

**CAE submission to:
'Stronger futures for all young Victorians: a discussion paper on the youth transitions system'**

The Centre for Adult Education (CAE) is pleased to have the opportunity to respond to this discussion paper.

The *CAE Strategic Framework 2009-2013* was officially launched in March 2009 by Jacinta Allan, MP (then Minister for Skills and Workforce Participation). This framework strongly positions CAE to adapt and continually meet the changing needs of learners, communities, businesses, industries and governments in an ever-changing global environment. Through this framework CAE is well positioned to support COAG targets.

The *CAE Strategic Framework 2009-2013* outlines four key areas of learning:

Learning for Learning - Supporting people to successfully engage in learning;

Learning for Earning - Assisting learners to develop, update and enhance skills for employment;

Learning for Business - Designing workforce development solutions to improve and sustain business performance; and

Learning for Living - Enriching life through access to diverse learning experiences.

CAE actively promotes the value of learning for all by ensuring that it provides strong transitions, employment skills, enterprise productivity and an enhanced life for all learners, regardless of life stage or personal circumstances.

In 2009 3,285 young people in the 15-24 year old age group engaged in learning programs at CAE.

CAE supports strong transitions for young people through all key learning areas and specifically through the work of CAE College. CAE College is one of three learning centres at CAE. It provides a comprehensive and supportive adult learning environment for individuals to achieve their vocational, personal and further study goals. Learning options range from foundation skills to tertiary pathways.

CAE College develops independent learning skills through the provision of a range of flexible, adaptive and e-learning alternatives. Learners come from all parts of Melbourne and range in age from 16 years old through to mature age.

The programs delivered in this area in 2009 include:

- Victorian Certificate of Education (VCE)
- Diploma of Liberal Arts (DLA)
- Victorian Certificate of Applied Learning (VCAL)
- ReTale (a program including the full Certificate III in Retail)
- General Education
- English as a Second Language
- Languages other than English

CAE College successfully delivered a wide range of learner-centred programs and has had a number of significant achievements in 2009. These include the rapidly growing VCAL and Youth Pathways Programs, the diversity of VCE subjects on offer at CAE for both young and mature-age learners, the tertiary pathways program Diploma of Liberal Arts, and the many different learning options provided to learners in ESL and adult literacy.

To further strengthen opportunities and outcomes for 15-24 year olds, CAE has developed a personalised learning model for all learners at CAE College. Many learners at CAE College have experienced learning disruptions. This model allows for learners to develop an individual learning and development plan that helps identify the impact of learning disruption. The learner articulates academic, learning, work or career aspirations as well as personal development needs. Upfront literacy, numeracy and learning styles diagnostics are integral to the development of the plan. A learning program is designed for each learner as a result of the planning process. The learner's progress is monitored through the assignment of a 'learning coach' who will engage with the learner throughout their entire enrolment at CAE.

Aspects of the model have been trialled in 2010. The model will be fully operational in 2011.

How can we continue to improve the current youth transitions system?

Q. What form should the proposed literacy and numeracy standards take?

A. The proposed literacy and numeracy standards should conform to the Australian Core Skills Framework (ACSF) so that assessment and reporting is in line with the national standard. This is especially helpful in the cases of learners who move states.

Q. In what other ways can the acquisition of literacy and numeracy skills be strengthened?

A. Language, Literacy and Numeracy (LLN) skills should be embedded in all curriculum and training packages. Teacher training for all sectors must include LLN and be part of ongoing professional development.

Support for making informed education and training choices.

Q. Will a career plan strengthen young people's engagement with education and their capacity to make informed study and career choices both during schooling and in subsequent education, training and employment settings?

A. A work or career plan is a feature of CAE's personalised learning approach. The model at CAE is an individual learning and development plan that encompasses LLN and learning styles diagnostics. Importantly, it incorporates both short and long term goals that reflect the learner's personal, academic and employment related aspirations.

The strength of the CAE model is that it is not a one-size-fits-all. We understand that each learner who comes to us is a unique individual with a different set of learning skills. We understand that for some learners it is difficult to express career goals and that learning to learn and having positive experiences of work come first. We appraise each learner individually and provide a flexible, tailored learning approach that aligns with the person ideas at a point.

At CAE, rather than focussing on the narrow scope of a linear career plan, we provide opportunities for personal development, qualifications and employment skills. Of course concrete and measurable action plans are still needed; however, these plans should offer a range of flexible learning options and contain integrated components like projects and personal development. CAE is in a very good position to offer this holistic approach to learning because of our wide range of informal courses that work well to supplement the formal learning process.

Q. What other actions should be taken to ensure that sound career development services are available to all young Victorians?

A. Whether provided as an institution, school-based or external service, career vocational advice needs to be provided by qualified professionals who have breadth and depth of understanding of the opportunities for young people. They need to be well versed in the myriad of pathways to achieve desired outcomes. Any service must be able to address the need for employability skills as well as the kinds of qualifications and work experience required to be successful.

Q. How can business/industry be more involved in assisting students' career choices?

A. By being mentors, coaches, and providing authentic work are key.

The benefits of business being involved is two-way. Not only do students benefit from firsthand exposure to work, employers benefit from being mentors, coaches or through involvement in projects that assist them to understand working with young people and traversing the inter-generational gap.

By way of example CAE delivers the successful ReTale Melbourne program – a tailored program for young people who have experienced disrupted learning – in conjunction with industry partners Victoria Police, City Local Learning and Employment Network and City of Melbourne. The ReTale program runs for 12 weeks and includes the full Certificate II in Retail, support from CAE's Youth Pathways Officers and Counsellors and a weekly program with a group of Mentors from the Victoria Police. Following the completion of the program, many learners have pursued their own pathways. These include work placements and continuing education in VCE, VCAL, Retail, Hospitality, Tourism, Childcare, Nursing and Graphic Design

Arrangements that support and encourage young people to complete qualifications.

Q. What would further strengthen the delivery partnership between government and non-government schools and between schools and VET providers?

A. Equitable funding arrangements between sectors. Data and information sharing and the strengthening of VET Clusters. Funding – support for networks such the Victorian Applied Learning Association (VALA).

Q. What additional actions should Government take to support young people to complete initial qualifications in the VET sector?

A. No cost for the initial qualification.

Q. Would greater levels of institutional specialisation in curriculum and qualification delivery result in improved quality of provision, and support increased student attainment of Year 12 or an equivalent vocational qualification?

A. There needs to be a diversity of provision in locations that are accessible. Specialisation may result in barriers to participation due to distance, travel time and cost and community disconnect.

Q. How should schools, VET providers and system authorities use the new transparency and accountability arrangements in Victorian schools and Victorian Student Number to improve the completion rate of Year 12 or equivalent qualifications?

A. The new transparency and accountability arrangements could assist in capacity to determine learner needs and where a specific learning experience has led to disengagement.

Q. What other strategies could be introduced to lift qualification completion rates for young people in the schools and VET sectors?

A. The eligibility criteria should be waived for all qualification levels for people under the age of 24. Young learners should be able to undertake as many qualifications and certificates as they choose so as to enhance employability, aid personal growth and keep engaged with learning.

Systems that assist students to move effectively between courses, institutions and sectors.

Q. How can student's transition to VET sector, higher education and full-time employment be improved?

A. Work needs to be done to improve the parity of esteem between sectors and courses. For many the VCE represents the race to tertiary entrance score at the cost of good general education and a healthy self esteem. There is a need for universities to consider other entry criterion for young people as it does for more mature learners. A linear pathway is only one way to transit. More often learners weave their way through a mix of learning and working that may lead to qualifications attainment. Articulation pathways (both ways) need to be mapped. Institutionalising the Credit Matrix would be a good start.

Q. What other steps are required to assist schools' connection to the world of work?

A. Authentic work placement. Some employers need training to support young people effectively. The VET sector is well placed to provide such training (eg, TAA) Employers should have eligibility criteria waived for such training.

Reverse industry release programs funded by government would be very beneficial- there is little incentive for an employer to release as a staff member for short term teaching experience even though this would have a great impact on students.

Provide incentives for 'retired' workers from skills shortages areas, such as some trades, to undertake teacher training; perhaps using a traineeship model for mature workers. VET-Industry taster programs are ideal and should attract government funding.

Q. What other initiatives would improve school to tertiary education articulation and support young people to take advantage of the expansion of these sectors?

Teacher exchange and development programs between sectors would be beneficial.

Articulation within the VET sector and from VET to higher education

- Q. Should efforts to improve VET to higher education and credit arrangements focus on particular occupational pathways and skill priority areas, for example in engineering and nursing?**
- A. Credit arrangements should be identified for all qualification pathways. Not all occupation skills shortages can be predicted therefore a more holistic approach is needed and the focus on skill shortages should not be to the exclusion of other areas.
- Q. How can governments ensure that reforms to the VET sector and higher education sector address both skill needs and student demand for particular qualifications?**
- A. There should be no caps on the number or level of qualifications for people under the age of 24 as it leads to a risk of disengagement. Learners should be encouraged to gain a variety of foundational certificates.
- Q. How can governments improve provision and articulation arrangements to better support young people, especially in regional and rural areas, to access tertiary qualifications without needing to re-locate?**
- A. By strengthening the Adult and Community Education (ACE) sector to become learning partners with TAFE and Universities. Hundreds of ACE providers are located in communities where there is no access to TAFE or University. They could become learning hubs for the delivery of tertiary programs. Investment in learning technologies and strategies could assist this process. Local ACE staff are well placed to coordinate and supervise.

Opportunities for young people to re-engage with education and training

- Q. How can Youth Connections be implemented in Victoria to most effectively re-engage young people with education and training?**
- A. Ensure a well managed and transparent referral system.
- Q. Should LLENs be provided some flexibility to facilitate and broker service provision to young people 20 and over, in line with the flexibility in Youth Connections service provision?**
- A. Yes.
- Q. Is the range of qualifications on offer to re-engage young people adequate? (Existing qualifications include VCAL, adult VCE, the General Certificate of Adult Education and the Diploma of Further Education).**

In general yes. However the flexibility for training organisations to develop and deliver short sharp programs, with funded work placement is required. Skill sets that can be built on are important tools for re-engagement. There is a role for the recognition of informal learning and pre-accredited programs that lie outside the formal recognition system. These are short courses designed for learners to gain confidence and skills with a view to move accredited courses. ACE fund ACE providers to deliver these programs and has invested in the Quality Pre-accredited Delivery project, one of the projects funded through the ACE Capacity initiative. CAE has been contracted to lead this initiative.