

Executive Officer
Economic, Education, Jobs and Skills Committee
Parliament House
Spring Street
East Melbourne Vic 3002

GOTAFE submission to the Victorian Parliament's Economic, Education, Jobs & Skills Committee's Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools.

Goulburn Ovens TAFE is extremely passionate about the careers advice the young people in the Hume region receive from their Secondary Schools. We have, for the past 2 years, employed a dedicated team of Youth Engagement Officers to work intensely with Secondary Schools with the sole aim to bring VET pathways into their classroom conversation. We have developed resources to assist careers/home room teachers to improve their capacity to explain the benefits of a career in trades and vocational streams to at-risk students before they disengage.

The Hume Region has been identified as having the highest youth unemployment rate in Victoria and as being in the top 10 youth unemployment hotspots in Australia. GOTAFE continues to work towards ensuring that at-risk teenagers have a better start in life by reaching into schools to capture, understand, and meet the needs of at-risk secondary students before their academic disengagement.

Evidence demonstrates that educational underachievement in the Hume region is resulting in low employability which in turn results in high youth unemployment, despite skills shortages being evident across the region. GOTAFE has redesigned some entry level courses to attract youth back to training, and to meet industry's expectations for employability. GOTAFE has created appealing non-VTG "taster" courses to reconnect less academic young people with training and the opportunities of trades and other vocational occupations.

Finally, GOTAFE has established industry networks across priority growth sectors, for student placement as interns or employees. GOTAFE will continue to grow its network of employers in growth sectors, such as food processing, primary production, and health and ensure that young people in schools are aware of the employment opportunities that exist in the Hume region.

We welcome the opportunity to share with you some of our experiences and thoughts, as below.

The relationship between school career advice and employment outcomes

During the past 2 years 4 Youth Engagement Officers and 1 Careers Events Coordinator have worked with 27 Secondary Schools across the Hume Region. We have developed a number of Programs to support classroom and one on one conversations to explain and promote VET pathways. We have delivered over 450 individual Vocational Plans to potential school leavers.

A very interesting and relevant statistic from the Hume Region:

- on average only 30% of Year 12 graduates go to university

It is GOTAFE's observation that 70% of school leavers in the Hume Region are not getting access to appropriate career information from within their school environment. The constant struggle for Secondary Schools in "balancing the budget" has meant a moving away from VET in Schools programs hence lessening the young person's exposure to Vocational Pathways.

From our experience

Schools ability to facilitate youth employment outcomes is limited due to the following factors:

- The direct link from school career adviser to employment is very inconsistent and is heavily reliant on the time allocation of the careers practitioner in place,
- The career practitioner's capabilities to build and maintain industry networks that provide direct outcomes for students,
- Deficiencies in 'real' vocational knowledge and industry expectations by careers practitioners in the school setting. This is sometimes attributed to the roles being undertaken by under loaded teaching staff who mostly only hold a teaching qualification.
- Limited capability to undertake meaningful work experience programs and structured work placements due to time allocations, lack of industry connections, lack of awareness of industry expectations, lack of confidence in the LLEN's functionality of the SWL portal and its value, and value placed on genuine vocational experience by the schools,
- Too much focus on University outcomes and emphasis on ATAR data.

How well current career advice programs meet the needs of school leavers

- For the most part poor, based on the information above. Capacity to spend the time needed with individuals is the key and is where the shortfalls begin.

The challenges faced by school career advisers

- Career development for young people doesn't, and cannot happen in isolation. The schools need external supports, greater access to industry and could utilise past students more to allow those with the most current information to work with their students.
- More work needs to be done with parents and carers to increase awareness and understanding of what the options are post-secondary. Parents feel the pressure from Schools and teachers for their children to aspire to University only.
- An inundation of information by external stakeholders, particularly universities, that take an entirely biased approach to course guidance and advice. All are trying to get in with the 'careers advisor' and isolate other service providers at times.

Specific career advice needs of young people in regional Victoria and how to address them

- Unbiased support provided in collaboration with the schools by vocationally aware professionals that are local and invested in their regional space.
- Funding to provide transport and access to career information opportunities.
- The capacity to reach out to the younger people in primary schools to take a more pro-active approach to starting the vocational conversation earlier and allowing us to teach them how to manage their career aspirations at the transition points of the schooling/life.
- The career service needs to be a tangible product with real experiences and relevance that will ultimately help shape a young person's choices.

Interstate and overseas best practice models that could be implemented in Victoria

This report from New Zealand is very interesting:

<http://www.ero.govt.nz/publications/careers-education-and-guidance-good-practice/>

- The current model of GOTAFE's Youth Engagement Team, which is able to provide one on one face to face career guidance, is considered the point of difference within those schools that we are collaborating with. Although this type of model is not new, successes continue and the program is growing because GOTAFE has invested in its regions youth. We now know that the support needed in the career space requires more than just a school career practitioner, it is a team effort and needs to cater for all pathways and therefore utilise the experts from:
 - University
 - TAFE
 - Industry

Should you require any further information or wish to seek clarification on any points please feel free to contact:

Jodee Price
Manager, Skills and Employment

[REDACTED]

Phone: [REDACTED], mob. [REDACTED]

Regards,

[REDACTED]

Margie Fixter
Acting CEO
GOTAFE