



# Legislative Assembly Economy and Infrastructure Committee

## **Inquiry into student pathways to in-demand industries**

### Template for Youth Associate final report to Committee

**Name:** [Matilda Ryan]

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**Bio:**

Matilda (Tilly) Ryan is a 23-year-old community champion and youth advocate from Warrnambool on the Great South Coast of Victoria.

She has played a vital role collaborating, innovating, and building strong relationships across industries and LGAs to address challenges identified by other young people in her community.

This includes working alongside Brophy Family and Youth Services, The Brotherhood of St Laurence in their place-based programs, and the National Youth Employment Body to develop strategies and a better understanding of levels of governance.

Tilly loves appreciating nature, music and trying new things. This year she went to New Zealand to skydive, drove across Australia via the Nullarbor Plain, and to China to climb the Great Wall.

In her spare time, Tilly can be found kicking goals on the footy field and mentoring others to find and lead with their values.

**Summary of consultations:**

[Write a brief summary of your consultations.]

16 young Victorians participated in the consultations. The average age of interviewees was 23 years old. 15 of the participants were currently employed. Among them, 1 was on a gap year, 4 were working and/or studying trades, 10 were not engaged with study, and 2 were serving in the Defence Force.

In terms of living arrangements, 9 interviewees were living out of home, 7 living with family. 50% of respondents identified as being from regional or rural Victoria. There was a significant presence of mental health challenges or experiences across participants. There were no culturally diverse interviewees, 20% identified as queer or part of the Rainbow Community.

**The interviews were conducted through a mix of methods:**

- Over 40% of surveys were completed independently without further instruction.
- Two one-on-one sessions were held over coffee.
- One group session was conducted with four participants.

In total, approximately six hours per week over three weeks were spent engaging with survey participants.

Connections with interviewees came from a variety of networks:

- 60% were close friends or people the interviewer knew from school.
- 20% were contacted through career exposure opportunities.
- 20% were connected through sports or community groups.

#### **Interview results:**

- **What experiences did your interviewees tell you about?**

Many participants shared experiences of poor career advice and misinformation about work readiness during their schooling years. Several felt unprepared for real-world employment expectations, especially regarding the transition from school to full-time work.

- **What did your interviewees say is currently working well?**

- the ability to use social media and technology to explore diverse job pathways.
- online tools specific to industry and when that coincides with practical training. These opportunities are effective when local communities run open days, events etc.

Collaborative, co-designed and flexible arrangements. For example;

- free TAFE courses,
- placement opportunities
- wellbeing support
- work-life-balance
- financial incentives

In relation to VET and career advice, interviewees reflected on the impact that co-design has on the effectiveness of learning environments.

Feeling connected and being able to join a community if relocated. Support is a significant resource that is vital for success.

- **What problems or issues did your interviewees tell you about?**

- Negative attitudes of employers and career advisors toward young or inexperienced workers.
- There was a significant lack of career advice/ mentoring about the capabilities and the skill sets required to join the workforce.
- Content provided at schools, conversations with friends and family, interactions in public all impact a young person's ability to build skills. Responses indicate across the education system there was not enough relevant or effective information to develop pathways into more meaningful successful employment.
- Leading to lack of direction and confidence among young people entering the workforce.
- Financial stress, the housing crisis, and climate change were frequently mentioned as major concerns affecting their sense of stability and motivation.

- **What solutions or recommendations did they have?**

- Stronger support for vocational and applied training (VAT) pathways, including TAFE programs and “earn and learn” models such as traineeships and apprenticeships.
- Better career guidance that reflects current industry needs and modern job markets.
- As one interviewee put it: *“If schools focused more on practical skills and real work pathways instead of just pushing uni, we’d actually feel ready to start our careers.”*