



Transition to Work and young people with disability

The Key Recommendation

Australia needs a youth specific, evidence-based employment support program to assist young people with disability transition from school to further education and training and ultimately into work.

This support needs to be adequately resourced and staffed by professionals with an understanding of the needs of young people with disability.

Transition To Work should be enhanced as a primary vehicle for such support.

This submission provides background to the current situation that young people with disability find themselves in. It also provides guidance on the way forward, drawing on our experience and the relevant research.

Background

Disability has been a persistent marker of disadvantage, one clear consequence of which is limited employment opportunities.

Australia has one of the lowest employment participation rates of people with disability in the OECD (OECD, 2010) and Australia is ranked 27th out of 27 OECD countries when it comes to relative poverty risk for people with a disability. Statistics suggest an overall general lack of employment opportunities for people with disability, (Australian Bureau of Statistics 2011).

Australia compares poorly on the international stage when it comes to preparing our young people with disability to successfully transition into 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, the lack of coordination and effective supports, and limited or no exposure to employment experience or career development during the schooling years.

Unfortunately, the situation for young people with disability was getting worse in an era of uninterrupted growth. The gap in terms of economic inclusion and employment participation between young people with disability and those without disability has widened over the last 20 years (Emerson & Llewellyn, 2014 Fortune, N., Llewellyn, G., Stancliffe, R. Badland, H., Emerson, E. 2021).^{1 2}

¹ Fortune, N., Llewellyn, G., Stancliffe, R. Badland, H., Emerson, E. (2021). Disadvantage facing young people with disability in Australia. University of Melbourne. <https://doi.org/10.26188/14531763>
Available at: Disadvantage facing young people with disability in Australia

² Emerson, E., & Llewellyn, G. (2014). *Left Behind 2014: Monitoring the Social Inclusion of Young Australians with Self Reported Long Term Health Conditions, Impairments or Disabilities 2001-2012* (2203-7381).



The situation is expected to deteriorate even further in the wake of the COVID-19 crisis, without effective intervention.

Young Australians 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; indicators of long term, and often life-long disadvantage.³

Young people with disability are:

- 4 times more likely to get their main income source from government pension or allowances compared to other young people (44% to 11%).⁴
- most likely to experiencing the risk factors of disadvantage and to have multiple layers of disadvantage.
- They may be vulnerable to abuse and neglect, and are more likely than the general population to require child protection services.⁵
- over-represented in the criminal justice system.⁶
- much more likely to have mental health issues
- twice as likely not to had completed Year 12 or its equivalent (44% 89% of in the 20 to 24 age group).^{7 8}

The transition from school to employment for young people with disabilities is often difficult and many neither pursue further study nor gain employment.

This steady decline in employment participation over the last 20 years for young people with disability is an indicator of long term, and often life-long disadvantage.

This is costly for government, society and the individual. Young people with disability are at particular risk of being caught in the welfare dependency trap (Deloitte Access Economics, 2011).

It is imperative that these trends are reversed, especially as it has been found that if young people with significant disability do not engage in mainstream employment by age 21, it is unlikely that they ever will (Siperstein, Parker, & Drascher, 2013).

We need to break the link between disability and poverty, the key to doing that is to focus on supporting young people with disability to take an employment pathway.

Transition to Work and DES

³tictetowork.org.au/media/download_resources/word/7. [Transitions to Employment of Australian Young People with Dis_HSiO079.pdf](#)

⁴ [People with disability in Australia 2020: in brief \(aihw.gov.au\)](#).

⁵ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/419adf38-dc20-4e73-b17d-a2af1fd505a6/AW15-4-8-Vulnerable-young-people-aged-15-24.pdf.aspx> [Chapter 4.8 Vulnerable young people \(aged 15–24\) \(feature article; Australia's welfare 2015\)\(AIHW\)](#)

[Chapter 4.8 Vulnerable young people \(aged 15–24\) \(feature article; Australia's welfare 2015\)\(AIHW\)](#)⁶

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/getmedia/419adf38-dc20-4e73-b17d-a2af1fd505a6/AW15-4-8-Vulnerable-young-people-aged-15-24.pdf.aspx>

⁷ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/data?page=3>

⁸ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/australias-welfare/secondary-education-school-retention-completion>



The consultation paper states: “In Transition to Work young people can get intensive pre-employment support to help them achieve their employment and education goals.”

Transition to Work providers address participants’ needs through a holistic and personalised approach that builds their human capability. The service was designed to ensure providers work alongside disengaged and disadvantaged young people, establishing trust with them and enlisting them as an agent of their own change.⁹

Young people with disability are one of the most disadvantaged groups of young people transitioning from education to employment (Winn & Hay, 2009).¹⁰ Despite this, they are not a target group of Transition to Work.

Young people with a disability make up 1 in 10 of the 15–24 year age group¹¹ yet representation in Transition to Work inflow population is only 5%. Many young people with disability are directed away from Transition to Work.¹²

Young people are directed to Disability Employment Service (DES) rather than Transition to Work. DES is a compliance-based job placement service. It does not currently have youth specific interventions. It does not provide ‘intensive pre-employment support’ to help them achieve their employment and education goals. Participants under 25 make up 13.3% of the DES population.

The DES risk adjusted funding mechanism, implemented in 2018, had the effect of reducing funding for young people with disability. Generally in DES, young people are allocated less funding than would be the case with Transition to Work providers.

The DES mid-term review recommended that more proactive support for young people, noting that early intervention can reduce risk of long-term unemployment and reliance on income support.¹³ It found providers lack specialist skills and that DES program design restricted the ability of providers to address the specific needs of individual participants and employers.

Young people in DES generally are not receiving youth specific supports that address their needs in a holistic approach.

The Transition to Work funding model is weighted more to service fees than Outcome Payments and gives equal value to Employment and Education Outcomes. This is unlike DES, where the focus is on outcome payments.

⁹ www.dese.gov.au/transition-work/resources/transition-work-consultation-paper

¹⁰ Hall, S., Fildes, J., Liyanarachchi, D., Plummer, J. and Reynolds, M. (2020) Young, Willing and Able - Youth Survey Disability Report 2019. Mission Australia: Sydney, NSW

¹¹ <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/disability/people-with-disability-in-australia/contents/education-and-skills/engagement-in-education>

¹² Referrals to DES were around one per cent of the exit reasons recorded. www.dese.gov.au/transition-work/resources/transition-work-interim-evaluation-report

¹³ <https://www.dss.gov.au/disability-and-carers-programs-services-disability-employment-services/mid-term-review-of-the-disability-employment-services-des-program>

The consultation paper states that Transition to Work enables upfront investments in the capabilities of the young person, helping to protect them against the long-term scarring effects of labour market recessions.¹⁴ It requires that Transition to Work providers are able to identify training and education opportunities which will help young people develop the skills and attributes employers are looking for. Young people with disability would benefit from this investment based model, rather than the current compliance based employment model of DES.

Young People with Disability

Young people with disability are young people first and require youth specific support as well as disability employment expertise.

The current employment support systems are largely failing young people with disability in Australia. Consequently, this is condemning these young people to a marginalised and dependant life with reduced opportunity for social and economic participation.¹⁵

Young people with disabilities are represented in other specific youth populations such as “early school leavers”, “vulnerable” and “disconnected” youth. Policy analysts and researchers have suggested developing a single overarching federal policy that addresses the challenges faced by (all) youth in transition (Fernandes, 2012; Moreno, Honeycutt, McLeod, & Gill, 2013).¹⁶

Improving the transition from school to work for young adults with disability has been a mainstay of many inquiries and reports in Australia (including those listed below); however, the many positive recommendations for transition support for these young people have not been realised to any significant extent and the actual process of post school transition has remained ill-defined.¹⁷

The enquiries and reports are as follows:

- [Mid-term Review of the Disability Employment Services \(DES\) Program 2021](#)
- [Looking to the future: Review of senior school pathways 2020](#)
- [Unique Individuals, Broad Skills 2018](#)
- [National Disability Strategy Secondary implementation plan Driving Action 2016](#)
- [Willing to Work paper \(2016\)](#)
- [NDIS Participant Employment Strategy 2019 – 2022](#)
- [National Disability Employment Framework Discussion Paper, DSS 2015](#)
- [Disability Care and Support Inquiry Report, Productivity Commission, 2011](#)
- [A Stronger Fairer Australia, Government of Australia, 2010](#)
- [WORKability II: National Inquiry into Employment and Disability, Australian Human Rights Commission 2005](#)
- [National Disability Strategy 2010-2020 report to COAG 2012](#)
- [Laying the Groundwork 2011-2014, FaHCSIA 2012](#)
- [Shut Out Report, National People with Disabilities and Carers Council and FAHCSIA, 2009](#)
- [National Mental Health & Disability Employment Strategy, DEEWR, 2008](#)

¹⁴ R Ranasinghe, E Chew, G Knight & G Siekmann, 2019; ILO, 2011; OECD, 2016

¹⁵ <https://tictetowork.org.au/news/improving-school-transitions-get-australian-young-/>

¹⁶ The 2020 Federal (USA) Youth Transition Plan: A Federal Interagency Strategy www.dol.gov/sites/dolgov/files/odep/pdf/20150302-fpt.pdf

¹⁷ <https://www.cyda.org.au/resources/details/85/post-school-transition-the-experiences-of-students-with-disability>

- [A New System for Better Employment and Social Outcomes](#), DSS 2015
- [Disability Standards for Education 2005 2020 Review](#)
- [The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions 2009](#) and
- [Evaluation of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions 2014](#)

The right to work and gain a living is enshrined in article 27 in the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities (United Nations, 2007).¹⁸ The Convention stipulates that “Learners with disabilities receive the support to ensure the effective transition from learning at school to vocational and tertiary education, and finally to work.”¹⁹ The National Disability Strategy identified the need for a high quality program designed to facilitate a smooth transition from education to employment.²⁰

Yet from an Australian perspective, transition to employment support systems is failing young people with disability, resulting in reduced opportunity for social and economic participation and the marginalisation of this group.²¹

The Transition to Work initiative was developed in recognition that employment programs designed for adults are not ‘fit for purpose’ for young people. Within the general cohort, young people with disability need tailored young and disability specific employment supports.

Young Australians with disability have similar career and financial aspirations to other young people, yet are more than twice as likely not to be employed or satisfied with their employment opportunities and job prospects. During the transition from school, young people often encounter great uncertainties and tremendous developmental challenges. These issues may be more stressful with the presence of a disability, thereby increasing the risk of social exclusion amongst young people transitioning who have a disability (Kraemer & Blacher, 2001; Winn & Hay, 2009; Yu, 2009).

Having a job is a key aspect of adulthood and significant in facilitating social participation, financial stability, self-worth, and quality of life (Jahoda et al, 2009; Lövgren et al, 2014).

Children and Young People with Disability Australia (CYDA) states in its recent submission: “Tinkering around the edges of existing employment programs is money wasted unless proper government investment is dedicated to understanding what works and developing a coordinated, evidence-based approach”.²²

¹⁸ https://tickettowork.org.au/media/research_submissions_files/After-School-Jobs-Literature-Review_Final.pdf

¹⁹ UN Committee on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, General Comment No. 4 (2016) Article 24: Right to inclusive education, 2 September 2016, CRPD/C/GC/4, available at: <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/CRPD/Pages/GC.aspx>

²⁰ Department of Social Services (DSS) (2016) National Disability Strategy Secondary implementation plan Driving Action 2015 – 2018 Australia

²¹ Thiele, R., Bigby, C., Tideman, M. (2018). Young people with intellectual disabilities and work in after school jobs: a literature review. Living with Disability Research Centre, La Trobe University: Bundoora, VIC

²² [FINAL CYDA-submission-to-the-National-Disability-Employment-Strategy_May2021.pdf \(dss.gov.au\)](#)



What we need

A report tabled at the Disability Royal Commission revealed that for people with disability, at each step of the transition from education to work there was generally a downward bias away from 'best-practice' services towards 'compliance-driven' service providers. There were few forces directing individuals into the 'best-practice' flows. 'Good leadership as well as appropriately resourced professionals are both required for high quality services (and instances of both were limited)'.²³

We need to turn this around.

Australia needs a youth specific, evidence-based employment support program to assist young people with disability transition from school to further education and training and ultimately into work.

This support needs to be adequately resourced and staffed by professionals with an understanding of needs of young people with disability.

Transition To Work should be enhanced as a primary vehicle for such support.

It is clear what needs to be done as there is a substantial body of evidence and research both here and overseas that shows what works in ensuring employment success.^{24 25 26 27 28 29 30}

²³ Buchanan, J., Smith-Merry, J., Yen, I., Drinkwater, A., & Smith, B. (2020). Disadvantage, disability and vocational education and training: A research report. Sydney: Centre for Disability Research and Policy. ISBN: 978-0-6487544-1-1 [EXP.0062.0001.0022.pdf \(royalcommission.gov.au\)](#).

²⁴ Valuation of Ticket to Work outcomes: [tictetowork.org.au/media/download_resources/word/Ticket to Work valuation of key outcomes 2021 kZjsjSS.pdf](https://tictetowork.org.au/media/download_resources/word/Ticket_to_Work_valuation_of_key_outcomes_2021_kZjsjSS.pdf)

²⁵ tictetowork.org.au/media/download_resources/word/7._Transitions_to_Employment_of_Australian_Young_People_with_Dis_HSiO079.pdf

²⁶ Wilson, E. & Campain, R. (2020). Fostering employment for people with intellectual disability: the evidence to date, Hawthorn, Centre for Social Impact, Swinburne University of Technology

²⁷ Carter, Erik & Austin, Diane & Trainor, Audrey. (2012). Predictors of Postschool Employment Outcomes for Young Adults With Severe Disabilities. *Journal of Disability Policy Studies*. 23. 50-63. 10.1177/1044207311414680.

²⁸ Mazzotti, Valerie L.; Rowe, Dawn A.; Kwiatek, Stephen; Voggt, Ashley; Chang, Wen-Hsuan; Fowler, Catherine H.; et al. (2020): Secondary Transition Predictors of Postschool Success: An Update to the Research Base. *SAGE Journals*. Collection. <https://doi.org/10.25384/SAGE.c.5171883.v1> https://transitionta.org/sites/default/files/news/Predictors_Mazzotti_2020_CDTEI.pdf

²⁹ Sheppard, L., Harrington, R. & Howard, K. (2017). Effective school to employment transitions. Research to Action Guide, Rapid Review. NDS Centre for Applied Disability Research. Available at www.cadr.org.au https://tictetowork.org.au/media/download_resources/word/A_Rapid_Review.pdf

³⁰ www.tennesseeworks.org/getting-to-work/



In the Australian context, the transition from school for individuals with a disability is complicated by a disparate and fragmented group of service agencies providing a range of services, along with, at times, a deep-seated prejudice towards people with disabilities in the marketplace.³¹ There is a ‘siloiing’ of sectors and programmes which is a barrier to effective employment outcomes. Siloiing creates fragmentation, duplication and inadequate levels of support for young people with disability.^{32 33}

We need the education, training and employment sectors working in concert to improve employment outcomes as no single system or program – not a school, employment service or community service - can pay for and provide the array of support needed to effectively meet the needs of youth with disabilities in transition to employment. However, when coordinated and scaffolded, these resources can produce positive (and cost effective) outcomes for young people with disability, well beyond the scope of what any single employment program or system can hope to mobilise on its own.³⁴

In submission to the National Disability Employment Strategy the Melbourne Disability Institute states: The interface between education and employment is critical. Many young people with disability leave school without essential foundational skills for work, with low self-confidence, and with few networks to support. ‘Intensive early investment to bridge that gap will avert snowballing costs stemming from labour market exclusion over a young person’s life course.’³⁵

While not underestimating the challenges, the Ticket to Work model has demonstrated in significant numbers that young people can thrive in open employment when prepared and supported through a coordinated approach. The Model developed from scoping ‘what works’ in other countries (see Appendix.)

The gap between young people with disability and those without need not widen even further: there is no need for another consultation or government inquiry to consider the matter when there is more than enough evidence on what works. There is a proven, cost-effective way forward.

³¹ Winn, S., & Hay, I. (2009). Transition from School for Youths with a Disability: Issues and Challenges. *Disability & Society*, 24(1), 103-115.

³² Sitlington, P. L., & Clark, G. M. (2006). Transition education and services for students with disabilities (4th ed.). Boston: Allyn & Bacon.

³³ Winn, S., & Hay, I. (2009). Transition from School for Youths with a Disability: Issues and Challenges. *Disability & Society*, 24(1), 103-115. doi:10.1080/09687590802535725

³⁴ National Governors’ Association Center for Best Practice. (2004). Early lessons from states to promote youth development’. Washington, DC.

³⁵ Olney S, Deane K & Bonyhady B (2021) *Melbourne Disability Institute Response to the National Disability Employment Strategy Consultation paper April 2021* Melbourne Disability Institute, University of Melbourne engage.dss.gov.au/uncategorised-submissions/1620978005/



We would welcome the opportunity to discuss our submission and the Ticket to Work findings in more detail and to answer any questions you may have.

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National Disability Services is the peak industry body for non-government disability services. It represents service providers across Australia in their work to deliver high-quality supports and life opportunities for people with disability. Its Australia-wide membership includes over 1,150 non-government organisations which support people with all forms of disability. Its members collectively provide the full range of disability services — from accommodation support, respite and therapy to community access and employment. NDS provides information and networking opportunities to its members and policy advice to State, Territory and Federal governments.

Ticket to Work is an initiative of NDS that aims to improve open employment participation in Australia by galvanising local resolve, advocating for systemic change, and providing an architecture for optimal employment and career achievement for young people with disability. This paper has been informed by the experience, research and evaluations of Ticket to Work.

Appendix

Ticket to Work

Ticket to Work an initiative of National Disability Services (NDS) has been scoping, trialling, testing and evaluation evidence-based practice in Australia to improve youth employment.

Ticket to Work was established in response to poor and falling school to work transitions for young Australian with disability, knowing that unsuccessful transition from school holds lifelong economic and social implications for the individual, their families and our society.

While not underestimating the challenges, Ticket to Work has demonstrated in significant numbers that young people can thrive in open employment when



prepared and supported through a coordinated approach. The model developed from scoping 'what works' in other countries.

Ticket to Work's connected approach has delivered 1,691 jobs for young people with significant disability, the majority with an intellectual impairment from special schools.

Empirical research is the basis of the Ticket to Work model

National Disability Services has collaborated with researchers and evaluators, to develop a large body of work around effective school to work transition for young people with disability.

The recent evaluations on the elements of the Ticket to Work model have shown:

- The Ticket to Work model has number of social and fiscal benefits (Social Ventures Australia, 2019).
- Ticket to Work participants post-school are substantially more likely than a similar comparison group to:
 - work in open employment
 - complete year 12
 - participate in the labour force
 - be involved in community and socially active (Atkinson, Christian, Cassidy, Rutherford & Hawkins, 2019)
- Ticket to Work's approach is working for key stakeholders (evaluation of employers, parents and network members) and is in line with international good practice and research (Atkinson et al., 2019; Kellock, 2019; Wakeford, 2019).
- That there is a need to focus on how to get different sectors working in concert to improve employment outcomes and raises expectations (Meadows, 2019).
- That Ticket to Work supports effective integration of mainstream and disability supports, and reduces duplication (Atkinson et al., 2019).

Employment, education and training outcomes post school

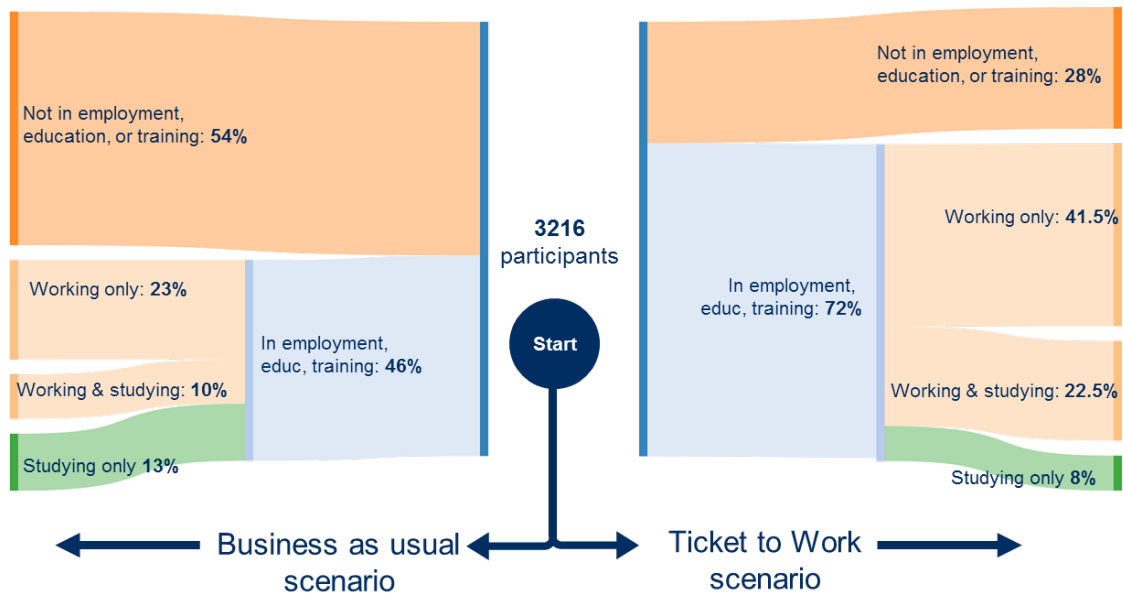


Figure indicates findings of a comparison study - SVA 2021 ³⁶

Young people with disability that had opportunity to participate in work and career development opportunities at school showed improved employment, education and training outcomes compared to young people that did not have Ticket to Work support (Business as usual).

³⁶tictetowork.org.au/media/download_resources/word/Ticket_to_Work_valuation_of_key_outcomes_2021_kZJsJSS.pdf



Characteristics of the Ticket to Work model

The **Ticket to Work model** was developed by combining various 'success factors' from research literature and related international experience to improve social and economic participation for young people with disability.

Ticket to Work prepares young people for the world of work, providing them with an open employment pathway in their transition from school through a combination of vocational/career development and early contact with work environments.

Community partnerships are developed and leverage the power of cross-sectoral partnerships to provide individualised support, blending existing resources, coordinating, scaffolding all relevant supports for young people with significant disability.

These partnerships are coordinated by an intermediary, which supports development of a local community partnership, including schools, employment services, training organisations, post school providers and employers.

Ticket to Work:

- brings together disability-specific and mainstream representatives from a variety of sectors to work strategically and collaboratively
- supports young people to gain access to early experiences that positively influence their views of themselves as workers
- prepares young people with disability for the workplace and gives them an employment pathway that is typical of other young adults
- meets the needs of employers, providing enhanced retention and profitability.

Ticket to Work Evaluations

Ticket to Work in its aim to improve pathways and opportunities has completed a number of investigation and evaluation into the elements of model. These can be accessed at <https://tackettowork.org.au/research/> These include:

Title: Ticket to Work Valuation of key outcomes (2020) by Social Venture Australia (SVA)

Focus: SVA took a conservative approach to evaluating the post school outcomes of Ticket to Work over a 3 year period. They found the Ticket to Work model has the ability to significantly reduce government expenditure while increasing the number of young people with disability to gain meaningful employment and experience improved social outcomes.

[Access the 'SVA – Ticket to Work valuation of key outcomes report'](#)

[Access the infographic summary of report](#)

Title Beneficial for all: The After School Jobs Project (2021) by Dr William Crisp



Focus: This report explores a three year project that aimed to create opportunities for secondary school students with a disability to participate in after school jobs. The evaluation provides an overview of the broad policy context, details of the Ticket to Work model, the rationale for the project, and lists the project outcomes.

[Access the 'Beneficial for all: The after school jobs project' report](#)

Title: Employer Experience of employing young people with Intellectual/Cognitive disability (2020) by Peter Kellock

Focus: This paper reports on the experience of employers who offer work opportunities to young people with intellectual disabilities. The paper considers aspects of the employer experience and how best to meet the needs of employers in order to increase the number of job opportunities available for young people with intellectual disabilities.

[Access the 'Employer experience' report](#)

Title: Parent engagement in school to work transition for their child with disability (2020) by Michelle Wakeford

Focus: Having a supportive family and social relationships is one of the main factors associated with a successful transition from school or vocational programmes to employment. This paper explores the literature regarding parents' experience of their child with a disability's transition from school and looks at the experience of parents involved in Ticket to Work.

[Access the 'Parent engagement' report](#)

Title: Collaboration – the key to unlocking a successful future for young people with disability (2019) by Dr. Denis Meadow

Focus: This paper examines the literature and explores interagency collaboration as a mechanism to improve post-school transitions for students with a disability.

[Access the 'Collaboration' report](#)

Title: Ticket to Work Network Analysis (2019) by ARTD Consultants

Focus: This report provides the findings from a partnership assessment for nine Ticket to Work networks operating in five Australian states. It identifies key successes and challenges of Ticket to Work partnerships and how they work to support young people with disability into employment.

[Access the 'Network Analysis' report](#)

Title: Effective school to employment transitions for young people with disability. A Rapid Review of the Literature (2017). Sheppard, L., Harrington, R. & Howard, K.



Focus: This Research to Action Guide articulates the key components of best practice for supporting the transition from school to employment for young adults with disability in Australia, based on the best available evidence.

[Access the 'Rapid review of the literature'](#)

Other reports/research/submission can be found TickettoWork.org.au