assisting in basic tasks this saves me time"* and that *"our ASbAT takes a work load off other staff members, he's been a real help"*. Another said that *"It has benefited the business because with the ASbAT students they have been so productive since they are so enthusiastic about their training and the work they do so it brings a level of productivity to the whole team. Other team members (those without disability) must be inspired by the ASbAT students and so it has established good role modelling and if they can do it (students with disability) then the other members can too. They also follow all instructions and so the work gets done properly with proper process and no shortcuts"*.

'Teaching and mentoring a young person' and 'contributing to the development of a young employee' was also commented on by a number of employers. One employer noted that participating in these activities provides a means for assessing the employability of a potential employee. Another said that they enjoyed being part of a young person's workplace training and development as *"through perseverance working with*

them, it puts a smile on my face when they are given a task and we work hard on it and finally they can do it on their own and get it done!".

'Modelling the importance and benefits of disability employment within the community' was seen as an ethical imperative for some employers. One employer said that *"it shows we are trying to help, contribute to community and help others. It also assists those that have a disability because we show them that they are not just looked at for their disability and it shows others in the community that they are one of us and equal"*.

'Gaining an understanding of disability within a workplace context' was identified as important within some businesses as noted by one employer who said that *"by having these young people in our workplace we are increasing overall staff awareness of people with a disability"*.

It was also noted by one employer that *"Ticket to Work has given us exposure into the special schools once again so we can support more students and give them a chance"*.

8.6.3 Workplace planning and policy adaptations

When employers were asked ***"Did your business need to develop any new policies / practices or make any modifications to the workplace to enable student/s with disability to work in your business?"*** just over 80 per cent said they did not need to.

The majority advised that they already had sound diversity inclusion and occupational health and safety practices in place. However, a number of employers did note that they recognised a need to provide *"a higher level of pastoral care to their ASbAT employee"* and modify supervision arrangements to ensure that their employee had adequate assistance and mentoring in the workplace.

One small and relatively new organisation said that employing an ASbAT student has in fact assisted them to ensure their internal policies and arrangements are appropriate and that they see the implementation of these, particularly around workplace diversity, being something that will be of benefit to *"any other new employee that should join us in the future"*.

8.7 Employer recommendations

When asked ***"Would you recommend that other employers offer work experience or Australian School based Apprenticeships and Traineeships opportunities to students with disability?"*** almost all respondents (93.75 per cent) indicated that they would.

The rationale behind why respondent employers would promote the offering of work experience an ASbATs to business peers varied and took account of not only the value but the level of commitment required to provide young people with genuine and supported employment.

Some employers noted that participation in such workplace preparation activities allows their business to 'build community awareness of disability and the part that employers can play in providing an employment pathway to persons with disability'.

Others commented that other employers need to be made aware of the support and guidance that is available to them, through DES providers and GTOs, which makes the provision of assistance to students with disability in the workplace a very organised and guided model.

A number of employer respondents noted that it is something to be recommended to other businesses as it does provide significant business rewards but needs to be tempered with a commitment to investing in appropriate supervision and training in the workplace.

Overwhelming employers commented on that fact that participation in these activities 'introduces employers to young people that are loyal, enthusiastic, productive and grateful for the opportunity'.

With respect to ASbATs one employer respondent said *"you'd be crazy not to! There is so much energy because they feel so adequate about what they are doing and they are so motivated so that creates a positive energy and you can utilise their motivation to the businesses' advantage!"*

9. Schools involved in Ticket to Work

“Schools working with students with additional educational needs should accommodate to post-school service providers, learn their needs and limitations, share resources, and work as a team, perhaps engaging in joint professional development activities and involving post-school providers in planning meetings for students who are interested in their services. In this way you can generate a culture of commitment to the transition process and before long post-school providers, employers and further education agencies are making suggestions to schools about how, with their involvement, outcomes for students can be improved. However, active engagement of the school with the post-school world is the key” (Meadows, 2012).

Ticket to Work has found that schools have greatly appreciated a real partnership with a DES, GTO, RTO and other relevant organisations as the school does not necessarily have all of the skills and knowledge that these agencies do and recognise that involving them in student transition preparation can greatly enhance students’ transition to employment outcomes.

The partnership model that underpins Ticket to Work, and the outcomes it is delivering for school students, is something that is greatly appreciated by the special and mainstream secondary schools that are part of Local Ticket to Work Networks across Australia.

The following reviews feedback provided, over the course of individual telephone interviews, by six school Principals and teachers that are part of the Ticket to Work initiative. These representatives come from a mix of special and mainstream schools. Some work in schools located in metropolitan areas, while others represented schools in regional locations.

Their feedback covers key aspects of the Ticket to Work – the philosophy in which it is grounded, the underpinning partnership approach and the outcomes this approach is delivering to students with disability in Australian schools and the employers and parents that support them.

9.1 ‘Good Transition’ elements school comments

In speaking with Ticket to Work schools it is evident that they share the views portrayed in this report with respect to what should comprise a ‘good transition’. The schools spoken with have all too often seen students that they have cared for, supported and guided over many years fail to make a successful transition from school and into post-school employment. This is not only a devastating outcome for the young people but for the educators who hoped to see them move into a positive life beyond school. A number of schools noted that, because of the close knit community built within their schools and the strong bonds established with their students, they do receive return visits from past students and unfortunately this all too often is accompanied by stories of transition to employment failure and pervasive stigmatisation in the community.

Educators are advocates for increased career planning, workplace preparation, work experience and ASbAT access. Many try, within their limited budgets and time, to offer all of these transition elements to their students with disability cohorts. However, many recognise that they can’t do it alone and that partnerships with other agencies is one way of ensuring that their students gain access to external support agencies that can support their efforts to improve their students’ post-school employment outcomes.

Some educators have been ‘burned’ by previous efforts to engage in external transition partnerships whereby *“many promises were made but not delivered upon”*; making some schools reticent to try partnership approaches and are only now re-connecting with this approach under the formal guise of the Ticket to Work partnership.

Many of the interviewed educators praised the Ticket to Work model for being an ‘umbrella’ one that takes a holistic approach to youth transition, brings together agencies with a genuine interest in supporting students with disability and is outcomes oriented. Some also noted that Ticket to Work and is gaining validation and

approval from within their wider school community and contributing to their efforts to raise student and parental employment aspirations.

Paula Barnett, Principal of Berendale School and one of the Ticket to Work originators, noted the impressive transformation that her school has gone through in recent years. Paula said that *“through partnerships like Ticket to Work we are now seeing outstanding post-school student outcomes. Four years ago 90 per cent of our leaving students went into day services whereas today only seven per cent do. The vast majority of our students now move into employment or vocational training after finishing school. As a school we made a strategic decision to work with external partners to provide students with employment opportunities and to raise expectations”*.

Some schools indicated that taking on Ticket to Work, and the related activities of work experience and ASbATs, has necessitated some internal changes and ensuring that all staff understand and feel part of this new approach to employment transition preparation for students. As one school Principal said *“staff at my school celebrate when students gain an ASbAT. It’s a huge achievement. We are pretty good at communicating with teachers that their students will be out for the day, at work for the day. There is now a shared vision and our main goal is that this (Ticket to Work ASbATs) is for our student’s futures”*.

9.1.1 Career development and workplace preparation schools comments

Schools indicated that they conduct a variety of career development and workplace preparation internally, but that their provision and scope has been enhanced through the involvement of Ticket to Work partner organisations. Some schools are now drawing upon partners, particularly those working within the employment sectors (such as DES providers, GTOs and industry bodies), to attend lessons and speak to students about jobs, skills shortages and industries that are of interest to students. As one educator said *“the students really benefit from meeting these professionals – they listen, are attentive and it’s good for them to get a break from hearing their teachers drum home the same information all the time”*.

The Ticket to Work package is seen by some schools as creating an overall change in the nomenclature used within school communities. As one special school educator said *“for a long time special schools dwelled on developing ‘life skills’ and now we say ‘work’, ‘careers’ and ‘inclusion in the community’ is the main thing we do. These are the words we use in Ticket to Work meetings and now we are all using those words with our students, and the students are using those words with us too”*.

Two educators said that the success of older students participating in ASbATs is role modelling the feasibility of employment to younger students and to other parents. One teacher said that *“Ticket to Work is part of that shift and a really positive part of it is that we can really show the success of the students. We can show that our kids are working and show they are moving onto employment, and it’s quite a visible success as you can physically observe these transitions”*. Another said that *“Ticket to Work has been great in a way I did not expect, the Grade 7 students want to do the jobs the older ASbAT students are doing, because they heard about them working and know they get paid for it so they are a great role model for our students. The ASbAT students will tell you that themselves, especially those that used to play up! They now say they are really enjoying it and they know they have to be good; they really are growing up and doing an ASbAT have a lot to do with it”*.

Interestingly, the role modelling of employment to other students is not restricted to being amongst only other peers with disability. One special education teacher in a mainstream school said that *“other kids in the school (without disability) are envious that these students have ASbATs with key employers in town. It puts a positive focus for the students with disability in our school, as well as it looks good on their resume and opens doors for them”*.

9.1.2 Work experience schools comments

All schools identified work experience and/or volunteering as an important element of preparing young people to transition from school. As one school noted *“we offer work experience and community access when the students turn 14 because we know that the program is teaching them how to work. It allows the students to learn from making mistakes in the workplace. It also allows them to go somewhere and if they don’t like it then they can give it a go and do their best. If it still doesn’t work out then we can find somewhere else for them to do work experience”*.

All schools have provided these opportunities over many years however, for some, taking the next leap and converting a work experience placement into an open paid employment arrangement was not something that had been previously attempted or witnessed. This was not through lack of wanting, but in many cases the teachers did not have the time or the knowledge of how to do so. For those educators, Ticket to Work is transformative. Transformative in that partners can assist with the sourcing of student work experience opportunities and work towards converting that placement into a paid ASbAT arrangement.

9.1.3 Australian School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (ASbATs) schools comments

Only a handful of schools had participated in student ASbAT provision prior to engaging in Ticket to Work. Those that had, commented that it often didn’t work as coordinating and monitoring ASbATs was too time consuming for schools undertake alone, which at times led to a breakdown in arrangements. Schools were overwhelmingly positive about the role that ASbATs can play in the employment transition of their students, and as noted earlier ASbATs are increasingly seen within the school as something for young students to aspire to and for parents to request.

Almost all school interviewees had one or more stories about an individual student that had grown and developed enormously through participation in an ASbAT. As the following stories relate, participation in ASbATs often extend beyond the important development of workplace skills to also include concurrent positive psycho-social development outcomes or improved school attendance levels.

“I wondered if some of the students would be able to get out of bed for their ASbAT work! One example is of a student who found it difficult to get out of bed for school but I found out that since starting the ASbAT he is now jumping out of bed to get to work! As a result of this, his school attendance is actually improving and he has only been doing his ASbAT for the last four or five months. So this has really changed him and his attitude, he hasn’t missed a day of work and he is in a routine. As soon as he got the ASbAT something just clicked, he could see a future and he is now also achieving really well at school” (Teacher, special school).

“The change in the students has been immense. Their ability to see some future goals is quite evident. We’ve had one young lady who is doing a retail ASbAT whose whole level of independence has grown immensely. She comes from a dysfunctional background and now she has a goal to become independent and get herself well. The self esteem boost is amazing to watch. She’s also turning up for other programs in school after being a chronic truanter” (Teacher, special school).

Schools did note that ASbAT participation is not without its difficulties and is requiring schools to restructure lesson delivery, assist those that miss school whilst at work to catch up on missed studies and negotiate work days with employers that suit the needs of all parties. However, those that commented on this did note ASbATs are worth the extra effort at the school end to ensure the student is gaining genuine workplace experience. One teacher said that *“as the ASbAT students are on placement they do miss a bit of school but that is more general run of the mill issues with students and missing school. The other difficulty we have is finding the right time for them to miss it and it doesn’t always agree with what the employer wants and not a good day for our particular student to miss. It doesn’t always meet the school’s need but it’s taught us to facilitate for what the employer needs. This is more of a negotiation issue between the employer and school”*.

9.2 Partnership approach schools comments

As noted earlier, schools are extremely grateful to be involved in Ticket to Work as it brings together a variety of organisations and agencies that all share a common goal of improving students' employment and transition outcomes.

Ticket to Work has, for some schools, introduced them to natural youth transition allies that they weren't previously aware of. As one special school teacher said *"for us, Ticket to Work has been perfect. At the beginning we were reticent to take this on board because we've been burned by outsiders in the past. But the communication between us and all the agencies really works. I definitely think it's been due to the type of people working for these agencies as they are very communicative people and they also put the interests of the students first, just like we do"*.

Schools also noted that they have been impressed by the level of commitment and care that individual Ticket to Work partners offer to the students and parents, which in turn supports and reduces pressures at the school end. One teacher noted said that *"our kids don't do well in unfamiliar environments so the support they receive from the partners is significant and because of this their ASbAT achievements are very high"*. Another said that *"previously getting kids to the meetings and placements at the external agencies has proven difficult but since undertaking Ticket to Work the partners come here to meet with students which takes the pressure off us. That's been really positive for the kids and positive for the parents because the school is a familiar environment for them all"*.

The challenges of the working in partnership was discussed by some interviewees, but many highlighted that the Ticket to Work model is such that it minimises any partnership challenges or personality differences that may emerge. Many commented on the important role that having a Lead Agent coordinating Ticket to Work effort has had, as it means all partners know there is the one central organiser that can coordinate activities, meetings and mitigate any partnership challenges by virtue of holding that neutral party role.

Schools were particularly grateful to the DES, RTO and GTO partners that have been making up their Local Ticket to Work Networks for sharing their skills for the benefit of their schools and students. A number of schools recognised that these partners often went 'above and beyond' to make Ticket to Work operate effectively in their region or school. As one school said *"we don't hold all the answers but it's great to now be able to pick up the phone and get an answer from one of the experts in our partnership"*.

Schools were also welcome that, through the partnership, students were building connections and relationships with external agencies that are funded to assist students once they finish their education, for it is these agencies that can continue to support young people's post-school employment and training aspirations. As the Principal of a special school said *"from a school perspective we can't do it on our own and for many years we did try to, but there is no safety net for students when they leave our school. This sort of partnership puts a safety net around the student, enables them to be more successful and people outside of the school environment have greater skills in the work area than I do and can continue to work with them when they do leave our school"*.

9.3 Employer outcomes schools comments

Much, if not all, of Ticket to Work is predicated on the consistent involvement of employers during student transition journeys. Schools have been privy to the impact that connecting their students with employers has for both parties.

In reflecting on Ticket to Work ASbATs, one school said that *"we've been very impressed with the response from the employers, and impressed by how much the students achieve in the workplace. I also think the employers have also been impressed about how much the students can achieve in the workplace. But the*

employers need to be congratulated for working hard to train and support the students in their workplaces. They really stick their necks out to make it work”.

Schools recognised that the partners are opening doors to employers they wouldn't otherwise be able to. One teacher said that *“Some employers now ONLY give placements to those with disability so that's really positive”.*

Schools are also aware that while employers offer employment to persons with disability, it is important that it is for the right reasons. Schools were grateful that employers do open their doors to their students but they are often mindful that it is for the 'right reason' and not *“because they feel sorry for the students”.* One Principal articulated this well in saying that *“the intention of the employers taking on kids is really good but sometimes it's from the wrong motivation. Sometimes the motivations are due to the sympathy factor or because the employer can get financial incentives, it should be that they take these kids on because they can be great workers”.*

Similarly, some schools expressed concerns that when it comes to work experience employers are not always correcting the behaviour of students because the placement is only for a very short period of time. It was noted by one school that *“the work experience reports we sometimes we get back from employers are not always honest, they have not been truthful in what the students have achieved in the workplace and they let little things slide. We need to have this honesty at the beginning so we can gain truthful feedback so we can address any issues with student as they occur or when they return to school”.* This same school saw that Ticket to Work could play a role in addressing this matter at a national level.

9.4 Parent outcomes schools comments

Schools have witnessed the outcomes and positive effects that student participation in Ticket to Work activities is having on parents and carers.

The vast majority of schools that were interviewed used the words *“letting go”, “feeling confident”* and *“gaining support”* when discussing the impact that student participation in activities such as work experience and ASbATs is having on parents. One teacher said that *“Parents are letting go and feeling more confident we've had positive feedback from them to date. ASbAT parents are feeling more confident about their children and seeing great changes within them. One mum told us that her child had saved money from his wages to buy a gift for her and this is great as the child had never engaged that way before”.*

Some parents are feeling a sense of relief and some of their own worries are being assuaged because they are seeing their child holding down open employment. One teacher said that *“parents are very happy with Ticket to Work as they don't have to seek employment for their kids and it's a relief for them”.* However, some schools noted that some parents are still struggling to overcome the over-protectiveness that has been a feature of their life as the parent of a child with disability. One principal related the example of *“a student whose mother withdrew him from his outdoor horticulture ASbAT due to weather conditions in winter. That was the parents' perspective and it showed that it was really treating the disability like an illness and we need to help parents to move away from that perspective”.*

Other schools indicated that placing students in demonstrated employment that is accompanied by targeted support, a wage and vocational training is promoting the idea that employment is and should be the norm for their students with disability.

9.5 School endorsement of Ticket to Work

Many schools that were interviewed said that Ticket to Work is leading the way in improving student's transition to employment outcomes. Schools thanked their Local Ticket to Work Network partners for

supporting them as educators and for supporting their students to become confident and prepared future working members of our society.

All schools endorsed the national expansion of Ticket to Work with one saying that *“we are so excited that it’s now national because growing it will only make things better for kids with a disability”*.

In 2013 the pilot Ticket to Work schools in Melbourne were winners of a Victorian Department of Education and Early Childhood Development award for their involvement in the development and implementation of the model. Pleasingly, we have now been made aware that a school in Queensland has also just won a ‘Regional Education Showcase Award’ for its involvement in Ticket to Work and the number of successful ASbATs that have resulted out of the partnership there.

As one school put it *“Ticket to Work has really amazed us!”*

10. Local Ticket to Work Members

The partner organisations involved in a Local Ticket to Work Network are varied and built around the relevant organisations and agencies based in specific locations.

Local Networks members reflect the needs of the partnership group and available support agencies in local areas. Special and/or mainstream secondary schools are central partners, in some cases only one school forms part of the Local Network whereas in others multiple schools are involved. Members generally include Group Training Organisations (GTOs), Registered Training Organisations (RTOs), Workplace Learning Coordinators (WLCs – Victoria only), ASbAT Brokers (some states only), Australian Apprenticeship Centres (AACs), local councils, industry representatives and Local Employment Coordinators.

The following reviews feedback gathered, during a semi-structured focus group, with 23 Local Ticket to Work Network members. These representatives came from a number of states and territories, with some based in metropolitan areas and others based in regional areas.

10.1 Partnership approach comments local members

All agreed that the Ticket to Work partnership approach is the ideal vehicle for improving the employment outcomes of young people with disability and preparing them for a successful transition post-school.

The members saw the Local Network delivering three key outcomes. First, the provision of coordinated support and facilitating knowledge transference between all partners. Second, the provision of genuine employment opportunities to young people with disability. Third, working alongside schools to assist them in their efforts to raise the employment aspirations of young people and their parents.

The partnership model was deemed as one that allows for a diverse range of partners who share the common goal of improving the employment outcomes of young people with disability in their local community to collaborate, share individual sectoral knowledge and expertise and provide support to one another. It was noted by one focus group participant that *“each of us hold a little piece of the youth employment picture and by sharing our skills we can find the right way to assist the students”*. Another said that *“when we first started Ticket to Work in our area we held a forum that allowed each partner to present on their organisation’s goals and missions allowing us to get a better idea of just how each could play apart in Ticket to Work – we realised just how different we all are but also how our differences could complement each other when it comes to youth employment”*. Another said that *“We’ve found the partnership model absolutely invaluable due to the amount of knowledge each partner holds. If something falls through one of the partners can offer assistance or feedback and the support is called upon in this sense”*.

Local Ticket to Work Networks are committed to improving the transition and employment outcomes of young people with disability in their local communities. To achieve this, the partnership must work effectively and collaboratively, while the work generally involves a mix of strategic planning and the delivery of operational activities. As place-based and grassroots partnerships, each Local Network is supported by the National Ticket to Work Network to build their own approaches to achieving this goal, recognising that the cross-sector partners in the room are well placed to determine the most feasible mechanisms for their community and student cohort. It was agreed that the involvement of DES providers *“is important because they can identify what employment opportunities are available for the student and they can provide ongoing support to each young person and employer once an ASbAT is arranged”*. Another that has close involvement with a local GTO said *“their involvement is invaluable as they can advocate for individual students with their host employers and gain access to industry areas that are often hard to access”*.

Local Ticket to Work Networks are also playing important roles in assisting schools to break down barriers and change cultures within school communities. Some Local Networks found that some schools (or some staff

within a school) put up barriers to student participation. That is, some schools held low expectations of their student cohort and as result did not want to offer workplace opportunities as it was perceived their students would 'fail' or other schools only wanted to offer Ticket to Work activities to a small minority of students who were seen as 'worthy'. One Local Network partner shared the work they did to try and change this perception but had setbacks when one of their DES members pulled out of the partnership. *"Some schools believe the students aren't capable of doing an ASBAT. But a dedicated DES can assist with driving the schools to believe that the students are capable and identify suitable students. After our very dedicated DES worker left we've found it hard to regain the involvement of one of our schools"*.

Yet it was noted by a number of the focus group participants that many schools are working tirelessly to change the perceptions of parents and students, many of whom still consider disability to be a barrier to sustainable and fulfilling employment. It was commented on that some schools are now including presentations from Ticket to Work partners at parent information sessions, and having these partners discuss employment opportunities with students is helping in the school's efforts to change pervasive negative parental and student employment perceptions.

One participant noted that the Local Network is enabling parents to meet with a wide range of organisations that can assist their child while they are attending school as well as after they complete and that it is also helping to *"break down misguided fears that students will lose the Disability Support Pension should they undertake an ASbAT"*. The partnership is also seen by many as providing an opportunity for the cross-fertilisation of ideas between sectors and learning about how each can support the other.

10.2 National expansion of Ticket to Work comments local members

Much discussion was held regarding the national expansion of Ticket to Work and the benefit that having access to national advice and support is having at the local level.

All agreed that having access to national support is advantageous and necessary because the National Network can capture the knowledge, resources, strategies and practice and use this to support the Local Networks improve employment outcomes in their areas. Many saw the National Network as a platform by which advocacy for young people, employers, parents, schools and other stakeholders can be achieved. It was also seen that the national body has played a critical role in assisting regions to establish Local Networks through the provision of advice, resources and research attesting to need for improved transition to employment outcomes for all Australian young people with disability. One said that *"The new national Ticket to Work website is great. The research, stories and case studies on it makes it a tool for promoting the employment of young people with disability to our key stakeholders. The 'hidden library area' means that all Local Networks can access a pool of resources and tools whenever we want and wherever we are"*.

Participants also noted that having a national Ticket to Work body facilitated regular meetings between Local Networks who could then share ideas, discuss and source solutions to issues in their regions and build relationships that enable 'offline' discussions between members.

The intermediary of one Local Network said that *"having a National Ticket to Work Network has been fabulous and we need it to continue into the future as it provides a greater potential to share current practices and how connections and partners have been formed in other regions ... The National Network has given us the confidence to tackle the naysayers, who think these kids cannot work"*.

Another said that *"the national perspective has so much more credibility and potential to our Local Network rather than working in isolated pockets"*.

Overall, the National Ticket to Work Network was seen by participants as critical to strengthening existing Local Networks. It was also recognised as providing an overarching body that ensures consistency in message, access to research, regulates the establishment of new Local Networks, ensures all Local Networks are

working under a common philosophy and mission and is the glue that brings separate Local Networks together to collaborate.

There was overwhelming agreement that without the national body Ticket to Work could not be continued in the quality assured way that it currently does.

11. Recommendations and Considerations

This report highlights the need for a number of recommendations and considerations required to improve the school to work transitions of Australian young people with disability. Some of these suggest cultural changes; some suggest systemic ones, while others specifically reference the ongoing provision of the Ticket to Work partnership model. The propositions can be achieved through a mix of community, research and government contributions. These recommendations and considerations include the following:

- Build a culture whereby all members of the community demand that young people with disability aspire to labour force experience and participation
- Ensure that all young people with disability are exposed to the same level of career development, workplace preparation, work experience and ASbAT access as is afforded to their non-disability peers
- Alter Disability Employment Service (DES) guidelines to allow these experts to better support the transition of young people with disability (including working work experience, part-time work and other workplace preparation supports) prior to the final year of schooling
- Maintain the current DES guidelines arrangement which allows DES providers to support young people undertaking ASbATs in Year 11 and year 12.
- Encourage partnerships and allow for the braiding and blending of services to allow young people with disability to participate in employment, independence and personal development programs and services that best meet all of their needs
- Fund research to investigate the current state of transition and employment outcomes experienced by young Australians with disability and investigate other nation's policy responses to improving school to employment transition
- Fund the establishment of longitudinal research programs that track the transitions and employment outcomes of young people with disability over a sustained period of time post school completion
- Fund expansion of Ticket to Work as a nation-wide model that supports and improves the school to work transition of Australian young people with disability
- Fund the continuation of the National Ticket to Work Network which, in turn, will allow for the continued support of Local Networks and establishment of new ones.

12. Conclusion

This report evidences that the current transition to employment support systems are, by and large, failing Australian young people with disability and condemning these young people to a marginalised and dependant life with reduced opportunity for social and economic participation.

Australia compares poorly against other western nations when it comes to the preparation and support provided to young people with disability as they begin their transition to a life beyond school. Many of our young people, who could become active members of the Australian workforce, are dissuaded from doing so because of low employment expectations, limited or no exposure to genuine employment experience or career development during the schooling years. In addition, some young people are encouraged to participate in post-school day service programs and ADEs that can limit access to open employment opportunities.

This report articulates that there is huge potential to improve the long-term outcomes of young people with disabilities. Our current understanding on how best to achieve positive post-school transition outcomes includes:

- The importance of preparation for work
- The importance of transition points
- The importance of collaboration and partnerships
- The importance of exposure to real work
- The development of quality frameworks and evidence-based practice.

The recommendations and considerations presented in this report highlight the cultural and systemic changes required to increase the likelihood of these positive transition outcomes being delivered and achieved.

Ticket to Work has also demonstrated its ability and capacity to coordinate efforts, galvanise local resolve and provide an architecture for spotlighting and promoting strategies and practices that produce optimal employment and career achievement for young people with disability.

It has been shown that Ticket to Work does deliver results for young people with disability. Of the young people who had completed their ASbAT and were surveyed, 86 per cent have continued in ongoing open employment with the remaining 14 per cent currently in vocational education. This is an outstanding result in light of the data which shows that the vast majority of Australian young people with disability do not transition into ongoing open employment post-school.

As one Ticket to Work member said “it is time we stop the soft discrimination of our young people with disability through low expectations and ignoring the aspiration. Ticket to Work represents a great model for bringing together communities to ensure that these young people have every opportunity for a positive life beyond school”.

Glossary

AAC	Australian Apprenticeship Centre
ACFE	Adult, Community and Further Education
ADE	Australian Disability Enterprise
AHRC	Australian Human Rights Commission
ASbAT	Australian School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships (also known as School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship [SbAT]; School-based Apprenticeship [SbA] in some states)
ATAR	Australian Tertiary Admission Rank
DAAWS	Disabled Australian Apprentice Wage Support
DDA	Disability Discrimination Act (1992)
DEEWR	Department of Education, Employment and Workplace Relations (Australian Government) now broken into a number of departments including the Department of Social Services (DSS)
DES	Disability Employment Service
DEECD	Department of Education and Early Childhood Development (Victorian Government)
DLO	Disability Liaison Officer
DSR	Disability Support Register
DSS	Department of Social Services
GTO	Group Training Organisation
ISP	Individual Support Package
JCA	Job Capacity Assessment
LLEN	Local Learning and Employment Network
NDCO	National Disability Coordination Officer
NDIA	National Disability Insurance Agency
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SbA	School-based Apprenticeship
SBAT	School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship
SNA	Support Needs Assessment
SWL	Structured Workplace Learning
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
TTE	Transition to Employment
TTW	Transition to Work
VCAL	Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	Vocational Education and Training in Schools
WLC	Workplace Learning Coordinator

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