

The Government's Response

The Parliament of Victoria Economy and Infrastructure Committee *Inquiry into sustainable work outcomes for disadvantaged jobseekers* has come at a crucial moment for Victorians facing labour market disadvantage.

The coronavirus (COVID-19) pandemic has had a significant impact on the Victorian labour market. As at February 2021, the unemployment rate for Victoria had fallen to 5.6 per cent, among the lowest in the nation. Victoria's employment has nearly recovered all its pandemic losses, the participation rate has risen sharply since September and labour demand is strong. The recovery in the Victorian labour market has progressed faster than predicted – but significant challenges remain:

- Hours worked have dropped and Victoria's unemployment and underemployment rates remain higher than pre-pandemic levels.
- Long-term (1-2 years) and very long-term (2 years +) unemployment is rising.
- The JobKeeper wage subsidy scheme ended on 28 March 2021. Around 370,000 Victorian workers (11% of Victoria's total workforce) and 135,000 businesses were still being supported by JobKeeper just prior to it ending (as at February 2021). There is concern that the end of JobKeeper will result in job losses and higher unemployment.
- Youth unemployment rate has increased to 15.3% in February 2021, an increase of 4.7 percentage points since the start of the COVID-19 pandemic.
- Metropolitan Melbourne has been severely impacted by COVID-19 due to its industry mix and lack of tourism. On the other hand, economic recovery has been slower in Victoria's regional areas, with regional Victoria experiencing significant job losses despite lower COVID-19 cases and fewer restrictions last year compared to metropolitan areas.
- Not all cohorts are recovering at the same pace. Those experiencing deep and persistent disadvantage in the labour market are facing greater challenges from job losses. Some vulnerable cohorts are overrepresented in industries that have been hardest hit by the COVID-19 pandemic.

The Victorian Government recognises and has responded to these challenges.

In guiding Victoria's economic recovery, a foundational Jobs Plan formed a key part of the 2020-21 State Budget. This plan focuses on:

- generating growth in new and innovative industries;
- getting Victorians back into work (approximately 200,000 people by 2022 and 400,000 people by 2025);
- ensuring no community or Victorian is left behind by making sure support reaches every corner of the State; and
- building new opportunities for employment, education and economic development.

The Government expects to create over 120,000 jobs (both directly and indirectly) through initiatives and investments outlined in the 2020-21 State Budget.

The Government understands that the economic impacts of COVID-19 have been experienced unequally. Women, young people, those aged over 60, regional and remote communities, and Victorians who may have work experience but no formal qualification have been impacted disproportionately. Accordingly, support for these at-risk groups is central to the Victorian Government's recovery plan. For example, the Government has committed \$150 million to support businesses to hire approximately 6,000 women through wage subsidies. Additional wage subsidies and labour-hire initiatives will be targeted towards older and younger jobseekers. The Government has also provided \$58 million to expand opportunities for apprentices and trainees, including dedicated funding to help women get into trades.

The Victorian Government will continue to complement employment services with strong investment in education and training. The Government is investing \$1 billion in the TAFE and training system, funding up to 80,000 new subsidised training and Free TAFE places – including specific opportunities for disadvantaged jobseekers. The Government has also committed to creating more than 50,000 places in skills-focused short courses, for quick retraining into high-priority jobs, and expanding pathways for apprenticeships and traineeships.

The pandemic has exposed many of the structural inequalities present in the economy, including insecure work. Accordingly, the Government has invested \$5 million to develop a new Secure Work Scheme in consultation with employers, unions and workers. This pilot will provide five days sick and carers pay at the minimum wage to casual or insecure workers in priority industries.

Finally, the Victorian Government has invested a historic \$619.4 million to provide jobseekers with the information, advice, services and supports they need to get back to work. This significant investment will help the Government deliver a comprehensive package of assistance to support Victorian jobseekers through an expanded Jobs Victoria. Since its inception, Jobs Victoria has supported over 14,000 long-term jobseekers into employment and engaged over 5,500 employers across Victoria. Almost 30,500 Victorian jobseekers have so far voluntarily sought support from Jobs Victoria services (1 February 2020). Jobseekers have been predominantly supported through the main program, the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN), with JVEN participants unemployed on average for more than two years (114 weeks) when they registered for support. The significantly enhanced Jobs Victoria services include:

- **Jobs Victoria Employment Services (JVES)** providing personalised and tailored support to long-term unemployed jobseekers or jobseekers at-risk of being long-term unemployed via the network of Jobs Victoria services across the State. JVES Mentors work closely with those who need extra support to get them ready for work and placed into jobs. This expanded network of Jobs Victoria partners will include generalist and specialist service streams to engage with a broader range of disadvantaged or at-risk jobseekers and connect them with employment opportunities.
- **Jobs Victoria Advocates** working in communities across the State to connect people who have lost work or been long term unemployed to employment services, training opportunities and other support.
- **Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors** helping people understand their work/career options and plan a path back to employment.
- **Jobs Victoria online hub and hotline** offering virtual employment connection and a navigation hub to provide advice and connect jobseekers to local services that can support them to be work ready and gain employment.
- The **Jobs Victoria Fund**, supporting both Victorians looking for work and businesses looking to grow, with wage subsidy payments of up to \$20,000 available to employers who take on workers, with a focus on women, mid-career jobseekers, young people and others who have been hardest hit by the pandemic.
- The **Flexible Job Pathways Fund** helping remove barriers faced by some jobseekers such as lack of work clothes, lack of transport to get to new jobs or lack of access to dental treatment to support job readiness and confidence.
- **Place-based approaches** that complement other Jobs Victoria services by supporting local leadership and solutions to unemployment.
- Investing in **Social Procurement** to maximise the jobs flowing from government spending and record levels of infrastructure investments.
- **JobsBank** supporting business to create inclusive employment opportunities for jobseekers experiencing disadvantage by working with employers, promoting the benefits of socially inclusive employment and advocating for greater understanding of and engagement with Social Procurement.

These initiatives, programs and supports will be delivered in close collaboration with businesses, jobseekers and the wider Victorian community. The Victorian Government is committed to providing support to the thousands of Victorians who are experiencing or who are at risk of long-term unemployment and ensuring they have pathways into work. These initiatives balance demand side (employer focused) and supply side (jobseeker focused) interventions and target those at greatest risk of being left behind as the economy recovers.

RESPONSE TO RECOMMENDATIONS

GUIDE TO RESPONSE

This response has been prepared in accordance with the Guidelines for Victorian Government Submissions and Responses to Inquiries. The following key sets out the five categories of response, which are consistent with the Guidelines.	
KEY	
Support in full	All elements of the recommendations are supported
Support in part	Some elements of the recommendations are supported
Support in principle	The Victorian Government generally supports the intent or merit of the policy underlying the recommendations but, does not necessarily support the method for achieving the policy.
Under review	Further analysis is required for the Victorian Government to determine its position.
Not support	The Victorian Government does not support the recommendation.

No	Recommendation	Type of Response	Response
1	That the Victorian Government through the National Cabinet advocate for an increase to the JobSeeker Payment and Youth Allowance rates following the phasing out of the Coronavirus Supplement to ensure jobseekers can meet their living expenses and search for work.	Support in principle	The Victorian Government notes that the Australian government has raised the base rate of JobSeeker and Youth Allowance by 25 dollars a week, less than 4 dollars a day. This small increase is insufficient for jobseekers to meet their living expenses and search for work. The Victorian Government will continue to advocate to the Australian government for an increase to the rate of JobSeeker and Youth Allowance through appropriate forums.
2	That the Victorian Government continue funding the Jobs Victoria Employment Network for a further five years.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government has acknowledged the significant success of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network (JVEN). Since 2016, over 14,300 long-term unemployed jobseekers or those at risk of long-term unemployment have been supported into work by JVEN delivery partners. Final program evaluations for JVEN found that the program is delivering strong outcomes for long-term Victorian jobseekers and employers.</p> <p>The Government has invested \$619.4 million over 2.5 years to support Victorian jobseekers into work through an expanded and improved Jobs Victoria as part of the 2020-21 State Budget. New Jobs Victoria Employment Services (JVES) will build on the achievements of JVEN and retain its key features of success. These include flexibility to respond to needs of jobseekers and local labour markets; strong engagement and relationships with employers; collaboration between Jobs Victoria and other services to meet needs; and funding linked to the achievement of outcomes. JVES will concentrate on the places and communities with high levels of unemployment, with the nature of support tailored to the needs of local jobseekers. JVES will provide tailored support to clients of other Government services, recognising that employment and economic participation will help drive the achievement of outcomes across multiple Victorian Government programs.</p> <p>JVES will be delivered through core (generalist) and focussed (specialist) service streams to ensure all jobseekers are supported. The investment delivers a major expansion of Jobs Victoria services and recognises that more Victorians at risk of disadvantage need access to personalised employment support. More information about JVES can be found at: jobs.vic.gov.au/employment-services</p>
3	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions review the Jobs Victoria Employment Network funding model to consider remunerating service providers for improvement in work readiness using the Employment Readiness Scale or a similar measurement tool to assess service effectiveness.	Support in part	<p>As part of the record level of investment in Jobs Victoria in the 2020-21 State Budget, the Government committed funding to expand and enhance support to long-term jobseekers via the JVES which builds on the strengths of JVEN. There will be core (generalist) and focussed (specialist) service streams; place-based delivery; greater service integration for clients; and a significant funding increase to expand both the capacity of services and their geographic reach.</p> <p>The JVES model is not prescriptive in the support to be provided to both jobseekers and employers. The model recognises the expertise of employment organisations to support Victorians into work. Jobs Victoria partners have adopted a service approach/model that is flexible and responds to the needs of individual jobseekers. This includes the use of different tools to assess and monitor job readiness.</p> <p>Funding for delivery of JVES will be linked to the achievement of employment placements and employment outcomes (sustainable employment for at least 26 weeks). JVES funding will involve a mixture of General Services (30 per cent), Outcome Funding (65 per cent) and Completion Funding (5 per cent). The General Services component of the funding has been increased to respond to the tougher labour market in Victoria. Additional information about JVES is available at: https://jobs.vic.gov.au/employment-services</p>
4	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions adopt a similar post-placement support model to Disability Employment Services whereby Jobs Victoria Employment	Support in principle	Some programs, such as Disability Employment Services (DES), can offer post-placement support to participants for the first year (52 weeks) of employment with their consent. This enables DES providers to engage employers around workplace modifications, assist with job design, provide on-the-job training and/or other necessary supports.

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	Network participants can request post-placement support beyond 26 weeks if and when required.		A feature of the new JVES, which have replaced JVEN, is that funded services maintain contact with jobseekers and employers for up to 26 weeks post-placement as part of achieving job outcomes. The Victorian Government recognises that some jobseekers facing more complex vocational barriers may require post-placement support beyond 26 weeks. A new Flexible Job Pathways Fund will provide additional resources to support those jobseekers facing multiple or complex barriers to employment, and will be able to be used for additional post-placement support to support employment retention.
5	That the Victorian Government encourage men in the public sector to take parental leave and flexible working arrangements.	Support in full	<p>In late March 2021, the Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) released an updated Flexible Work Policy for the Victorian public sector (VPS).</p> <p>The updated policy emphasises that flexible work:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is equally available to all employees regardless of their gender. • Covers a range of options (such as part-time, flexible start / finish times, remote working, purchased leave) to help employees manage their work-life balance and caring responsibilities. • Will not impact career progression or access to development opportunities. <p>As part of the refresh, the VPSC will develop tools to empower managers and their teams to make flexible work arrangements work for them.</p> <p>Data indicates that women are overwhelmingly the primary caregivers of newborn children. The <i>Victorian Public Service Enterprise Agreement 2020</i> includes measures to support secondary caregivers assuming a period of primary care for a newborn child by providing an additional period of 12 weeks' paid parental leave when they take on primary caring responsibilities. The Agreement provides a range of other paid and unpaid leave entitlements which can be accessed in the lead up to a child's birth and during the first year of a child's life.</p>
6	That the Victorian Government encourage medium and large-sized enterprises to offer flexible working arrangements to all employees so they can fulfil caring responsibilities for any family member.	Support in principle	The Victorian Government is working to implement the <i>Gender Equality Act 2020</i> , led by the Commission for Gender Equality in the Public Sector, which includes supporting public sector entities to develop Gender Equality Action Plans to address key workplace gender equality indicators, including availability and utilisation of flexible working arrangements. This existing work supports this recommendation and will likely provide transferable learnings that could be applied to the private sector. The Government's Social Procurement Framework includes an objective for 'women's equality and safety', which encourages suppliers of goods and services to government to improve gender equality within their business through gender equitable practices.
7	That the Victorian Government through the National Cabinet advocate for measures that encourage greater flexibility and improved access to affordable childcare for jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in principle	The Victorian Government will continue to advocate in this policy area through the Minister for Women's contribution to the Women's Safety Ministers Taskforce. Advocacy will occur through other interjurisdictional platforms as appropriate (e.g. the National Federation Reform Council). In Victoria, the Equal Workplaces Advisory Council (EWAC) advises the Minister for Industrial Relations on initiatives that will tackle the gap in women's pay and workforce participation in the Victorian public and private sectors. Ultimately, the Commonwealth has responsibility for childcare policy settings. The Victorian Government has introduced some short-term state-based measures through the 2020-21 State Budget to mitigate against some of the impacts of the pandemic on working parents and address structural barriers to employment for women in particular. These include \$170 million to provide free kindergarten in eligible services in 2021, and \$82 million to increase the availability of outside school hours care, which will make it easier for low income parents to engage in the paid workforce. There are limited opportunities for the Victorian Government to act on this issue and create long-term systemic change. Long-term reform will need to be led by the Commonwealth.
8	That the Victorian Government support the Transport Accident Commission to expand the L2P Learner Driver Mentor Program to offer more places in regional areas and to jobseekers facing disadvantage, and increase the upper age limit from 21 to 30 years.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government funded L2P Program currently assists young learner drivers aged 16 to 21 who have limited access to a supervising driver or vehicle to gain the 120 hours driving experience required to apply for a probationary licence. The current program provides 2,200 places for learner drivers per year. It is estimated that there could be up to 25,000 young people (aged 16 to 21) in Victoria who would benefit from participating in the L2P program.</p> <p>Young learners are matched with fully licensed and trained volunteer mentors and have access to a sponsored vehicle to enable them to gain supervised driving experience. The program is delivered by either local councils or not-for-profit community agencies across 73 of the 79 local government areas in Victoria.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's current investment is \$33.4 million over four years, from 1 July 2019 until 30 June 2023 to deliver the program. An "L2P Enhanced" Program has been recently piloted to provide more places in the program to young people who are involved with youth justice settings.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will undertake further exploration to understand the nature and scale of the needs of unlicensed disadvantaged Victorians aged between 21-30 years.</p>

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9	That the Victorian Government support Aboriginal-controlled organisations across Victoria to run a volunteer driving school for Aboriginal learner drivers.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government supports the objective of providing culturally appropriate programs for improved road safety and ensuring that Indigenous communities are positioned to influence the design and delivery of those programs.</p> <p>The eligibility criteria for enrolment in the L2P Program prioritises learners who identify as Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander. The program has allocated places for Indigenous learner drivers. The Victorian Government is currently supporting the Rumbalara Netball and Football Club in Shepparton to develop its mentored driving program for young Indigenous learners, and the L2P East Gippsland program predominantly supports the local indigenous community.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will consult with Aboriginal-controlled organisations to identify how a volunteer program could assist Aboriginal learner drivers and what the nature and scope of such a program would be.</p>
10	That the Victorian Government support more Aboriginal-controlled organisations to become training and/or employment services providers.	Support in part	<p>The Victorian Government strongly supports greater employment outcomes and self-determination opportunities for Aboriginal Victorians. The Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions' Aboriginal Economic Development (AED) branch works to support Aboriginal-controlled training and employment organisations to build capability. AED engages in intra-departmental consultations and grants processes to ensure that all Jobs Victoria employment services are representative, culturally safe and appropriate for Aboriginal jobseekers. In addition, the Aboriginal Stakeholder Consultation Plan outlines the process for consultation with key Aboriginal stakeholders for the co-design of Aboriginal employment services delivered under Jobs Victoria.</p> <p>Consistent with the Government's commitment to the principles of Aboriginal self-determination, Jobs Victoria, in collaboration with AED, is consulting with Aboriginal communities to help shape the approach to design and delivery of the specialist services. Consultation will help define program models for delivering specialist Aboriginal services to ensure they respond to unique needs of Aboriginal communities across Victoria. Funding for specialist Aboriginal services will be allocated to Aboriginal Community Controlled Organisations/Traditional Owners/Aboriginal businesses wherever possible or to organisations able to demonstrate cultural competency and culturally safe and appropriate service delivery. The Victorian Government will tender for specialist Aboriginal Employment Services in mid-2021.</p> <p>Under the <i>Marrung Aboriginal Education Plan 2016-2026</i>, the Victorian Government is committed to providing improved support for all Koorie learners undertaking further education and training. The Victorian Government runs an expression of interest process from time-to-time for registered training organisations, including Aboriginal-controlled organisations, and currently contracts with the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation Inc (VACCHO) and the Victorian Aboriginal Community Services Association Ltd (VACSAL), to deliver subsidised accredited training.</p>
11	That the Victorian Government prioritise and increase funding for employment programs that incorporate mentoring for jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government supports this recommendation in full and is enhancing its suite of programs targeted towards jobseekers with high barriers to employment. As part of the historic \$619.4 million investment in Jobs Victoria in the 2020-21 State Budget, funding has been allocated to several programs that develop the capabilities of jobseekers facing disadvantage. Key programs include: new Jobs Victoria Advocates (\$41.4 million), who will be active in the community delivering information and advice to jobseekers and connecting them with available services and supports; Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors, who will offer expert guidance and career mentoring to Victorians who need support to understand their work/career options, but who lack access to professional counselling services; and expanded JVES, delivered by mentors who will provide personalised and tailored support to long-term unemployed jobseekers or jobseekers at-risk of being long-term unemployed. This major investment will help meet new and rising demand for support from priority jobseekers.</p> <p>Jobs Victoria programs will also be complemented by the work of other portfolios, such as Multicultural Affairs, Housing, Youth, Crime Prevention and Training and Skills, facilitating a collaborative whole-of-government approach to addressing issues of inclusion, access and social and economic participation, particularly for shared clients.</p>
12	That the Victorian Government create an avenue for current or retired senior public servants to become mentors to new starters in the Victorian public sector who may be facing disadvantage.	Support in principle	<p>VPSC is currently providing mentoring programs to diverse groups of VPS employees, through programs including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Victorian Government graduate program • Disability Employment programs • Aboriginal Employment (Barring Djinang) programs. <p>The mentors in these programs are current public servants. VPSC will review existing mentoring arrangements in place across government and give consideration to developing a mentoring offering to new starters that addresses any gaps.</p>
13	That the Victorian Government incentivise large private sector employers to implement mentoring programs to	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government is delivering a range of financial incentives to support employers to take on jobseekers, particularly those from priority cohorts including women, mature-age workers and young people. The Government has allocated \$250 million in the 2020-21 State Budget to create steady and sustainable employment for priority jobseekers across Victoria. At least \$150 million of the total subsidies will go to women, of which \$50 million will support women over 45 into employment.</p>

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	support new starters in their enterprise who may be facing disadvantage.		In addition to this investment, \$15 million has been allocated to support JobsBank, to support business to create inclusive employment opportunities for jobseekers experiencing disadvantage. JobsBank works with employers, promoting the benefits of socially inclusive employment and advocates for greater understanding of and engagement with the Social Procurement Framework. Where appropriate this support may also include assisting employers to support disadvantaged new starters.
14	That the Victorian Government support the State Library of Victoria and local government libraries to run free digital literacy workshops that teach the basics of using a computer, navigating the internet and creating a résumé.	Support in principle	Many local libraries, including the State Library, currently provide a range of community-facing programs including those designed to address barriers to employment, including digital literacy. The Victorian Government provides assistance to both the State Library of Victoria and local government libraries to run programs such as free digital literacy workshops. The Victorian Government also delivers initiatives like Jobs Victoria Advocates who provide in-kind support to local public libraries to deliver value to jobseekers and the community.
15	That the Victorian Government support more neighbourhood houses to register as Learn Local providers to offer pre-accredited training in employment skills, including digital literacy, to enhance the work readiness of jobseekers.	Support in part	The Victorian Government ensures neighbourhood houses are supported to become Learn Local providers where appropriate, taking into consideration the service delivery mix and place-based circumstances.
16	That the Victorian Government raise awareness among the community, particularly individuals experiencing disadvantage, of the learning opportunities neighbourhood houses and Learn Locals provide.	Support in full	The Victorian Government seeks to raise awareness of the value proposition offered by Learn Local providers in providing a 'soft-entry' into formal education and training settings and pathways for those experiencing disadvantage in the Victorian community through multiple channels including social media, ministerial visits and announcements, regular communications from the Adult Community and Further Education (ACFE) Board chair, the annual Learn Local awards and other publications and community engagement channels.
17	That the Department of Education and Training support more projects similar to Strengthening Pathways for Adult Learners in Gippsland to give Learn Locals across Victoria the skills to develop training courses in collaboration with local industry.	Support in part	The Victorian Government works closely with the ACFE Board, whose role is to plan and promote adult learning, allocate resources, develop policies, and advise the Minister for Training and Skills on matters related to adult education in Victoria. The ACFE Board has recently announced the ACFE 2025 Strategy Fund which seeks to invest strategically in projects aligned to the achievement of the Ministerial Statement on the future of Adult Community Education in Victoria, a key element of which is strengthening training-to-employment pathways for learners through a range of priority projects.
18	That the Department of Education and Training work with the TAFE and Learn Local sectors to encourage greater collaboration and further strengthen the pathways into TAFE for jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in part	The Victorian Government works closely with the ACFE Board, whose role is to plan and promote adult learning, allocate resources, develop policies, and advise the Minister for Training and Skills on matters related to adult education in Victoria. The ACFEB Strategy 2020-25 identifies partnerships between TAFE and Learn Local providers as a key strategy to support the participation of vulnerable learners in TAFE. Current projects include providing support through Learn Local pathways programs and Learn Local programs supporting vulnerable learners once they are enrolled in TAFE to reduce withdrawals and build successful outcomes.
19	That the Victorian Government raise awareness among the community of the existence and locations of Skills and Job Centres and who is eligible to use their services.	Support in full	Skills and Jobs Centres have an integral role in supporting those who have lost work through the COVID-19 pandemic to engage in training-to-employment pathways, which will involve significant emphasis on advertisement and promotion of their services. Skills and Jobs Centres are promoted on the Victorian Skills Gateway and Departmental web pages and through TAFEs.
20	That the Victorian Government raise awareness among the community, particularly individuals experiencing disadvantage, of eligibility and access to the Skills First Reconnect program.	Support in full	The Victorian Government widely promotes the support offered to disadvantaged learners through the Skills First Reconnect program and has taken steps in redesigning the program to improve cross-referral from the Department of Education and Training (DET) and to other Government programs, a system-wide approach to promotion among funded organisations, and a renewed, formal communications plan involving extensive advertisement and promotion of the service, particularly among disadvantaged cohorts identified as requiring more targeted support; such as asylum seekers, Koorie learners and those with a connection to Youth Justice services. A key aspect of these changes includes the requirement that each provider develop an integrated service delivery model in each Local Government Area to ensure the program is appropriately linked and promoted in tandem with services funded by other agencies, departments and sectors.
21	That the Victorian Government consider five-year funding terms for the Skills First Reconnect program when funding is due for renewal.	Support in principle	The Victorian Government has announced changes to the funding terms of Skills First Reconnect contracts in 2021. New arrangements include up to four years of funding certainty for high-performing organisations delivering the program.

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22	That the Department of Education and Training work with English language program providers to develop and support delivery modes tailored to the varied needs of newly arrived migrant and refugee jobseekers.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government has recently committed funding to organisations who provide English language programs for new migrants and refugee communities to ensure they are supported to provide the most targeted employment-pathways support possible, especially in the context of the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>The Government is commencing work to roll-out newly announced 2020-21 State Budget initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • \$520,000 towards the establishment of a Multicultural Learning Partnership between DET, AMES, Victorian Multicultural Commission (VMC) and ACFEF and Migrant Workers Centre at Trades Hall. This partnership will support project activity to improve core skills awareness and engagement by culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities. • \$809,000 for AMES Australia to support cultural safety training and the Career Mentors for Multicultural Learners program. <p>The Victorian Government is exploring options for delivery models tailored to the varied needs of newly arrived migrant and refugee jobseekers and best-practice referral pathways between its services, such as Jobs Victoria Advocates, the Jobs Victoria Hotline, Skills and Job Centres and Skills First Reconnect.</p> <p>Major reforms to the Adult Migrant English Program (AMEP) announced by the Commonwealth on 28 August 2020 can be leveraged as part of the response to this recommendation. Key changes include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • removing the current 510-hour limit on free English tuition • extending eligibility from functional English to vocational English • removing the time limits for enrolling, commencing, and completing English tuition for eligible visa holders who were in Australia on or before 1 October 2020. <p>These reforms are a positive step towards ensuring a more tailored provision of English language support to newly arrived migrants and refugee jobseekers.</p>
23	That the Victorian Government work with Victorian universities to develop alternative entry pathways into undergraduate study specifically for people who have been in out-of-home care.	Support in principle	<p>The Commonwealth has primary responsibility for policy settings, funding and regulation of higher education in Australia, including funding for undergraduate study.</p> <p>A number of universities provide tailored support for care leavers. For example, La Trobe University's 'Higher Education for Care Leavers Strategy' provides outreach to schools, tailored support with applications and enrolments, accommodation assistance, and financial aid, including scholarships, financial counselling and a Care Leaver Bursary.</p> <p>As noted in the report, the Victorian Government has committed to a multi-year investment in the Raising Expectations program. Raising Expectations is a cross-sectoral collaboration between the Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare and university partners that supports young people in out-of-home care and care leavers to aspire to, access and succeed in vocational and higher education.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will work with universities to encourage sharing best practice and consideration of opportunities to support the development of alternative entry pathways into undergraduate study specifically for people who have been in out-of-home care.</p>
24	That Corrections Victoria ensure its prison education and employment services engage with employers to co-develop training programs that address industry skill shortages and link prisoners with real job opportunities post release	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government is working across the Corrections and Justice Services system to ensure prison education and employment services engage with employers to co-develop training programs that address industry skills shortages and link prisoners with real job opportunities post release. An industry consultant is assisting with strengthening industry-specific collaboration and establishing stronger paid employment pathways and career opportunities for people exiting prison.</p> <p>This will build and expand upon existing services offerings in education and training services. Employment, training and education are critical drivers of successful rehabilitation and reintegration, with sustainable employment being a key protective factor against re-offending. Employment, training and education are recognised as key criminogenic risk factors which need to be addressed to avoid re-offending.</p> <p>The Victorian Government, in partnership with TAFE and training providers, delivers education and training programs to adult prisoners, including through vocational education and training programs co-designed with industry, TAFE and employer partners to focus on pathways to employment in construction, hospitality and engineering. The Government is working to ensure existing education and employment supports align with future employment opportunities, including areas of industry need, skill shortages and employer demand.</p>
25	That the Department of Education and Training consider how it can reduce barriers other than financial for	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government provides a range of other initiatives to reduce barriers other than financial for disadvantaged jobseekers.</p> <p>This includes the following programs that are not specific to Free TAFE, but assist jobseekers to enrol in Free TAFE if sought:</p>

No	Recommendation	Type of Response	Response
	jobseekers facing disadvantage to enrol and participate in free TAFE.		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Community Service Funding – includes counselling and psychological services, social welfare services, pathway support, careers counselling and course advice Reconnect – includes case management to refer participants to accommodation, counselling and study foundation skills supports Skills and Jobs Centres – includes careers counselling and course advice <p>Additional Free TAFE Funding was provided in the 2019-20 State Budget for Student Support to augment existing Community Service Funding for services such as counselling and psychological support.</p>
26	That the Department of Education and Training work with growth industries to enhance their capacity to host placements for students undertaking free TAFE courses.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government has been working closely with the TAFE network to understand the extent of mandatory work placement on student completions during the COVID-19 pandemic. As a result of the pandemic, some TAFE students have experienced delays in accessing work placements, affecting the completion of their qualifications.</p> <p>As a matter of urgency, the Victorian Government is implementing solutions that will drive increased placement opportunities across the sector. For example, the Government:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> has engaged the services of the Apprenticeship Employment Network (AEN) to work as a third-party broker to find placements for students in agreed priority qualifications and match the priority students to the placements utilising the Placeright platform; is expanding the Placeright platform to integrate Community Services qualifications. This platform helps avoid multiple approaches being made to employers, allows students to be tracked by RTOs, is already mandated for managing health services related to mandatory work placements across both VET and Higher Education sectors and is currently used by TAFEs; and has provided additional funding to TAFEs for the extension of the Placement Coordinators program to incorporate all qualifications with mandatory work placements. <p>Additionally, the Minister for Training, Skills and Higher Education has recently announced \$1 million to ensure Victorians can get practical on-the-job experience and begin working in sectors critical to the state’s economic recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. This will help an initial 1,000 people in sectors such as nursing, mental health, disability and individual support, childcare and community services to get suitable placements quickly. The pandemic has affected many VET students in accessing mandatory work placements needed to complete their courses and begin work in these vital sectors. This funding will help address these matters.</p>
27	<p>That the Victorian Government implement all recommendations in the Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee’s 2018 report for the Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools, prioritising:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> incorporation of career development into the school curriculum from at least Year 7 reductions in school career practitioners’ teaching loads so they can devote most, if not all, their hours to career development and student counselling mandatory professional development for school career practitioners on labour market trends and emerging industries online access to local labour market information for students, parents and schools better utilisation of Local Learning and Employment Networks to connect students with local employers and industry expansion of Years 7–10 students’ access to local industry taster or immersion programs 	Support in principle	<p>Refer to the Victorian Government’s previous response to the <i>Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools</i>. The Victorian Government has delivered a broad range of initiatives under the <i>Transforming Career Education in Victorian Government Schools Plan</i> launched in May 2018, which outlines the significant investment made into career education initiatives from the 2018/19 state budget.</p> <p>The <i>Transforming Career Education in Victorian Government Schools</i> plan outlined the Government’s investment in a suite of initiatives to redesign career education and help government school students have access to high quality career education to connect today’s learning to tomorrow’s jobs. The career education reforms focus on starting career education early, connecting career education to work and making career education a priority in schools.</p> <p>In addition, the 2020 <i>Review into vocational and applied learning pathways in senior secondary schooling</i> (the Firth Review) made 38 recommendations aimed at improving the quality of and access to vocational and applied learning pathways for Victorian secondary school students, which includes further reforms to the delivery of career education. Key recommendations include development of a single, fully integrated senior secondary certificate with an embedded vocational specialisation, a place-based approach to delivery, a greater role for the department in supporting school-industry engagement and providing career practitioners with equal information regarding student vocational pathways.</p> <p>The Government has committed in principle to implement the Review’s recommendations. In the 2020-21 State Budget, the Victorian Government announced \$38m to support the first stage of reforms, including funding Jobs Skills and Pathways Coordinators for every government senior secondary school to provide increased administration and coordination for vocational and applied learning programs.</p>

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	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> mandatory professional development for school career practitioners on the needs of student groups facing disadvantage. 		
28	That the Department of Education and Training develop a mechanism for schools to directly refer school leavers to On Track Connect from October each year so that Local Learning and Employment Networks can provide support to school leavers earlier.	Support in principle	<p>Local Learning and Employment Network annual reporting into On Track Connect outcomes has identified that earlier contact with school leavers would result in:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> higher contact rates due to contact details being more current, higher referral rates, and fewer and shorter gaps between leaving school and transitioning to further education, training and employment. <p>The Firth Review recommendations include a number that relate to improving the tracking of students through and post schooling. The role of the LLENs and the On-Track survey will be included in this reform work.</p>
29	That the Victorian Government provide support, ease the administrative burden and develop financial incentives to encourage more employers to take on work experience students.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government is delivering a range of incentives to encourage employers to take on jobseekers, particularly those from priority cohorts including women, mature-age workers and young people. The Government has recently established the Jobs Victoria Fund to support employers to grow and recover while helping Victorians looking for work into steady jobs. The Fund will provide \$250 million in wage subsidies to assist Victorian businesses to employ at least 10,000 people who are looking for work and will target a range of priority jobseekers including young people aged under 25.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has committed to develop a whole-of government youth strategy to ensure that all young people are healthy, safe and empowered to contribute to the issues that affect them. Limited work experience, barriers to accessing education and training which meets their needs, challenges in accessing targeted employment supports and competition for entry level jobs are some of the specific challenges young people face entering the workforce.</p> <p>Over 9,200 jobseekers aged 15-24 have registered with Jobs Victoria services, and more than 4,100 of these young people have been supported into work (as at 1 March 2021). In addition, the Victorian Government currently provides support for young people through a number of programs. The Budget also provides \$5 million for youth traineeships to create sustainable employment outcomes.</p> <p>Work experience placements for school students are an important existing element of career education in Victorian secondary schools. Any work experience programs for post school job seekers could draw from the guidance and best practice resources developed to support safe and meaningful experiences in the workplace available on DET's public website.</p>
30	That the Victorian Government expand the number of work experience placements it offers secondary students at its departments and agencies, and set a proportion of these placements for students facing disadvantage	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) currently provides information and guides to students and young people on career pathways and options via Careers.Vic.</p> <p>Programs offered by the VPS which support disadvantaged students/young people and offer equitable access to opportunities include the YES program, traineeships, cadetships, RISE program, disability and Aboriginal employment pathways. The Victorian Government also works with a range of inclusive vendors to source suitable candidates and ensure shortlisted candidates are selected through non-discriminatory practices.</p> <p>The Government will examine existing work experience programs in place across government and assess the need for a consistent approach or central coordination regarding work experience for secondary students. Safety considerations for young people must be foremost in considering the appropriateness of work experience placements. As set out in a number of resources for schools to ensure that students can have safe and meaningful experiences in the workplace, including Ministerial Orders and best practice guidance.</p>
31	That the Victorian Government support more Skills and Jobs Centres to provide paid local internships for adults who are seeking to return to the workforce.	Support in principle	<p>Skills and Jobs Centres form part of a State-wide Victorian Government program to help potential students, jobseekers and employers. They provide advice on job-readiness training, upskilling and job opportunities and work with industry/ employers at a strategic level. Skills and Job Centres are not currently structured or resourced to promote, identify, broker, manage and pay for internships.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's \$64 million Digital Skills and Jobs program, announced in the 2020-21 State Budget, will retrain Victorians who lost their jobs during the COVID-19 pandemic, providing short courses and up to 5,000 industry internships to help jobseekers – with a strong focus on women – get job ready.</p>

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			The \$250 million Jobs Victoria Fund announced in the 2020-21 State Budget and launched in March 2021, will support both Victorians looking for work and businesses looking to grow, with wage subsidy payments of up to \$20,000 available to employers, with a focus on women, particularly women aged over 45 years, mid-career jobseekers, young people and others who have been disproportionately affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.
32	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions capture de-identified data on Jobs Victoria Employment Network participants to enable the evaluation of program effectiveness for particular cohorts	Support in full	The Victorian Government's digital strategy outlines the data capture and reporting activities for all programs, including the JVES, and will capture deidentified data as part of business as usual activities to support planning, evaluation and operational decision making.
33	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions consider bonus lump sum payments for employers when an employee hired through the Jobs Victoria Employment Network reaches 12 and 24 months of continuous employment	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government supports job creation initiatives and is open to a broad range of policy approaches moving forward. Jobs Victoria outcomes are predicated on strong engagement with employers, including incentives. However, bonus lump-sum payments for employers based on employee retention are not currently a feature of Jobs Victoria services.</p> <p>The Government launched the \$250 million Jobs Victoria Fund to create steady and sustainable employment for priority jobseekers across Victoria. At least \$150 million of the total subsidies will go to women, of which \$50 million will directly support women over 45 into employment. Wage subsidies of up to \$20,000 are available for priority groups. Payment of the subsidies is in instalments with 30 per cent paid at 26 week and 40 per cent paid at 52 weeks of continuous employment. Guidelines on how the Fund operates are available at: jobs.vic.gov.au/about-jobs-victoria/our-programs/jobs-victoria-fund</p>
34	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions develop and distribute employer packs on targeted jobseeker cohorts, such as people with disability and older people, promoting success stories, the benefits of employing these cohorts and how to support them in the workplace	Support in full	<p>Jobs Victoria employment services engage directly with employers across many different industries in order to secure the best outcomes for jobseekers, employers and the Victorian economy; this engagement includes targeted programs that focus on the needs of the most disadvantaged jobseekers. The new JVES model will continue supporting employers to meet their skills and labour needs by connecting them to suitable jobseekers. The success of engagement with employers via Jobs Victoria services will be a key feature of the Government's strategic communications activities, further promoting the benefits for more diverse recruitment by employers.</p> <p>The Jobs Victoria Digital Engagement Strategy engages jobseekers and employers to highlight positive stories/case studies through social media and other digital channels. Through these mechanisms, Jobs Victoria is able to share positive experiences and learnings by engaging directly and productively with employers. Jobs Victoria case studies can be found at: jobs.vic.gov.au/about-jobs-victoria/case-studies</p>
35	That the Victorian Government support the creation of employer pledge programs to publicly recognise and support employers who actively commit to recruiting jobseekers facing disadvantage	Support in principle	<p>While the Victorian Government encourages recruitment of employees facing disadvantage, the evidence does not suggest that employer pledge programs are the most effective means of achieving this outcome. An evaluation of the JobsBank pilot found the job pledge model demonstrated difficulties translating general pledges into employment opportunities and a mismatch between jobs pledged and the jobseekers supported through JobsBank. Evaluators recommended greater clarity and alignment of expectations between pledging organisations, the Government and partners.</p> <p>The Victorian Government supports employers through a range of different initiatives including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • A network of Jobs Victoria partners through JVEN and the new JVES with strong employer engagement function • A new Jobs Victoria Fund to create steady and sustainable employment for priority jobseekers across Victoria with a particular focus to support women and women over 45 into employment • JobsBank receives funding to work directly with employers to promote the benefits of socially inclusive employment. • A range of programs in Small Business Victoria including the Business Support Fund and the Upskill My Business website.
36	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions support training providers and employment services providers to work with employers to co-develop and co-deliver employment programs that meet current and future demand for skills and workers at both a local and state-wide level	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government strongly supports programs and initiatives which develop strong relationships with employers.</p> <p>Under Jobs Victoria, many high-performing partners already give employers opportunities to contribute or actively co-design employment and training supports with employers. However, an evaluation of the JVEN found that co-design models in general are difficult to implement and often do not correspond with what employers most value in JVEN (i.e. having recruitment and hiring tasks done for them).</p> <p>Overall, Jobs Victoria services are demand-led and predicated on employer engagement. The 2019 JVEN evaluation highlighted that employers were satisfied with Jobs Victoria services, citing time and cost savings in their recruitment processes. Employers reported that Jobs Victoria jobseekers were motivated, well-prepared and supported, delivering significant benefits to their businesses. Some employers also noted that Jobs Victoria has helped increase the size and quality of their recruitment pool, which has</p>

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			<p>been particularly important in regional areas where distance and skill mismatches make recruitment more difficult. Jobs Victoria has also had a significant impact in local communities, even narrowing the gap between LGAs with the highest and lowest unemployment rates in Victoria. This finding indicates Victorian Government programs are 'unearthing' jobs with employers that would not have otherwise existed. Indeed, many employers used Jobs Victoria for 'repeat hiring' or created vacancies as a result of their positive experiences.</p> <p>Proximity to local employers allows for meaningful, real-time input into how Jobs Victoria employment services are delivered. The Victorian Government wants to encourage stronger employer relationships for the JVES that will be implemented in the second semester of 2021.</p>
37	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions support relevant community service organisations and advocacy groups to expand their delivery of employer training on workplace inclusiveness.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government has supported a number of community service organisations to provide workplace inclusiveness training through the provision of the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund (JVIF) grants. Some examples include training being provided to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Victoria Police through the Victoria Police Diversity Recruitment Program, • The Royal Children's Hospital through the Integrated Practical Placement Program (IPP) • A range of workplaces through Specialisterne's Dandelion Program <p>The Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund is currently being evaluated.</p> <p>The \$15 million JobsBank initiative supports businesses to create inclusive opportunities for jobseekers experiencing disadvantage. JobsBank works with employers, promoting the benefits of socially inclusive employment. Where appropriate, JobsBank assists employers to connect with community organisations and advocacy groups offering specialist employer training.</p>
38	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions, in collaboration with relevant community service organisations, work with WorkSafe, the Fair Work Commission and the Victorian Human Rights Commission to develop best practice guidelines and self-audit checklists for employers to assess the inclusiveness of their workplace.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government acknowledges the importance of inclusive employment, particularly for jobseekers experiencing disadvantage. It also acknowledges the important work undertaken by the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission, WorkSafe and others to develop best practice guidelines. Victorian Government employment programs undertake direct employer engagement and job creation initiatives, which enhances workplace inclusivity and also enhances employer capacity. Reinforced in the findings of the JVEN evaluation, Jobs Victoria employment services are most effective when they build personalised relationships with local employers.</p>
39	That the Victorian Government require large-sized enterprises that employ 200 or more employees to develop and implement a disability action plan.	Support in part	<p>The Victorian Government supports disability action planning in the private sector, and this recommendation to require them outside the public sector will be considered as a part of the Disability Act Review.</p> <p>Clause 38 (1) of the Disability Act 2006 (the Act) requires public sector agencies to have disability action plans but does not currently cover non-public sector entities. Further, disability action plans are broader in scope than just employment. Under the Act, disability action plans are required to cover:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • reducing barriers to persons with a disability accessing goods, services and facilities; • reducing barriers to persons with a disability obtaining and maintaining employment; • promoting inclusion and participation in the community of persons with a disability; • achieving tangible changes in attitudes and practices which discriminate against persons with a disability <p>Roll out to the private sector will require the development of disability action planning tools and resources for businesses. Opportunities for extending and strengthening disability action plan requirements will be given further consideration as part of the current review of the Disability Act 2006 and ways to support the wider uptake and implementation of disability action plans will be considered as part of the development of the next state disability plan. Strengthening the focus of businesses on more inclusive practice and culture will complement the gains already achieved through a range of actions undertaken by Jobs Victoria to increase the employment of people with disability by:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Supporting almost 550 Victorians with disability into work through Jobs Victoria.

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			<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Identifying and supporting new approaches to deliver effective employment assistance to people with a disability through funding from the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund (JVIF). The Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund (JVIF) provides small grants to support new and innovative approaches to employment services. A total of \$700,000 of funding under the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund has been set aside for a Disability Project Stream to specifically support new and innovative approaches to employment support and employment services for people with disability. Appointing a dedicated Jobs Victoria employer engagement officer to identify employment opportunities for people with disability. Increasing the number of young people with disability enrolled in the Youth Employment Scheme (YES). Identifying, documenting and publishing positive examples of employment of people with disability both from the perspective of jobseekers and employers. <p>Recognising that the Commonwealth Government through Disability Employment Services (DES) has the primary responsibility for provisioning employment services for people with disability, the decision from the Commonwealth to restrict DES client from accessing Jobs Victoria Services has resulted in unintended consequences affecting people with disability. The JVEN experience has shown that some jobseekers with disability can benefit from the strong employer linkages, and the local tailored responses that JVEN provides without exiting DES services.</p>
40	That the Victorian Government require all public sector bodies, and encourage all non-public sector employers, to deliver cultural awareness training to their staff on a regular basis to capture all new and existing employees	Support in principle	The Victorian Government has implemented and continues to support the development of guidance, support and training relating to cultural awareness through a number of initiatives, programs, actions plans (Getting to Work action plan and Barring Djinang programs) and via the Public Sector Values and Code of Conduct for Employees. The Victorian Public Sector Commission (VPSC) will collaborate with Departments, Multicultural Affairs, employee staff lead networks, community of practice groups and other stakeholders to identify any gaps in cultural awareness and partner to deliver whole of government learning and development module/s.
41	That the Victorian Government through the National Cabinet advocate for a streamlined recognition process of overseas professional and trade qualifications.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government recognises that skills and qualification recognition is a key issue and barrier to full socioeconomic participation for newly arrived migrants and settlers. The Victorian Government will advocate to the Commonwealth Government for improvements to the recognition process of overseas qualifications, including through the Senior Officials Settlement Outcomes Group.</p> <p>As identified in the Report, the process of recognising overseas professional and trade qualifications is complex and involves a large number of different organisations, as well as responsibility at both the Commonwealth and State levels. Skills assessment is offered for both regulated and unregulated occupations. For regulated occupations the recognition services are provided by various occupation specific registration boards established under State/territory legislation, State/territory licensing authorities and professional membership bodies for different occupations. Professional membership bodies for different occupations, Overseas Qualifications Units, third-party providers such as VETASSESS, and TAFEs are among the organisations providing assessment services for unregulated occupations.</p> <p>Therefore, the streamlining of processes or establishment of a centralised body to oversee the recognition process is a challenging and complex undertaking, involving a large number of stakeholders with differing perspectives.</p> <p>In addition to exploring opportunities to improve the recognition of overseas qualifications, the Victorian Government will seek to elevate the value of this recognition amongst employers. This is partly covered in Recommendation 40.</p>
42	That the Victorian Government pilot a program to support recently arrived refugee jobseekers gain recognition of their overseas qualifications using the evaluation findings of the Department of Social Services' Career Pathways Pilot for Humanitarian Entrants to inform the program's operation.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Overseas Qualifications Unit (OQU) currently provides academic assessments for humanitarian visa holders qualifications. In 2019-20, 80 assessment outcomes were provided for humanitarian visa holders, which equals to 12.5% of all the OQU provided assessment outcomes (637). The OQU recently undertook qualitative analysis of all applications submitted within six months. This analysis helped to form the new OQU Assessment Methodology for assessing Humanitarian Visa Holders qualifications.</p> <p>Jobs Victoria also provides a range of employment services that work closely with refugees and new migrants, including services that support migrants with professional skills to find work that matches their capabilities and qualifications via specialist JVEN/JVES partners. Overseas qualified migrants will also benefit from other initiatives funded in the 2020-21 State budget, namely:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jobs Victoria Advocates to assist in service navigation and referrals to appropriate employment, education and training services. Jobs Victoria Career counsellors connecting jobseekers with career and vocational advice. Career Counsellors will provide career development and support to people who need assistance to understand their work/career options and who lack access to professional career counselling. <p>In addition, the new Community Employment Connectors (CEC) Program seeks to enable recently arrived jobseekers to gain adequate support regarding qualification recognition and to gain relevant employment. The CECs will provide enhanced advocacy, support and brokerage services that strategically respond to the needs of culturally</p>

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			<p>and linguistically diverse and young jobseekers facing high levels of disadvantage. CECs will also provide support by drawing on local networks and expertise through embedment with local organisations and will support jobseekers in line with learnings drawn from the Pathways Pilot for Humanitarian Entrants.</p> <p>This work will also link in with the Victorian African Communities Action Plan Employment Brokers Program presently being rolled out to ensure clear linkages and interfacing with the range of supports available to communities.</p>
43	That the Victorian Government require all public sector bodies, and encourage all non-public sector employers, to review their recruitment and workplace practices to ensure they are inclusive of jobseekers and workers diverse in age, culture and ability.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government is currently reviewing and updating the best practice recruitment and selection guidelines for the VPS.</p> <p>As part of the refresh, the guidelines will be developed into a toolkit to support teams and managers on providing inclusive recruitment, reviewing current practices, providing equitable processes, and exploring new ways for support a diverse workforce.</p> <p>The toolkit will also expand to incorporate the whole employee life cycle and provide best practice advice and support in onboarding, learning and development, performance, and retention and offboarding.</p> <p>Additionally, the VPSC has created a number of inclusive guides and resources to support managers, staff and jobseekers on a wide range of workplace practice including: Working remotely in the Victorian public sector, Wellbeing toolkit: Tips, tools and activities for managing team wellbeing, and Flexible work policy.</p>
44	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions run separate education campaigns for employers and jobseekers on workers' rights and available employment law services and provide this information in different languages including easy English.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government is running education campaigns specifically tailored to employers and jobseekers from disadvantaged and culturally and linguistically CALD backgrounds on workers' rights and employment laws.</p> <p>This will also be promoted through the network of CECs within local organisations, as well as through other networks and programs of work under the Multicultural Affairs portfolio, including:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • the Strategic Partnerships and Strategic Engagement Coordinators; • Migrant Workers Centre; • VACAP Employment Subcommittee and Victorian African Communities Action Plan Employment Brokers Program; • Victorian Multicultural Commission; • CALD Communities Taskforce Local Partnership structure; and • Community Support Groups
45	That the Victorian Government continue funding and consider expanding the Jobs Victoria Youth Cadetship Scheme if evaluation findings of the pilot program show that it has created sustainable employment opportunities for young Victorians.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government has continued funding for the Youth Employment Scheme (YES). The YES offers young Victorians the opportunity to undertake a traineeship in the Victorian Government. This traineeship combines paid work experience with study for a certificate level qualification to provide trainees with a solid base for a career in a public service or similar organisation. To date, 1,021 young people have been placed into work through YES traineeships (as at 1 March 2021).</p> <p>Under the Youth Employment Program (YEP), the Victorian Government has worked with the Community and Public Sector Union (CPSU) to deliver additional employment opportunities for young Victorians in the VPS. The Youth Employment Program (\$29m) is supporting the equivalent of 400 new full time (FTE) jobs over 12 months, or up to 800 FTE jobs over six months for young Victorians aged between 17-29. The program is providing employment in a range of roles across the Victorian public sector, including departments and statutory authorities, and will include introductory training relevant to working in the public sector.</p> <p>Other youth-focussed initiatives (funded through Working for Victoria) include the Victorian Apprenticeships Recovery package, which is funding 300 apprenticeships and traineeships for young people state-wide through the Apprenticeship Employment Network (group training network).</p>
46	That the Victorian Government continue supporting and investing in employment programs that partner community service organisations with private sector employers to provide employment opportunities to jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in full	<p>The 2020-21 State Budget investment includes personalised employment support to long-term unemployed jobseekers and jobseekers at risk of being long-term unemployed through JVES. This expanded network of Jobs Victoria partners will include generalist and specialist service streams to engage with a broader range of disadvantaged or at-risk jobseekers and connect them with employment opportunities.</p> <p>Suitably skilled and experienced organisations will be engaged to deliver JVES until June 2023 across Melbourne and regional Victoria – with more funding to support expert jobs 'Mentors' in more locations. The Victorian Government is encouraging EOIs from consortia and collaborations. The Victorian Government recognises that relationships with private sector employers are strongly linked to service effectiveness. The 2019 evaluation of JVEN highlighted that the Government could do more to strengthen the capacity of JVEN providers by helping them develop or increase connections with local employers. Accordingly, relationships with employers and collaboration are key</p>

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			<p>assessment criteria for Jobs Victoria commissioning processes. The expanded suite of Jobs Victoria services will continue to target support to long-term jobseekers and others who are at risk of long-term unemployment due to employment barriers.</p> <p>The Flexible Job Pathways Fund will also help remove barriers faced by some jobseekers such as lack of work clothes, lack of transport to get to new jobs or lack of access to dental treatment to support job readiness and confidence.</p> <p>Further, the Government's \$15 million Budget investment in JobsBank will promote the benefits of socially inclusive employment by partnering with employers and linking them with Jobs Victoria delivery partners.</p>
47	That the Victorian Government fund Local Learning and Employment Networks to appoint employment outreach officers, who would meet and work with local employers to coordinate opportunities for all jobseeker groups facing disadvantage within their region, not only young people who have disengaged from school	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government is committed to increasing employment opportunities for jobseekers facing labour market disadvantage. The 2020-21 State Budget commitments will support an enhanced and expanded suite of Jobs Victoria services and more job creation opportunities through procurement and wage subsidies. Jobs Victoria partners will engage with local employers with skills/labour needs and support jobseekers to prepare for and connect to those vacancies.</p> <p>The Victorian Government also currently funds 31 organisations that comprise the Local Learning and Employment Network (LLEN) to provide the state-wide School Employer Engagement Service. The model builds on identified LLEN strengths in the development of partnerships with employers which support successful post-secondary pathways for secondary school students. The role of the LLENs will be considered as part of the reform work in response to the Firth Review.</p>
48	That the Victorian Government support community service organisations and social enterprises to establish or expand supported labour hire arrangements to encourage more employers to host work placements for jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in full	<p>The 2020-21 State Budget invested \$619.4 million to provide jobseekers with the information, advice and support they need to get back to work through an expanded Jobs Victoria. This includes a \$266.5 million investment to enable Jobs Victoria to deliver face-to-face intensive support to those who need extra help, and \$250 million investment in wage subsidies to create around 10,000 jobs in priority industries, prioritising jobs that offer sustainable employment pathways. \$150 million is earmarked to create jobs for women, with a particular focus on women over 45 years of age.</p> <p>This builds on the achievements of the Working for Victoria initiative, which created more than 11,000 new jobs for Victorians in pandemic-response short term roles and longer-term six-month jobs supporting local communities. Working for Victoria created more than 1,500 jobs in community sector organisations and social enterprises, prioritising employment for groups most affected by the COVID-19 pandemic.</p> <p>Social enterprises and community service organisations delivering hosted work placements for jobseekers facing disadvantage also benefit from the Victorian Government's flagship Social Procurement Framework (SPF) which is driving inclusive employment outcomes from historically high Government infrastructure investments. While Jobs Victoria delivers the 'supply side', supporting jobseekers to improve their employability and improving access to jobs through wage subsidies, the SPF is a critical driver of the 'demand side', creating opportunities for social benefit suppliers to provide inclusive and diverse workforces, goods and services.</p>
49	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions create an avenue for employers to request post-placement support for Jobs Victoria Employment Network participants beyond 26 weeks of employment if and when required	Support in full	<p>As per recommendation 4, the Victorian Government recognises that jobseekers facing multiple or complex barriers to employment and their employers may require additional support. Additional support will be available to jobseekers through the new Flexible Job Pathways Fund which will support jobseekers facing multiple or complex barriers to employment. Flexible funding will equate to approximately \$3,000 per eligible person and will enable Jobs Victoria partners to provide longer and more intensive support when required, including post-placement support.</p>
50	That the Victorian Government encourage public sector bodies to publish their workforce composition with respect to Aboriginal and culturally diverse employees and employees with disability in their annual report, in addition to age and gender diversity.	Under review	<p>Further consideration of this recommendation is currently underway to inform the most appropriate approach. Amongst others, the main areas of review are:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Whether annual reports of public sector entities are the most appropriate medium to report on this important information or whether alternative reporting mechanisms need to be considered; • Which public sector entities are to be included in the reporting requirement scope; • Interaction of reporting requirements with privacy of employees and their privacy preferences; • Interaction with reporting requirements and obligations under the Victorian Charter of Human Rights and Responsibilities and the Equal Opportunity Act; • Robustness of and consistency of application of reporting requirements which in turn are dependent upon reporting definitions and parameters; and • Reasonable and realistic timeframes by which reporting requirements would be put in place. <p>It is likely that the review period will extend for a period of between 12 to 18 months.</p>

No	Recommendation	Type of Response	Response
			The Victorian Government will also consider whether other publications dedicated specifically to reporting on departmental commitments to Aboriginal employment (including VGAAR and SDRF annual reports) could be expanded to address this recommendation.
51	That the Victorian Government encourage non-public sector employers with 100 or more employees to report on their workforce composition in relation to gender, age, ability and cultural diversity	Support in principle	The Victorian Government is currently engaged in a number of activities that actively model inclusive employment practices and seek to support employers to build capacity in this area. This engagement includes working with the Victorian Equal Opportunity and Human Rights Commission and other relevant bodies to strengthen the capacity of private-sector employers to meet their obligations under the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 2010</i> , including their positive duty to eliminate discrimination, sexual harassment and victimisation, for example through supporting the Commission's provision of equal opportunity education and diversity and inclusion consultancy services to workplaces, and its investigation function. However, the Government acknowledges that this is a complex issue that affects a significant number of employers and employees across Victoria and intersects with many different portfolios, agencies and departments. The Government notes that the Commonwealth's Workplace Gender Equality Agency (WGEA) already mandates monitoring and reporting around workplace gender equity to non-public sector employers with over 100 employees.
52	That the Victorian Government make public the South Australian Centre for Economic Studies' 2019 program evaluation of the Jobs Victoria Employment Network.	Support in full	The 2019 program evaluation of JVEN is available in the Jobs Victoria website: jobs.vic.gov.au/employment-services
53	That the Victorian Government regularly publish data on the number and percentage of participants, placements and outcomes achieved through the Jobs Victoria Employment Network by cohort to enable assessment of the program's outcomes and progress over time.	Support in full	Jobs Victoria's data will provide the ability to analyse information about the number and type of participants and outcomes achieved through Jobs Victoria. Jobs Victoria data will be reported in DJPR annual reports and Budget Paper 3 reporting. Data and insights will be shared with providers and other Government departments on a regular basis.
54	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions review its outcomes payment model for Jobs Victoria Employment Network providers in terms of the appropriateness of employment thresholds for specific jobseeker cohorts, especially jobseekers experiencing family violence or mental ill-health, and develop strategies to accommodate cases where the thresholds may be too high.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the complex vocational and non-vocational barriers faced by many jobseekers. To better respond, Jobs Victoria has introduced a new, flexible funding model that incorporates findings from the 2019 JVEN evaluation and enables greater tailoring for specific jobseeker cohorts. Jobseeker outcomes can also be adjusted on a case-by-case basis. Changes to Jobs Victoria will also have a significant positive effect for priority jobseekers. JVES Core (generalist) services will respond to the needs of all eligible jobseekers in a region. These JVES partners will work collaboratively with other Victorian Government funded services (e.g. mental health services, education and training, and justice) to holistically support jobseekers. JVES will employ expert jobs 'Mentors' who will work with jobseekers to get them work-ready and connected to employment opportunities. Core services will also work collaboratively with focused (specialist) services that target support to specific jobseekers or industries, where specialist service provision will enable outcomes that would be difficult to achieve through core services alone.</p> <p>The Flexible Job Pathways Fund will provide additional support to jobseekers facing multiple or complex barriers to employment. All JVES partners will have access to this fund, providing up to \$3,000 per eligible jobseeker. This funding can be used, for example, to provide emergency accommodation for someone escaping family violence or assist someone to address mental ill-health where it is an impediment to employment.</p>
55	That the Victorian Government expand the eligibility criteria for its employment and reengagement programs to enable more jobseekers to access services, including removing restrictions against unemployed people who have completed Year 12 or who have previously attained a Certificate III	Support in part	<p>The recommendation reflects findings that access to Skills First subsidised vocational education and training usually requires students to undertake a higher qualification than they currently hold to be eligible for subsidised training. In the 2020-21 State Budget, the exemption from this eligibility requirement was increased to 30 per cent of all Skills First commencements in the year for TAFEs and Learn Locals and 10 per cent for other providers. This allows disadvantaged jobseekers attending those providers to undertake a subsidised (or free course if in Free TAFE) course at the same or lower level as the qualification they hold. In addition, there are existing exemptions from the upskilling requirement for particular disadvantaged jobseekers – such as Jobs Victoria clients or retrenched workers.</p> <p>Under the JobTrainer Fund partnership with the Commonwealth Government in 2021, young and unemployed Victorians may also receive subsidised priority training courses without an upskilling requirement.</p> <p>Skills First eligibility settings will be further considered by Government as part of both the Skills for Victoria's Growing Economy Review and the development of a new National Agreement for Skills.</p> <p>In the 2020-21 State budget, Victorian Government-funded employment services have been expanded to enable more jobseekers to access the services that they need. Jobs Victoria Advocates will deliver information and advice to jobseekers and connect them with available services and supports. Jobs Victoria Career Counsellors will offer expert guidance and career mentoring to Victorians who need support to understand their work/career options, focusing on areas with high concentrations of disadvantage. There</p>

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			are only two eligibility requirements for JVES: participants must be either long-term unemployed (26+ weeks) or at risk of long-term unemployment. The Victorian Government will monitor how these responses meet the needs of jobseekers.
56	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions review the number of employment services providers awarded contracts within a region to simplify the process for employers and jobseekers.	Support in full	Jobs Victoria employment partners are selected carefully on a region-by-region basis to address jobseeker needs and regional service provision. The JVEN evaluation offered many learnings and opportunities to connect and strengthen its capacity to operate in different environments. The new JVES will use the same approach. The allocation of new employment services across Victoria will respond to the needs of the region including responsiveness to the labour market need, methodology to achieve employment outcomes, understanding in working with employers to achieve sustainable employment, organisational capacity, commitment to collaborative service delivery and value for money. Decisions are underpinned by best-practice principles as set out in the DJPR procurement policy, which outlines value for money, accountability, governance, scalability and probity as key procurement principles.
57	That the Victorian Government prioritise and fund place-based employment programs that target local jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in full	The investment in Jobs Victoria in the 2020-21 State Budget has enabled a significant expansion of local, targeted employment services that are responsive to the local labour markets and communities in which they operate. JVES targets long-term jobseekers and those at risk of long-term unemployment due to employment barriers. As articulated in the program guidelines, JVES providers will connect with other services in the community that support jobseekers to increase their ability to find and retain work (e.g housing, health, training), and service delivery will be adjusted to meet the needs of different locations.
58	That the Victorian Government strongly encourage all councils, and require councils that govern a Local Government Area ranked in the three lowest quintiles of the Index of Relative Socio-economic Disadvantage, to develop and implement a social procurement policy and a framework to achieve the policy's objectives within five years.	Support in principle	The Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework (SPF) does not currently apply to local government. However, the Government recognises that local government is strategically placed to leverage social procurement opportunities to improve employment outcomes for local jobseekers facing disadvantage, particularly those disproportionately impacted by the COVID-19 pandemic. A number of Councils already apply social and local procurement requirements as part of their own procurement policies. The Victorian Government will continue to support this wherever possible. The Victorian Government will commence a social procurement project with councils within the three lowest Index of Relative Socio-Economic Disadvantage quintiles. The project will be supported by the current Victorian Government social procurement guidance for local governments 'Beyond Value for Money' updated in conjunction with the Municipal Association of Victoria in 2018.
59	That the Victorian Government ensure its contracts stipulate explicit employment targets in their social procurement clauses that reflect the circumstances and demographics of jobseekers in that workplace's location	Support in part	The <i>Local Jobs First Act 2003</i> is mandatory and requires all government departments and agencies to apply Local Jobs First to all procurements over \$3 million in metro Melbourne and \$1 million in regional Victoria. Local Jobs First supports Victorian businesses and workers by ensuring that small and medium size enterprises (SMEs) are given a full and fair opportunity to compete for both large and small government contracts, helping to create job opportunities, including for apprentices, trainees and cadets. All Local Jobs First applicable projects make commitments in their tender documents and in their contracts using the Local Industry Development Plan which includes employment commitments. Local Jobs First is complementary to the Social Procurement Framework. The priority focus in response to the COVID-19 pandemic economic downturn is employment. Explicit employment targets can be achieved through stipulating a minimum amount of contractual expenditure on employment or allocating a percentage of labour hours to be set aside for employment of target cohorts. Government buyers are encouraged to develop targets that reflect the circumstances and demographics of local jobseekers. However, they are also advised to frame targets flexibly. Suppliers propose targets they deem to be realistic within the scope of the specific contract and market competition helps to achieve the best outcomes on targets for government procurement activities. Not all types of contracts lend themselves to explicit employment targets and some suppliers have more scope than others to meet targets. For example, a professional services contract worth a few hundred thousand dollars might not provide an opportunity to employ staff beyond those already in the organisation. Also, smaller suppliers in regional areas have a limited pool of social benefit suppliers and inclusive employers to sub-contract. However, the Victorian Government will progress opportunities to broaden the use of explicit employment targets as it strengthens the implementation of the Social Procurement Framework. A key focus of the Government in the economic recovery stage – including through the Social Procurement Framework – is employment and training opportunities for young people and women, including the use of targets towards this end.
60	That the Department of Treasury and Finance provide information on, review compliance with, and evaluate the	Support in full	The Victorian Government has already commenced planning work regarding the development of an evaluation framework to evaluate the effectiveness of the Social Procurement Framework.

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	effectiveness of, the Victorian Government's Social Procurement Framework.		The Victorian Government will further develop monitoring, compliance and accountability mechanisms for the Social Procurement Framework. The Government is also establishing a procurement compliance function that will focus on immediate implementation of COVID-19 recovery support for women and young people through procurement associated with the 2020-21 State Budget and high value procurements (e.g. State Purchase Contracts). The establishment of the compliance function is a priority for 2021.
61	That the Victorian Government continue to support the creation and capacity building of social enterprises through its Social Enterprise Strategy with a stronger focus on regional social enterprises.	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government is implementing the 2017 Victorian Social Enterprise Strategy (the Strategy) which plays a key role in delivering social and economic outcomes, including delivering inclusive economic growth through job creation, improved workforce participation and increased productivity. The Government supports social enterprises to grow through implementing three key action areas:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1 - Increasing impact and innovation 2 - Building business capacity and skills 3 - Improving market access.
62	That the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions work directly with jobseekers facing disadvantage and employers to co-design improvements to employment programs so they meet jobseekers' needs	Support in principle	The new suite of Jobs Victoria services is based on person-centred principles and tailoring of responses to best help unemployed Victorians to secure work that suits their aspirations and circumstances. Funding for these services is directed to organisations with proven experience and expertise in delivery of effective employment support services to jobseekers facing employment disadvantage. Underpinning these services is a new Charter of Services that articulates a commitment to work with jobseekers in ways that meet their needs. This Charter of Service was informed by in-depth qualitative research into the experiences and perspectives of jobseekers regarding the type of support they want.
63	That the Victorian Government introduce a revolving and forgivable loan fund to support jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds start a small business.	Not support	<p>The Victorian Government recognises the importance of assisting jobseekers from disadvantaged backgrounds wishing to start a small business.</p> <p>The Government currently provides business mentoring for Aboriginal business owners through the Business Recovery and Resilience Mentoring program and Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce. LaunchVic also provides grant funding rounds for Aboriginal, multicultural, diverse and inclusive cohorts by investing in organisations and businesses that deliver programs to stimulate and support entrepreneurial activity in the Victorian start-up ecosystem. Business Victoria digital channels also provide information in languages other than English to assist Victorians with starting a business, including connection to in person support, guides and free online training. These interventions are evidence based and will continue to be refined on the basis of best practice to ensure the desired outcome is achieved</p> <p>The Commonwealth Government also provides financial support for Australians to start a small business through the 'New Business Assistance with NEIS' program. The NEIS program provides support to people interested in starting their own business or who need help to refocus an existing micro-business through the NEIS Allowance for up to 39 weeks and NEIS Rental Assistance for up to 26 weeks for eligible applicants. The Commonwealth also provides the 'Business Development and Assistance Program' for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander individuals and micro-businesses with access to finance products, advice, training and workshops to start or improve a small business.</p> <p>However, there is insufficient evidence that additional support of the proposed kind (i.e. a revolving and forgivable loan fund) would achieve the outcomes envisaged. The Victorian Government advocates that better engagement with support agencies, such as Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce, AMES, Council on the Ageing and the Brotherhood of St Laurence, will help improve support available for disadvantaged jobseekers. The Victorian Government will also continue connecting disadvantaged Victorians aspiring to start a small business to available support programs.</p>
64	That the Victorian Government provide resources and mentoring and run workshops through Small Business Victoria specifically for Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse people interested in starting a small business	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government's targeted business support communications include Small Business Victoria's digital and social media channels, the Multicultural Business Ministerial Council and the Victorian Multicultural Commission's in-language targeted information to CALD businesses and support groups.</p> <p>The Victorian Government has partnered with Kinaway Aboriginal Chamber of Commerce and EACH to provide wellbeing and mental health support for Aboriginal business operators under the <i>Wellbeing and Mental Health Support for Victorian Businesses</i> program.</p> <p>The Multicultural Business Ministerial Council provides a consultative forum on issues affecting the multicultural business sector and the Victorian Multicultural Commission coordinates a network of Victoria's multicultural chambers of commerce to promote community and economic prosperity.</p> <p>In 2020, the Victorian Government delivered 37 business workshops (to 459 participants) to support CALD groups in collaboration with a number of CALD business groups and councils. In 2019 a tailored <i>Winning Government Business</i> workshop was held in partnership with the Department of Jobs, Precincts and Regions Aboriginal Economic Development team, attracting 32 Aboriginal business owners.</p>

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			Standalone CALD workshops were delivered in conjunction with DJPR's Skilled and Business Migration branch, Living and Learning Hub Pakenham, Manningham Council, Swan Hill Rural Council, Rowville Neighbourhood Centre and Monash Community Link.
65	That the Department of Transport review the number and frequency of bus services to and from education centres and commercial and industrial zones in metropolitan and regional Victoria in relation to where jobseekers facing disadvantage live, and make improvements where necessary to increase access	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government's \$100 million Better Bus Fund and the \$28 million More Regional Bus Services initiative has delivered improved bus networks and services across Melbourne and Regional Victoria. These investments supplemented by other funding into bus services has made it easier for students to get to school, TAFE, University as well as VCAL and VET classes.</p> <p>The 2020-21 State Budget committed another \$25 million to improving bus services including initiatives that make it easier and safer for students to get to school.</p> <p>The Victorian Government regularly reviews bus routes across the network as changing transport needs arise across the network. When reviewing existing bus routes or planning new ones, factors considered include the likely number of users, suitability of the road network for bus operations, development of a direct and easily understood network, and connectivity with other public transport services.</p> <p>As part of the new timetable delivered in January 2021, approximately 360 bus and coach routes are progressively being re-coordinated to align with the new timetable. Coordination between buses/coaches and trains is vital as it helps people access education, employment and health services and it enables people to participate in social and sporting activities. It also helps to reduce demand for station car parking and reduces traffic congestion at the station and on roads.</p> <p>The Victorian Government's Flexible Local Transport Solutions Program invests in small-scale initiatives across Victoria that addresses transport disadvantage, integrates with other local transport options and improves transport access. The program aims to support flexible, tailored transport services or trials particularly in regional Victoria and outer suburban/interface areas.</p> <p>The Government works through Regional Partnerships, local councils and community organisations to identify and co-fund projects and initiatives that strengthen communities by improving access to local transport services and infrastructure. Projects funded include initiatives to provide vital transport services for disadvantaged young people to access VET programs in South Gippsland.</p>
66	That the Victorian Government support the creation of higher education study hubs in regional and rural areas of Victoria with poor access to tertiary education options.	Support in principle	<p>The Commonwealth Government has primary responsibility for policy settings, funding and regulation of higher education in Australia.</p> <p>The Commonwealth's Regional University Centres program enables regional students to study tertiary courses locally delivered by distance from any Australian institution. It provides infrastructure, administrative and academic support services and student support services.</p> <p>Victoria currently has one regional university centre located in Gippsland (Gippsland East Local Learning and Employment Network), with a second scheduled to be established in 2021 (Countries University Centre Bass Coast).</p> <p>The Commonwealth Government has indicated it will appoint a Regional Education Commissioner in the first half of 2021 to oversee and coordinate the effort to implement the National Regional, Rural and Remote Tertiary Education Strategy which includes ensuring equitable access to higher education for regional and remote students.</p> <p>The Victorian Government will continue to advocate to the Commonwealth for further support for regional and rural areas of Victoria to access tertiary education.</p>
67	That the Victorian Government enter into five-year funding agreements with not-for-profit organisations to enable them to provide intensive wraparound employment services to jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in principle	<p>Under the new JVES model, the Victorian Government is funding organisations to deliver services for the period between July 2021 and June 2023. Through Jobs Victoria, the Victorian Government believes its commissioning arrangements are appropriate and enable partner organisations to deliver high-quality services with a degree of flexibility. The 2019 JVEN evaluation supports these claims, demonstrating that JVEN produced strong employment outcomes for long-term jobseekers facing multiple barriers, including those in locations experiencing the highest rates of unemployment. JVES builds on evaluation findings and will enable more partners to deliver appropriate supports for a broader range of jobseekers facing disadvantage. Performance will be continually monitored to determine where there are areas for improvement.</p>
68	That the Victorian Government improve efficiency by extending funding for pilot programs that have achieved significant improvements in employment outcomes for jobseekers facing disadvantage.	Support in principle	<p>The Victorian Government has previously encouraged 13 pilot programs to support disadvantaged jobseekers, which were funded under two rounds of the Jobs Victoria Innovation Fund (JVIF). JVIF is currently being evaluated. Funding of future initiatives and extensions of existing pilot programs will be developed based on the evaluation of the current programs.</p>
69	That the Victorian Government develop a youth employment strategy to help young people gain the skills	Support in full	<p>The Victorian Government has committed to develop a whole-of government youth strategy to ensure that all young people are healthy, safe and empowered to contribute to the issues that affect them.</p>

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	and experience they need to successfully transition into the workforce.		Over 9,200 jobseekers aged 15-24 have registered with Jobs Victoria services, and more than 4,100 of these young people have been supported into work (as at 1 March 2021). DJPR and Jobs Victoria also provide support for young people under a number of programs: the Youth Employment Program (YEP) and the Youth Employment Scheme (YES). These programs offer young Victorians paid opportunities to work in the Victorian public sector, providing young people with a solid foundation for a career in the public service. The 2020-21 State Budget also provided \$5 million for youth traineeships to create sustainable employment and young people aged under 25 are a priority cohort for the \$250 million Jobs Victoria Fund.
70	That the Victorian Skills Commissioner work with each of Victoria's Local Learning and Employment Networks to develop and regularly update skills demand snapshots for their regions to inform students, jobseekers, educators and the broader community of local skills shortages and future workforce training needs	Support in part	<p>The Victorian Skills Commissioner currently undertakes Regional Skills Taskforces in order to gather information and provide advice about the unique skills needs of Victoria's regions. The regions focused on in this work align with the Regional Partnerships.</p> <p>Each Taskforce is made up of employers from across the region who represent the breadth of the region's major industries.</p> <p>Additional stakeholders are also consulted throughout the Taskforce process, including Victoria's Local Learning and Employment Networks.</p> <p>The outcome of these Regional Skills Taskforces are the publicly available Regional Skills Demand Profiles which outline the issues raised throughout the Taskforce process, the unique skills and training needs of a region, and how the training system can best support local industry now and into the future.</p> <p>There are no immediate plans to undertake a Regional Skills Taskforce in metropolitan regions. The 2020-21 State Budget allocated additional funding to the Victorian Skills Commissioner to complete a Regional Skills Taskforce in the remaining Regional Partnership regions.</p>