

**An Overview of the Labour Market and Labour Market
Policies, and an Outline of Best Practices and Lessons
Learned in Terms of Youth Employment**

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Prepared for ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on
Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific
Bangkok, 27 February – 1 March 2002

This is a working paper written to serve as a basis for discussion at the ILO/Japan Tripartite Regional Meeting on Youth Employment in Asia and the Pacific. The views and opinions expressed in this paper are those of the author and do not constitute an endorsement by the International Labour Organization. The paper has not been edited and should not be cited or distributed without consent from the author and the ILO. Please send comments and suggestions to ILO BAO/EASMAT at E-mail: teerasak@ilo.org.

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An Overview of the Labour Market and Labour Market Policies, and an Outline of Best Practices and Lessons Learned in Terms of Youth Employment

I. PREAMBLE

Australia's economic growth for nine years to mid 2000 has been described by the OECD as '*remarkable*' (OECD, 2001, quoted in Curtain, 2001). There has been nine years of continuous growth, representing the longest period of economic expansion since the 1960s. According to a joint publication in January 2001 by the country's key organisations representing the social partners¹, '*Australia is enjoying a sustained period of prosperity and affluence. Most of the country's economic fundamentals are positive – low inflation, consistent economic growth, strong export growth, high labour productivity, sustainable fiscal policy and solid returns for investors*'. (The Boston Consulting Group, 2001).

Accompanying this economic growth has been significant job creation with corresponding reductions in the national unemployment level, and rises in labour force participation. In the last five years alone, the total number of jobs grew by over 800,000 or 10%. The unemployment level dropped to a national low of 6.1% in October 2000, the lowest figure since 1990.

The last twelve months has seen a slowing of national economic growth, with negative impacts on job creation and employment levels. Unemployment rose to 7.1% in September 2001, only to fall back to 6.7% in December 2001. The long-term prospects are still uncertain given the events of September 11, but most commentators are expecting a further slowing of economic growth and unemployment levels to climb over 7%.

Despite the overall economic and job growth of the last decade, the reality of persistently high levels of youth unemployment remains a major national challenge. Job growth in recent years has overwhelmingly benefited adults aged 25 years and over, with only 1% more 15-24 year olds in employment in 2000 than in 1995. (The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001).

The unemployment rate for teenagers is three times greater than the national overall figure. For young adults (20-24 years) the unemployment rate is double that of older age groups. According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics the national unemployment rate in October 2001 for persons seeking full time employment was 24.1% and 11.3% for 15-19 years and 20-24 years respectively. This involved a total of 161,400 unemployed young people. An additional 96,100 were seeking part time employment.

During the last decade, Australia at both the national and state levels has implemented a multitude of labour market initiatives aimed at enhancing employment development through the strategic themes of:

- stimulating labour demand;

¹ Group included Australian Council of Trade Unions, Business Council of Australia, Australian Council of Social Service and Committee for Economic Development of Australia.

- encouraging enterprise creation and expansion;
- developing competitive human skills, and
- creating an efficient and flexible labour market.

Partnership between all levels of government has been a constant delivery theme, as has the increasing role of both the non-government and private industry sectors, with government increasingly privatising labour market support services via these sectors.

II. DEFINITION OF YOUTH

Most government agencies in Australia define youth as the age cluster 12 to 25. However, the national statistical collecting agency, the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) defines youth as those aged 15 to 24 years.

Young people and youth are generally used as synonyms. A distinction is often made between teenagers (15 to 19 year olds) and young adults (20 to 24 year olds).

III. THE DEMOGRAPHIC SITUATION OF YOUNG AUSTRALIANS

Table 1 below records the number and proportion of 15 to 24 year olds in the Australian population since 1976 and youth population projections through to 2026.

In 1999, there were approximately 2.7 million 15 to 24 year olds, representing 14.2% of total population. This figure is well down from the peak proportion of 18% in 1979. As illustrated by Table 1, the proportion of young people is projected to decline to 13.5% in 2006 and 12.3% by 2026.

Table 1	NUMBER AND PROPORTION OF 15 TO 24 YEAR OLDS, AUSTRALIA, 1976-1999, AND PROJECTED TO 2036						
	1976	1986	1996	1999	2006	2016	2026
Number ('000)	2,434	2,684	2,676	2,695	2,748	2,867	2,985
% of all persons	17.3	16.8	14.6	14.2	13.5	13.0	12.3
Source: Report from the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001							

In 1996, there were approximately 72,000 indigenous young people (ABS, 4110.0). This represented 2.7% of all young people, compared to 2.1% in 1996. Of more significance is the fact that the proportion of indigenous population under 25 years old was 60% in 2000,

compared to only 21% for total population and the median age is 19 years, compared to 35 for the total Australian population. These figures illustrate the emerging issues associated with increasing labour market demand by indigenous youth, and the need for special measures.

More than 420,000 young people – or almost one in six were born overseas (ABS, 4110.0). In 1996, 43% of Australia’s youth population born overseas were from Asian countries, and 25% from European countries. This is a reversal from ten years earlier (1986) where the equivalent proportions were 19% and 52% respectively (Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001).

Australian young people are strongly urban in terms of location – 66% are living in major urban centres, due largely to the greater availability of work and education opportunities (ABS, 4111.0).

In 1997, 66% of young people were living with their parents (ABS, 4110.0), a proportion that has increased from 61% in 1982. This trend of greater dependency on parents reflects the increased educational participation rates and deferral of partnering, child bearing and home purchasing.

Just under 50% of 20 to 24 year olds have established a separate household. One fifth of 20-24 year olds are living in a couple relationship. 12% of 20-24 year olds (150,000) have dependant children, of which 45,000 (nearly all female) were sole parents (ABS, 41211.0). Numbers of homeless young people appear to be increasing in Australia. One study estimates 15,000 – 19,000 homeless youth in 1991, growing to 37,000 homeless young people aged 12 to 24 on a typical night in 1998 (MacKenzie and Chamberlain, 1998).

Over the past 20 years, there has been a substantial decline in the proportion of young people who leave school early in Australia ¹. Now only approximately 10% of young people leave school before age 16. This group is concentrated among those with low levels of achievement in literacy and numeracy, males, indigenous students and young people from rural locations.

In 1980, only one third of Australians completed 12 years of education. Now 70% of young Australian complete, providing Australia with one of the highest school participation rates amongst OECD countries (OECD, 2000). However, as table 2 below shows, education participation peaked in 1993 and has slightly declined since that time.

Table 2	EDUCATION PARTICIPATION RATES, 15 – 24 YEAR OLDS					
	(% of population of same age)					
	Age 15	Age 16	Age 17	Age 18	Age 19	Age 20-24
1985	97	89	64	49	40	23
1990	100	93	77	60	49	27
1993	99	97	85	68	57	31
1995	99	95	84	65	55	32
1997	98	95	84	65	54	33
1999	97	91	81	64	53	33

(Source: Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001)

¹ Compulsory school attendance ends at age 15 in all states of Australia, except Tasmania where it ends at age 16.

Information about vocational education and labour force participation of young Australians is provided in Section VII below.

Finally, the stressful nature of the transition from school to work and its health implications needs to be noted. The Boston Consulting Group (2001) captured its impact well with this statement, *'the transition from school to work is a turbulent and uncertain period for most young people, even if many of them start on the right track. It may involve several steps forth and back between education and work. Living through this transition is a stressful time for many young people. Young Australians aged 18-24 years have the highest prevalence of mental health disorder of any age group. Over a quarter of young people (27%) report suffering from some form of mental health disorder such as anxiety (involving feelings of tension, distress or nervousness), affective (mood) or substance abuse disorders'*.

IV. YOUTH POLICY

Most state governments have prepared a youth policy which seeks to be a practical demonstration and declaration of the priority and directions the state intends giving to the development of its young men and women. These policies, often accompanied with a youth strategy and appropriate structures seek to enhance youth participation and development within the state. The link between economic and social opportunities, and the active participation of young people in the process of opportunity creation has been a growing focus in Australia.

Best Practice Example

In South Australia, an *Office of Employment and Youth* has been created to fulfil the lead role in the development of employment and youth policy program initiatives within the state. It has the twin focus of developing and implementing policy and program initiatives which –

- create employment opportunities for all South Australians, and
- progress the full participation of young people in economic and social life.

web: www.employment.sa.au

At the national level, no National Youth Policy exists. However there are a range of national statements and strategies in existence that provide key elements of a national agenda and framework for action for young people, namely:

- The Commonwealth/State agreed *National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first century*
- *The Vocational Education and Training in Schools Framework*

- *The Prime Minister's Community and Business Partnership*
- *The Stronger Families and Communities Strategy.*

Of great significance was the release in July 2001 of the statement of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce entitled *Footprints to the Future*. The Taskforce was established in September 1999 to advise the national government on how the nation could improve support for young people and their families as a young person moves towards becoming independent in the community, and how to strengthen support for young people at risk of not proceeding successfully from school to further education and training or on to full time employment and independence. At the Report's launch, the then Minister for Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Dr David Kemp, stated that the report set out a policy framework for supporting young Australians through school, and from school to further education, training, work and active citizenship. He stated – '*all young people deserve our support and "Footprints to the Future" is a well researched and an excellent blueprint as to how best to assist young people in making the step to adulthood. The Government is now responding in an effective and positive way to the recommendations contained in this important Report*' (media release, 10 July 2001).

Footprints to the Future 'sets out a policy framework for supporting young people through school, and from school to further education, training, work and active citizenship. The Report recognises that education and training, the provision of career and transition support for all young people and their families and a focus on local partnerships will help to create opportunity rich communities that will provide the foundations for bright futures for our young people' (Youth Bureau, 2001)

Footprints to the Future focuses on five connected principles/directions, namely –

- a national commitment to all young people;
- education and training as the foundations for effective transitions;
- the development of a youth career and transition support system;
- enhancement of focussed local partnerships; and,
- bringing about change in the way we support young people and respond to diversity.

At the heart of the recommendations of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce report is the concept of a *National Commitment to All Young People*, to be implemented through partnership with state and territory governments, community and business. In the words of the Report, this commitment would '*set out the things that we should be providing for our young people. it would aim to support them in transition to independence*'.

In practical terms, this National Commitment would undertake to provide all young people with the opportunity to –

- '*complete 12 years of schooling (or equivalent vocational training);*
- *undertake vocational education and training programs and structured workplace learning while at school and beyond;*
- *acquire employment and life skills which enable them to be dependant, confident and active members of the community;*

- *have access to a professional career and transition support system;*
- *if they leave school before completing 12 years of schooling, return to affordable and relevant training programs in a range of community settings;*
- *have available in their local community a range of support, which offers them early intervention with problems, crisis assistance and suitable long term help; and*
- *take part in local cultural, recreational, sporting and community service activities’.*

Many of the issues and recommendations identified by the Taskforce build on the vision set out in another significant national youth policy document *The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-First Century*, which was formulated by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs in 1999 (see Appendix 2).

Appendix I reproduces in full the National Commitment Statement, including the requirement for:

- *‘cultural and paradigm shifts in community institutions and systems;*
- *Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments to work together;*
- *integrated supported networks which create opportunities and respond to the diversity of challenges faced by young people;*
- *focussed and collaborative partnerships at the local level involving schools, industry, business, government and non-government agencies, communities, young people and their families;*
- *the development of learning pathways for each young person, transition follow-up mechanisms and transition indicators;*
- *the development of a comprehensive career and transition support system and the development of employability and life skill learning programs; and*
- *appropriate income support, health care and housing foundations’.*

Significant contribution to youth policy thinking and development is also coming from the community, philanthropic and private sectors, as they advocate and demonstrate new thinking. In particular there is growing promotion of paradigm change regarding young men and women which sees them as an asset for economic and social development.

problem	⇒	problem solver
client	⇒	change maker
recipient	⇒	co-participant
adult in the making	⇒	a citizen today
tomorrows leaders	⇒	part of today’s leadership team
an at risk population to be dealt with	⇒	a leadership asset to be cultivated

Below are three best practice examples which illustrate this focus on paradigm change thinking by the private, community and philanthropic sectors in terms of their approaches to working with young people.

Best Practice Example

The *Myer Youth Transitions Model* has been instigated by the Sidney Myer fund (a private philanthropic organisation), and a range of community organisations. The National government has contributed \$200,000. Supporting young people who are homeless or within the care and protective system, the program develops young peoples' independent living skills and personal resources. It develops a network of support, employment, education and housing options for each young person.

Best Practice Example

*Youth at the Centre*¹ is a national youth development initiative involving a private organisation (Bank of I.D.E.A.S), government agencies (national and state) and philanthropic organisations. It is a philosophy and a program which responds to the key issues related the retention of young men and women in regional Australia, and their active involvement in its economic and social future. As implied in the title – Youth at the Centre – it seeks to promote the active participation and leadership roles of young people in identifying and creating positive futures for their rural communities.

Program initiatives include:

- Changemakers – supports young people to identify and respond in practical ways to needs and opportunities within their communities;
- C.R.E.A.T.E (Creating Rural Entrepreneurial Attitudes Through Education) – enables young people to explore and enter self employment and social entrepreneurship;
- Youth leadership – provides a variety of opportunities for young people to develop leadership skills and experience leadership;
- Grantmakers – promotes the importance of young people being able to determine and influence community need and opportunity through youth philanthropy; and
- National Network – opportunity for rural young people to link with others from across Australia seeking to be part of positive change within their communities.

web: bankofideas.com.au

¹ The set of principles advocated by the Bank of I.D.E.A.S to enhance meaningful youth participation is reproduced as Appendix 3.

Best Practice Example

Lead On is a program based in a number of regional centres in the State of Victoria which provides opportunities for young people to learn about business and enterprise, learn about their communities and become better equipped for the future. It provides real-life, hands-on opportunities as part of a business or community organisation.

Lead on has instigated projects that range from surveys into youth services for local government, research and recommendations on smart cards for a local bank, developing scripts for a video on mental health for youth, writing sports columns for a local newspaper to staging one of the largest career expos ever held in regional Australia.

web: leadon.com.au

V. TRENDS THAT INFLUENCE THE EMPLOYMENT ENVIRONMENT

As a context for understanding the Australian labour market and the specific youth labour market, the following represents a summary of key trends of the past decade.

- strong overall economic growth (especially in the last 5 years), with slowing of the economy during the last 12 months;
- persistent high levels of unemployment for young men and women;
- shrinking of the full time job market for young people, and their increasing dependence on part-time work opportunities;
- transition to adulthood and economic independence becoming increasingly complex;
- the aging of Australian population;
- growing impact of globalisation and international competition;
- widespread community belief for greater equity and reconciliation with the country's indigenous peoples;
- the business sector playing a more significant role in community life;
- the importance of social coalitions (involving government, private and community organisations) coming together to address issues at the local level;

- growing dependence on private and community organisations to deliver employment support services;
- loss of services in rural areas;
- inequalities in terms of regional distribution of job opportunities;
- emergence of service and knowledge based industries as important sources of employment, with decline in traditional employment areas – agriculture, mining and manufacturing;
- consistent demographic change with population movement to coastal areas and population decline in most inland rural areas;
- increasing diversity of experience of communities; and
- current government priorities revolving around themes of economic efficiency, social cohesion, small government, devolution, partnerships, self-reliance, mutual obligations and prevention and early intervention¹.

VI. TRENDS IN THE CURRENT AUSTRALIAN LABOUR MARKET

The following information about labour market performance over the last year has been provided through *The Annual Report* of the Department of Employment, Work Relations and Small Business and *Labour Force Survey, October 2001* of the Australian Bureau of Statistics.

(a) Employment²

Table 3 below provides a summary of the employment situation in Australia in 1991 and 2001.

The year 2000/2001 has seen a slowing in employment growth which characterised the last five years. During this 12 month period, total employment increased by only 57,000 jobs (0.6%), significantly down on the creation of 300,000 jobs (3.4%) experienced in 1999/2000.

This period, 2000/01 has also seen a reversal in the strong growth in full-time employment³ evident in previous years. In fact, during 2000/2001, full-time employment opportunities actually declined by 67,300 jobs (1.0%). However, part-time employment grew by 124,700 jobs (5.2%), substantially higher than its trend growth of 3.8% per annum over the

¹ Appendix 5 outlines the major themes of the government's philosophy of social coalition/social partnership.

² Employment in Australia is defined to include any paid work of one hour or more per week, while the terms 'unemployment' is restricted to those without work who are actively seeking and available to start work during the reference period. Together, these groups determine the size of the labour force.

³ Full-time workers are defined by the Australian Bureau of Statistics as employed persons who work 35 hours or more in a week (in all jobs).

last decade. The increase in part-time employment reflects re-structuring within Australia's economy, and in particular the growth of service industries, the deregulation of the workplace and introduction of new technologies. The part time employment growth does reflect a growing and persistent underemployment issue in Australia given that 30% of part time workers are seeking more employment hours (The Boston Consulting Group, 2001).

Male employment stabilised around 5.1 million during 2000/2001 with male part-time employment increasing by 67,600, while male full-time employment fell by 66,700. Female employment on the other hand grew by 56,500 to 4.0 million, attributed entirely to part-time employment growth. Female workers account for the majority of part-time opportunities (71%).

The overall labour force participation rate in October 2001 was 63.8%, with the male and female rates being 72.6% and 55.3% respectively. Lower employment growth in 2000/2001 resulted primarily from a reversal of growth in two key industry sectors, namely the construction and manufacturing sectors. These two sectors account for 20% of the workforce. Both sectors grew strongly in 1999/2000 (9.1% and 7.7% respectively) but recorded significant job falls in 2000/2001 (-7.1% and -2.6% respectively). In addition, significant declines in employment within the wholesale trade and agriculture sectors occurred (-6.7% and -4.9% respectively).

Despite the weakening economic and employment environment, two service industry sectors have enjoyed strong job gains in the last year - property and business services (6.3%) and health and community services (5.7%).

Table 3

EMPLOYMENT STATUS BY SELECTED CHARACTERISTICS

	October 1991			October 2001		
	Total employed (‘000)	Full-time (‘000)	Part-time (‘000)	Total employed (‘000)	Full-time (‘000)	Part-time (‘000)
Males	4,432.9	4,037.0	396.0	5,147.0	4,407.0	740.1
Females	3,212.1	1,926.2	1,285.8	4,057.6	2,232.2	1,825.4
All persons	7,645.0	5,963.2	1,681.8	9,204.6	6,639.2	2,565.5
	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)	(%)
Males	58.0	67.7	23.5	55.9	66.4	28.8
15-24	10.6	10.5	10.8	9.4	8.2	12.4
25-54	41.3	50.5	8.4	39.5	50.5	10.9
55 and over	6.2	6.7	4.3	7.0	7.6	5.5
	58.0%	67.7%	23.5%	55.9%	66.4%	28.8%
Females	42.0	32.3	76.5	44.1	33.6	71.2
15-24	9.7	7.8	16.3	8.8	5.8	16.6
25-54	29.6	22.7	54.0	31.1	25.2	46.5
55 and over	2.8	1.8	6.1	4.1	2.6	8.1
	58.0%	67.7%	23.5%	55.9%	33.6%	71.2%

Source: Labour force survey, October 2001 (ABS 6203.0)

(b) Unemployment

In October 2000, the unemployment rate fell to 6.1%, its lowest level since March 1990. However, as employment growth slowed, unemployment began to rise reaching 7.1% in September 2001. While the figure has drifted down to 6.7% in October 2001, market expectations of unemployment over 7% are being forecast in the near future.

Table 4 below summarises unemployed persons by age.

Table 4	
Unemployed Persons – By Age and Whether Looking for Full-time or Part-time Work, October 2001	
Age	Percentage
15 to 19	17.3%
20 to 24	10.0%
25 to 34	6.3%
35 to 44	4.9%
45 to 54	4.7%
55 to 59	4.6%
60 to 61	4.4%
Overall Rate	6.7%

Source: ABS Labour Force 6203.0

Currently there are 696,000 people unemployed with 532,500 seeking full time employment, down considerably from a peak of 940,500 in 1992-93. This still represents approximately 4.7 unemployed people for every registered job vacancy. Although there was an increase in employment position in 2000/2001, this growth was not sufficient to cope with both an increasing number of people of working age (averaging 16,500 per month in 2000/2001) and a rising female participation rate. In the decade 1991-2001, the female proportion of total employment has increased by 42% to 44%.

The proportion of long-term unemployment (the proportion of persons unemployed for 12 months or more) has fallen in 2000/2001 from 26.2% to 22.9% of total unemployed. This represents 152,000 persons, down from 336,000. However, these ABS figures conceal much higher levels of long-term joblessness. People whose period of unemployment is interrupted by a short time through casual work, training or illness are no longer officially regarded as long-term unemployed. Unemployment benefit statistics which include such people are perhaps a more reliable guide, and reveal a more concerning trend – they show that the number of people receiving unemployment benefits for over one year has hardly fallen in the

last five years, and involved 385,000 in September 2000 (The Boston Consulting Group, 2001).

(c) Indigenous labour market

In February 2000, there were an estimated 134,600 Indigenous Australians aged 15 and over the labour force – 110,900 in employment, and 23,700 unemployed. Indigenous Australians experience unemployment at almost three times the rate of other Australians. The indigenous unemployment rate was 17.6% (compared to 7.3% for non-indigenous Australians). This figure would be approximately 40% if participation in a government job creation/training scheme – Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) was included. The indigenous labour force participation rate was 31.6% (compared to 63.7% for non-indigenous).

Australia's indigenous population is much more dispersed around Australia than other Australians. Approximately 20% live in remote areas where labour markets are practically non-existent. Only 1% of other Australians live in such remote areas.

Nearly 28% of indigenous jobs are directly in the public sector, compared to less than 18% for the labour force generally. In addition, a significant proportion of indigenous people work in community organisations. Estimates suggest that up to 70% of all indigenous jobs are reliant to some extent on public funding. Labour market growth is not in this sector, but the private sector.

Finally, nearly 25% of all indigenous jobs are in the labouring and other unskilled areas, compared to 8.7% for the total workforce.

VII. TRENDS AND CHARACTERISTICS OF THE AUSTRALIAN YOUTH LABOUR MARKET

Young people are clearly the most disadvantaged group within the Australian labour market. Young people aged 15 to 24 years are experiencing two and a half times the level of unemployment recorded for adults aged 25 to 54 (Dearn, 2001). In addition, part time and casual work opportunities dominate employment options highlighting the major unemployment status of young people.

The following two tables depict the education and labour force activities for teenagers (15-19 years old) and young adults (20-24 years old) in May 1999.

Table 5	Education and Labour Force activities of 15-19 year olds, May 1999			
	Full-time education	Part-time education	Not in Education	Total
Full-time employed	7,000 1 per cent	75,000 6 per cent	135,000 10 per cent	217,000 16 per cent
Part-time employed	325,000 25 per cent	10,000 1 per cent	71,000 5 per cent	406,000 31 per cent
Unemployed	76,000 6 per cent	4,000 --	62,000 5 per cent	142,000 11 per cent
Not in Labour force	505,000 38 per cent	2,000 --	49,000 4 per cent	556,000 42 per cent
TOTAL	914,000 69 per cent	91,000 7 per cent	317,000 24 per cent	1,321,000 100 per cent

Source: ABS, Transition from Education to Work, Australia May 1999 (6227.0)

Table 6	Education and Labour Force activities of 20-24 year olds, May 1999			
	Full-time education	Part-time education	Not in Education	Total
Full-time employed	9,000 1 per cent	113,000 9 per cent	571,000 43 per cent	693,000 52 per cent
Part-time employed	130,000 10 per cent	25,000 2 per cent	128,000 10 per cent	284,000 21 per cent
Unemployed	17,000 1 per cent	6,000 --	95,000 7 per cent	118,000 9 per cent
Not in Labour force	114,000 9 per cent	8,000 1 per cent	110,000 8 per cent	233,000 18 per cent
TOTAL	270,000 20 per cent	152,000 11 per cent	905,000 68 per cent	1,327,000 100 per cent

Source: ABS, Transition from Education to Work, Australia May 1999 (6227.0)

The recent Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001) stated clearly the changing nature of the youth labour market – 'A generation ago, most young people left school by 15 or 16, and were fairly readily absorbed into full-time positions in the labour force, where they learned work related skills on the job. This is no longer the typical pattern. More common now is prolonged participation in formal education combined with part-time work before looking for full-time work over an extended period of time.'

Information from the Australian Bureau of Statistics reveals a number of interesting trends and characteristics about the Australian youth labour market, namely -

- While Australia achieves well in terms of its proportion of tertiary graduates in the adult population (ranking sixth out of 28 OECD countries), Australia ranks low in terms of secondary school completion (17th out of 28 OECD countries with 57% of its adult population aged 25 to 54 with upper secondary school education). In the opinion of the Dusseldorf Skills Forum *'it is this gap between the education 'haves' and 'have nots' that is not only undermining Australia's ability to compete in a global knowledge economy. It is also likely to further increase income inequality ...'* DSF estimates that at least 14% of 19 year olds in 2000 have not attained a minimum level of education necessary to compete in today's demanding labour market (Curtain, 2001).

There is an obvious correlation between level of school completion and further education and employment achievement as illustrated by these examples:

- over two thirds of 1999 Year 12 leavers went onto higher education, TAFE or other forms of further education. In contrast, only 39% and 43% of Year 11 and 10 leavers followed a similar path;
- a third of early secondary school leavers do not appear to have made a successful transition to further study or full time work compared with nearly a fifth of Year 12 students;
- the difference in the unemployment rate for men aged 25 to 64 years with less than upper secondary education is double that of those who have completed the highest level of secondary school (Curtain, 2001).

The OECD Economic Survey of Australia for 2000 noted that *'many school leavers remain at considerable risk of being locked into marginal labour market activities that may not lead to better skills and employment prospects. More needs to be done to reduce the incidence of early school leaving'* (OECD, 2001).

- One of main reasons for the difficulties experienced by young people in their school to work transition is the lack of full time jobs for this age group. There has been a constant decline over the last 30 years in full time employment opportunities for young people.

In August 1970, 575,000 fifteen to nineteen year olds were in full time employment. By May 1989 this number had fallen to 454,000 (32% of age group) and by 1999 dropped to 217,000 (16% of age group). In terms of 20 to 24 year olds, the numbers in full-time employment fell from 868,000 in May 1989 (66% of age group) to 693,000 in May 1999 (52% of age group) (ABS, 6227.0).

In fact, between May 1995 and mid 2001, the number of full time jobs held by non-students 20-24 years, fell by 94,300 – a 13.3% decrease. At the same time full time jobs for adults aged 25 years and over grew by 9.5%.

- The rapid job creation of the last five years in Australia has had minimum impact on youth employment opportunities with less than 1% more 15 to 24 year olds in employment in 2000 than in 1995;

- In 1998, Australia recorded the second highest proportion of 15 to 19 year olds among OECD countries being unemployed. The comparative analysis by OECD of youth unemployment is depicted in Table 7 below;

Table 7			
Youth Unemployment 1998			
	Australian	OECD Average	Australia's ranking
15-19 year olds			
unemployment to population ratio	10%	6%	2/25
non-student unemployed as % of all 15-17 year olds	6%	4%	4/16
% of unemployed out of work for 6 months or more	42%	42%	12/21
20-24 year olds			
unemployment to population ratio	10%	9%	9/25
% of unemployed out of work for 6 months or more	45%	48%	13/21
Source: OECD (2001), quoted in Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001			

- Unemployment rates for early school leavers are significantly higher than for any other group of young people. Furthermore, the jobs taken by early school leavers (other than those who have an apprenticeship) are typically low skilled and provide relatively few training opportunities;
- Australia's labour market is certainly not as 'youth friendly' as many other countries. As mentioned, youth unemployment rates are two and a half times higher than adult unemployment rates.

Table 8 below illustrates well Australia's standing amongst OECD countries in terms of youth unemployment compared to adults.

Table 8	
Ratio Of The Unemployment Rate For 15 To 24 Year Olds Compared To The Unemployment Rate For 25 To 54 Year Olds, 1999	
OECD Country	Ratio
Germany	1.1
Austria	1.3
Ireland	1.6
Mexico	1.9
Hungary	2.0
Spain	2.0
Switzerland	2.1
Canada	2.2
Portugal	2.2
Czech Republic	2.3
Sweden	2.3
Denmark	2.3
Japan	2.3
Australia	2.5
Korea	2.5
Turkey	2.5
France	2.5
Netherlands	2.5
United Kingdom	2.5
New Zealand	2.5
Finland	2.6
Poland	2.8
Belgium	3.1
USA	3.1
Italy	3.5
Norway	4.0

- Part-time employment is a significant experience for many Australian young people and growing in dominance. In October 2001, young males and young females represented 12% and 17% of part-time workers respectively. Between 1989 and 1999, the number of 15 to 19 year olds working part time increased from 272,000 (19% of the age group) to 406,000 (31% of the age group). Among 20 to 24 year olds, the numbers undertaking part-time employment grew from 147,000 (11% of the age group) to 284,000 (21% of the age group). In fact, Australia ranks third behind France and Sweden (in OECD rankings) in terms of the proportion of young adults in part time work (Curtain, 2001). With 30% of

part time workers wanting more employment hours, Australia has a significant underemployment issue;

- Part-time employment is also used as a source of short-term jobs by young people while participating in education, or as a stepping stone to full-time employment. A large number of part-time jobs are held by students. Australia compared to other OECD countries has a relatively high proportion of young people who combine studying with part-time work (OECD, 2000);
- Compared to teenagers, young adults (20-24 years old) are in a less precarious employment situation – unemployment rates are lower, and for those employed, jobs are not as concentrated in such a limited range of industry sectors, nor in such low skilled occupations. Nevertheless, unemployment rates are still double the rate of other adults, and the duration of employment does average over ten months. Part-time employment is still very common;
- There are distinct gender differences in the workforce. Young women are more likely to be employed part-time, while young men are more likely to be in the labour force and to be unemployed. The industry sectors in which young women and men work and the occupations they hold also differ significantly;
- There have also been two significant trends in the late 1990s. First, a shift towards a great concentration of young people in small businesses which tend to provide less training than larger firms. Secondly, young people are more likely than in the past to hold low skilled positions (Vandenlteuvel and Wooden, 1999);
- Youth employment is heavily concentrated in the retail trade sector (31% of youth employment in February 2000). This concentration is even greater for 15 to 19 year olds, especially young women. Young people are also heavily represented in tourism, accommodation, cafes and restaurant industries. Related to this concentration is the fact that young people work in relatively low skill and low paid occupations, in casual and part time employment and in small businesses. Such forms and locations of employment are often associated with lower levels of on the job training;
- The only industries in which the number of jobs held by young people are growing faster than for the rest of the workforce are in the areas that employ relatively few young people – agriculture, forestry and fishing, communication services and education. Even in the hospitality and retail industries in which youth employment is concentrated, the rate of job growth is faster among those aged 25 years and older. Overall public sector employment of young people has also declined. Table 9 below illustrates the industry sector changes for young people, and provides comparison with workers aged 25 years and older;

Table 9	Employment by industry and age, February 1995 and 2000			
Industry	15 – 24 years		Aged 25 years and older	
	Employment 2000 (‘000s)	Change since 1995 (%)	Employment 2000 (‘000s)	Change since 1995 (%)
Agriculture, forestry and fishing	66	18	378	6
Mining	6	-45	76	3
Manufacturing	168	-23	952	5
Electricity, gas and water supply	5	-58	54	-25
Construction	118	0	576	20
Wholesale trade	74	-33	405	5
Retail trade	522	10	816	13
Accommodation, cafes and restaurants	153	15	287	16
Transport and storage	43	-2	355	2
Communication services	24	30	158	17
Finance and insurance	48	-21	295	20
Property and business services	156	22	826	31
Government admin and defence	28	-33	320	1
Education	47	11	526	8
Health and community services	85	-11	751	21
Cultural and recreational services	54	13	174	20
Personal and other services	69	5	293	19
<i>Total</i>	1666	1	7239	12

Source: ABS, Labour Force Australia (February), 6203.0

- The proportion of teenagers who are not in full-time employment, full-time education or part-time education and employment increases dramatically between age 17 (11%) and 18 (21%). This indicates that the period immediately after leaving Year 12 is critically important in determining young peoples transition to full employment. In the words of the Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce *‘a good early start – in the sense of being in full-time education, training or employment – seemed to be particularly important for female school leavers ... (there is) the need for tracking the experiences of school leavers and early intervention to assist those at risk in the transition process. Relative to the Nordic countries in particular, Australia lacks a comprehensive and integrated policy and programmatic approach to the construction of safety nets for young people at risk in the transition to work’*.
- Average earnings of young adults have fallen by about 20% relative to mature workers since 1984, and yet the numbers in full-time work have continued to fall despite better education and their lower wage attraction. This suggests the impact of other factors, namely:
 - structured changes reducing the number of entry level jobs for inexperienced workers;
 - employers’ concern about young people’s relative employability and lack of experience;

- The tremendous advance in school retention rates has stalled since the mid 1990's and has begun to decline. Australia is one of the few OECD countries in which school retention declined during the 1990's and is occurring at a *'time when education and training is becoming a lifelong, ongoing process and when, in terms of employment, value is being placed on the development of personal and intellectual skills – the so-called "soft skills" like clear thinking, problem solving and relationship building'* (Dusseldorp Skills Forum, 2001);
- Two groups of young people continue to face disadvantage in the labour market, namely indigenous youth and non-English Speaking Background (NESB) immigrant young people. Their unemployment rates are very high, as are their rates of part-time employment.

Table 10 below, based on the 1996 Census data clearly shows that the percentage of indigenous young adults (20-24 year olds) who are in the labour force and who are employed is much lower than for non indigenous young adults. In addition, the unemployment rate for young indigenous adults is twice that of non indigenous youth, with an unemployment rate of 31% for indigenous young men and 25% for indigenous young women.

Table 10	Labour Market Characteristics of Indigenous and Non Indigenous Young Adults, August 1996			
	Males		Females	
	Indigenous	Non Indigenous	Indigenous	Non Indigenous
% of population employed	51.5	72.2	36.9	67.2
Labour force participation (%)	74.2	85.1	49.0	76.3
Part time employment as % of total employment	34.6	21.2	43.6	34.7
Unemployment rate (%)	30.6	15.2	24.7	12.0
Source: Vandenlteuvel and Wooden, 1999				

Vandenlteuvel and Wooden (1999) explain the differences between indigenous and non indigenous by a range of factors. Compared with non indigenous adults, indigenous young people are less likely to have completed secondary school, hold post secondary qualifications, live in major urban centres and view formal education and employment as

culturally relevant. In addition, they are more likely to suffer from poor health and to have been arrested.

Table 10 also shows that the labour market disadvantage is also more pronounced for young indigenous women, eg, in August 1996, only 49% of indigenous young women were in the labour market compared to 76% of non indigenous young women and 74% of indigenous males. This difference is partly explained by the higher child bearing experienced by indigenous young women and the consequential withdrawal from the labour market. In addition, there is a much lower participation rate by women in Community Development Employment Project (CDEP) scheme than men.

It is worth noting that school retention for indigenous youth is well below that of other Australian youth. In 1998, only 83% of indigenous students remained in schooling to Year 10, compared to just under 100% for non indigenous students. Only 32% of indigenous students remain at school to Year 12 compared to around 73% of non indigenous students (The Prime Ministers Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce).

- Similarly, there is a much lower labour market participation rate and higher unemployment rate for immigrant young from Non English Speaking Backgrounds (NESB) compared to other young adults. Table 11 below shows that the employment to population ratio is lowest for NESB immigrant young adults and highest for Australian born young adults. Labour force participation follows a similar pattern. As with indigenous young adults, the differences are bigger for females – only one in two NESB young female adults were in the labour force, compared with over three in four young women either born in Australia or from an English Speaking Background (ESB).

Table 11	Labour Market Characteristics of Australian born and immigrant young adults (August 1998)					
	Males			Females		
	Australian born	ESB immigrants	NESB immigrants	Australian born	ESB immigrants	NESB immigrants
% of population employed	78.4	76.8	54.2	71.7	68.4	40.3
Labour force participation (%)	89.4	86.7	66.5	79.6	78.6	50.4
Part time employment as % of total employment	18.9	20.1	33.1	33.0	42.5	45.5
Unemployment rate	12.3	11.4	18.5	9.9	13.0	20.0
Source: Vandenlutevel and Wooden, 1999						

Finally, any insight into the Australian youth labour market would not be complete without reference to the Dusseldorp Skills Forum¹, and their concept of ‘*at risk*’ to identify those young men and women who are more vulnerable than others in finding and sustaining stable employment. The Dusseldorp Skills Forum has developed a national reputation for its study of the transition process young Australians undertake from full time education to full time work. They have captured well the complexity of this process – *‘moving from education to work for many young people is not a single step of leaving the educational system and entering the world of work. The transition process can extend for some time with neither an obvious starting point or a clearly defined end. For many, it involves several steps forth and back between education and work. Young people may be engaged in job search and waiting times, involuntary unemployment or in chosen time off for leisure, travel or other activities. The complexity of what is happening, therefore, cannot be captured in a single statistic such as the youth unemployment rate. Indeed, over-reliance on this measure has hampered a deeper understanding of the difficulties experienced by young people’* (Curtain, 2001).

Dusseldorp Skills Forum use the concept of the ‘*at risk*’ group to define those young people who are:

- not studying and
- in part time work, or
- who are actively looking for work (the unemployed), or
- those not in work and not considered as actively seeking work (not in the labour force).

According to the analysis of data by Dusseldorp Skills Forum up to a quarter of young people aged 18 to 24 years maybe ‘*at risk*’ in the labour market. Unfortunately these figures have remained consistent over a decade and show little sign of improvement despite the country’s improved economic position.

The proportion of 15 to 19 year olds considered ‘*at risk*’ in May 2001 was 15.1% - the average rate for the last 14 years has been 15.4% (Curtain, 2001). Table 12 below illustrates well this consistency.

¹ The Dusseldorp Skills Forum is a private national think tank that focuses on the learning and work circumstances of young Australians.

Table 12	
Proportion of 15 to 19 year olds not in full time education or full time employment May 1988 – May 2001	
	Percent
May 1988	14.5
May 1989	12.3
May 1990	13.9
May 1991	16.5
May 1992	17.1
May 1993	16.7
May 1994	17.0
May 1995	15.9
May 1996	16.5
May 1997	15.4
May 1998	15.8
May 1999	14.5
May 2000	14.4
May 2001	15.1
Source: Curtin, 2001, based on ABS Labour Force Figures for specified years	

As illustrated below in Table 13, the ‘*at risk*’ situation for young male and female adults (20-24 years) shows the same consistency.

Table 13		
Proportion of 20 to 24 year olds not in full time education or full time employment May 1989– May 2001		
	Males %	Females %
May 1989	14.4	32.4
May 1990	16.5	31.6
May 1991	22.0	34.8
May 1992	24.8	36.9
May 1993	25.1	38.1
May 1994	24.5	35.9
May 1995	21.0	35.6
May 1996	20.5	34.6
May 1997	24.2	37.6
May 1998	23.5	34.1
May 1999	21.7	35.2
May 2000	19.5	30.8
May 2001	21.4	32.0
Source: Curtin, 2001, based on ABS Labour Force Figures		

Tables 14 and 15 below illustrate Australia's standing among OECD countries in 1999 for proportion of 'at risk' young people not in education and not in full time work

Table 14		
Proportion of young people aged 15-19 years not in education and not in full time work, 1999		
OECD Country	Rank	15-19 years 'at risk' %
Poland	1	7.5
Denmark	2	9.8
Germany	3	11.3
Belgium	4	11.5
Greece	5	11.8
Finland	6	13.9
USA	7	15.2
Portugal	8	16.0
Switzerland	9	16.1
Netherlands	10	16.6
Hungary	11	16.8
Canada	12	17.2
Sweden	13	18.1
Australia	14	19.4
Spain	15	23.5
Mexico	16	23.6
Czech Republic	17	23.6
Italy	18	23.8
France	19	25.9

Table 15		
Proportion of young people aged 20-24 years not in education and not in full time work, 1999		
OECD Country	Rank	20-24 years 'at risk' %
Denmark	1	13.5
Netherlands	2	17.1
Sweden	3	18.1
Switzerland	4	19.1
Portugal	5	19.9
Czech Republic	6	22.5
Finland	7	23.0
Canada	8	23.8
Germany	9	24.3
USA	10	26.4
Greece	11	27.2
Australia	12	27.5
Hungary	13	28.8
Belgium	14	28.8
Poland	15	30.3
Spain	16	33.3
Mexico	17	34.4
Italy	18	36.1
France	19	39.0

Source: Curtain, 2001, based on OECD 2001 figures

The work of the Dusseldorp Skills Forum on the 'at risk' youth issue further highlights the key challenges of the Australian youth labour market, namely –

- persistency of labour market disadvantage compared to other age groups;
- lack of youth full time job creation;
- continuance of significant underemployment through the dominance of part time employment; and
- failure to maintain the momentum with increasing school retention levels.

VIII. ACTIVE YOUTH LABOUR MARKET POLICIES AND PROGRAMS – SUPPLY SIDE

Australian national and state Ministers at their Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) in April 1999 made an historic commitment about improving Australian schooling within a framework of national collaboration. Their *Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century* document (see Appendix 2) sees schooling as a foundation on which the future of the nation needs building. The document expands on three key goals.

As part of the Adelaide Declaration, Ministers agreed to the following six areas of schooling for initial outcomes reporting:

- literacy
- numeracy
- student participation, retention and completion
- vocational education and training in schoolings
- science
- information technology

and noted the need to develop performance indicators for:

- civics and citizen education
- enterprise education

Since April 1999, this document has been a foundation starting point for national and state efforts, and provided a basis for the *National Guarantee for all Young People* (July 2001), (see Appendix 1.)

Besides renewed focus on providing relevant schooling experiences for young people to cope and succeed with a changing world and labour market circumstances, there have also been significant efforts in the post school transition fields to better support young people in the movement to employment. Today a host of programs exist to assist specific target groups (especially those young people most at risk) plus provide a combination of assistance measures to unemployed young people including:

- individual skills audit and training needs analysis
- literacy and numeracy improvement
- living skills training
- vocational training
- work experience
- job information
- job search training
- job placement
- post placement support

Vocational Education and Training (VET) and Structured Workplace Learning

As mentioned in Section VIII above, a most significant development in Australia in recent years has been the growth in VET programs and the participation of senior students.

In March 2000, Australia Education Ministers agreed to develop and implement a new Framework for Vocational Education in Schools, representing a broader approach than in the past, and building upon the following key elements –

- explicit and well articulated pathways;
- community partnership;
- lifelong learning skills and attributes;
- enterprise and innovation;
- career information and guidance, and access to student services;
- individual assistance for students at risk;
- supportive institutional and funding arrangements; and
- monitoring and evaluation.

The new Framework covers both primary and secondary years of school education.

In 2000 Australian Education Ministers agreed on a national definition of VET – ‘Vocational Education in Schools assists all young people to secure their own futures by enhancing their transition to a broad range of post-school options and pathways. It engages students in work related learning built on strategic partnerships between schools, business, industry and the wider community’ (MCEETYA, 2000).

VET through a variety of school programs enables students to engage in on and off the job learning in order to obtain a nationally recognised qualification within the Australian Qualification Framework, as well as gain credit for a senior secondary education certificate. In most cases, students undertake Structured Workplace Learning within a business. Students learn practical workplace skills that industry and employers have decided are important for a specific job or career. The skills students learn are assessed by Registered Training Organisation. Implementation of VET across Australia shows incredible diversity of opportunity, but is in accordance with a set of nationally agreed principles, namely –

- adhere to Australian Recognition Framework requirements,
- based on national industry and/or enterprise competency standards,
- contribute to qualifications defined by the Australian Qualifications Framework as part of the senior certification of education and provide multiple pathways to training, education or work,
- ensure dual outcomes, being study towards senior secondary certificate with VET qualifications defined by the Australian Qualification Framework,
- take into account national and regional/local skill shortages, industry needs and student demand,
- appropriate accreditation and recognition procedures are developed that enable training packages to be delivered,
- provide for the needs of the equity target groups, and

- develop regional and community partnerships.

The growth in participation in VET in schools and Structured Workplace Learning has been remarkable. Over 167,000 young people participated in a VET in Schools program in 2000, up from 26,000 in 1995. Approximately 50,000 businesses Australia-wide provided Structured Workplace Learning opportunities.

Australian Ministers of Education made a commitment in 1999 to increase the proportion of students undertaking VET in schools, to reach 40% of senior students by 2004. Further, the Ministers expressed commitment to increasing the average numbers of hours enrolled in VET programs from an estimated annual average of 120 hours in 1998 to 150 hours by 2004, and increase the amount of time in workplace learning. Such a move will increase the relevance of schooling for many young people, as well as equip them more effectively for the world of work.

The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce stated its belief that recognised structured vocational education and training in schools was a critical component of learning, and should be accessible by all students regardless of whether they were going on to full-time job or further study.

The Taskforce stated that efforts should be directed towards –

- *'clearly establishing during compulsory school years the place of vocational learning;*
- *increasing the skill base of more young Australians to improve their capacity to move directly from school to employment or further education and training;*
- *improving pathways by establishing arrangements for VET assessments to contribute directly to tertiary entrance scores;*
- *raising the status of VET in schools and building linkages between these programmes and further education and training courses;*
- *enabling more students to undertake these programmes and increasing the depth of students' participation in VET studies; and*
- *strengthening and supporting employer involvement in the compulsory years and in VET in Schools programs'.*

Career Education/Guidance

There has been increasing commitment in Australia to improving the quality of information and counselling support to help young people make appropriate job and training choices. The following are examples of the diversity of initiatives now operating:

- *Enterprise and Career Education Foundation (ECEP) – ECEF was established by the national government in January 2001 to help young people make the right choices about their futures and to achieve a successful transition from school to further education, training and employment. ECEF promotes linkages between school, businesses and the community, to help students get vocational enterprise and career education, knowledge and experience before they leave school. The national government has provided \$100 million over four years to cover a range of innovative activities.*

- *The Youth Employment Link* – one central source of information in the State of Victoria through a comprehensive, interactive and fun medium to help young people make career choices (web page: www.yel.vic.gov.au).
- *Getaccess* – an interactive website for West Australia youth seeking career, employment and training related information and services. Their site is fun, easy to navigate and contains many ‘side trips’.
- *Rural Youth Information Service (RYIS)* – RYIS aims to provide young people aged 15-25 years living in rural and remote areas of Australia with information, advice, referral and follow-up assistance on employment, education and training opportunities, income support, accommodation and health. Although RYIS assists all young people, priority is given by RYIS workers to young people who are:
 - unemployed, and/or
 - facing ongoing difficulties in gaining employment and achieving employment goals.

Unfortunately RYIS is located in only 21 rural sites.

- *Career and Transition Advisors* – the national government announced in December 2001 a \$3.6 million program to pilot 30 career and transition advisors in 2002 to work with schools, local communities, young people and their families.
- *School Leaver Program* – an initiative of the Western Australian Departments of Training and Education, which surveys and follows up on school leavers in the state six months after leaving school, and provides advice and support to those who are experiencing difficulty accessing suitable training and/or employment opportunities.

School to Work Transition Support

As mentioned in sections VII and VIII, there is increasing concern about the dramatic increase in the proportion of young people between 17 and 18 who are neither in full-time education, full-time employment or part-time employment and part-time education. Improving the transition from school to employment and/or education has become an increasingly important priority, especially for those most at risk. The following best practice examples illustrate this growing focus.

Best Practice Example

As part of its objective of promoting cultural excellence and enriching the cultural life in Australia, the national government funds **seven national art training organisations** to provide transition pathways and support for young people developing skills in art forms to help them establish careers in the arts and cultural industries. The age range of students is usually 12 to 25 years. During 2000-2001, 400 full time students were trained and 120 graduates produced. A total of \$10 million is provided annually to:

- Australian Ballet School
- Australian National Academy of Music
- National Institute of Dramatic Art
- Australian Youth Orchestra
- National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association
- National Institute of Circus Arts, and
- Flying Fruit Fly Circus

Best Practice Example

The national government will commit \$4.8 million in the 2002-2003 period through the development of a ***Mentor Marketplace***. This Marketplace will increase young people's access to mentoring, which is a proven method of assisting young people to stay connected to the education, training and employment systems.

The Mentor Marketplace seeks to complement existing community based mentor projects and will consist of two elements:

- a high profile national mentoring partnership which brings together and acknowledges existing mentoring programs; provides good practice; facilitates an exchange of ideas, and funds research, workshops and conferences, and
- 'Making Mentoring Happen' which involves kick-starting mentoring projects and helping them grow.

Best Practice Example

The Links to Learning Community Grants Program of the New South Wales government assists young people aged 12 to 24 years who have left school early or are at risk of leaving school early, and provides them with a range of opportunities to remain in or re-enter mainstream education and training.

The program funds community organisations and local governments to undertake innovative and creative activities in the informal learning settings, and to link participants back to education and training. The community based approach for implementation of projects means that organisations develop local strategies to best meet the needs of local young people.

web: [www . det.nsw.gov.au/eas/acomm/index](http://www.det.nsw.gov.au/eas/acomm/index)

Best Practice Example

Promoting Self-reliance for Indigenous People is a national government initiative beginning in July 2002. It aims at supporting senior secondary indigenous students complete Year 12 and go on to higher education or vocational education and training. The funding will support 1,600 students through partnerships involving communities, industry and education providers. A further 2,300 students will gain access to vocational learning opportunities through local businesses and committees.

Best Practice Example

The *Jobs Pathway Program* (JPP) is a national government youth transition program which assists up to 70,000 young people annually from over 1,600 secondary schools around Australia. It began as a \$2 million pilot program in 1995 and has grown to a \$24 million program involving 74 organisations that deliver projects across Australia. JPP began as a program providing linkage to employment for Year 11 and 12 school leavers. Since then it has expanded to include all school leavers, and has evolved into the most established school to work transition initiative in the country. The program combines a preventative approach to school leaving with post school support. Delivery includes a wide range of options including personal support, brokerage and the development of alternative school curricula. Specific services include:

- an assessment of individual needs
- assistance with job search preparation
- career counselling
- referral to vocational and training programs

Unfortunately it has age and eligibility restrictions.

web: [www. dest.gov.au](http://www.dest.gov.au)

The national government also provides a range of very practical career publications and services that are worth highlighting, namely:

- *Job Guide* – Australia’s premier career information resource. This comprehensive resource (available through internet, disk and book versions) is now in its 30th year of provision (<http://Jobguide.detya.gov.au>)
- *Australian Careers Directory* – directed at helping parents wishing to help their young people. (<http://www.careers.gov.au>)
- *The Real Game* – a career and life skills education program that enables students, (target group 12-14 years) through activities based on an ‘experiential’ approach, to discover the realities of the adult world (<http://realgame.detya.gov.au>)
- *National Career Information System* – the state and national governments have agreed to develop and implement an Internet based National Career Information System (NCIS). This service is expected to be operational by March 2002.

Job Placement and linkage

Since the mid 1940’s, Australia has had a history of providing a national government run job placement agency, namely the Commonwealth Employment Agency (CES). In May 1998, this one agency approach was modified, with the introduction of a competitive national tendering system for this service, and the creation of the Job Network. The Employment Services Tender (involving up to \$1.7 billion over a 19 month period) was the largest single human services tender ever undertaken in Australia. Currently around 200 community, private and government organisations now constitute the Job Network and have tendered successfully to provide job placement and intensive counselling services across the country. These organisations provide approximately 2000 sites across the country. Collectively they now provide approximately 2000 physical office sites across the country. Church based agencies are the biggest provider. They target particularly the long-term unemployed, and offer flexible and tailored assistance to job seekers depending on their level of need.

According to the Youth Bureau (2000) ‘*young people have been given special consideration in the establishment of Job Network. Young people aged 15 to 20 years and registered unemployed and not in full time education or training are eligible Job Network members*’.

The Job Network provides a combination of government funded services including:

- *Job Matching* – delivers labour exchange services to job seekers including canvassing for jobs and matching and placing suitable unemployed people to these jobs, as well as preparing resumes for job seekers. The Australian Job Search database exists which to the year to the end of March 2001 collected 769,000 job notifications. Job Matching is offered from approximately 1,700 sites across Australia and assists approximately 400,000 people annually.
- *Intensive Assistance* – provides individually tailored assistance for up to two years to eligible job seekers who are more disadvantaged in the labour market, to prepare for, and

obtain, suitable employment. It is one of a few mainstream labour market programs that provide subsidised and integrated work placement and training as a stepping stone to permanent employment. National government provides support for approximately 300,000 job seekers to start in Intensive Assistance from more than 1,100 sites across Australia.

- *Job Search Training* – provides training for three weeks in job search techniques (eg, resume preparation, interview techniques and presentation skills) to give job seekers the skills and confidence to seek and obtain employment. To be eligible, a job seeker must be registered as unemployed for three months or more. Job Search Training is offered at 620,000 sites nationally. Job network members are contracted for 90,000 commencements annually

Young job seekers are generally provided with 15 consecutive working days of training and assistance in job search techniques. This period can be extended up to 20 working days to accommodate job seekers studying or working part time. Young people who have been unemployed for three months or more and who are work ready can receive a range of assistance including free access to telephones, computers, newspapers and the Internet.

- *Return to Work* – provides assistance to people seeking to re-enter the workforce after an absence of two years or more due to their roles as unpaid care givers of children or people with disabilities.
- *New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)* – assistance to eligible unemployed people to explore and enter the self employment option (see Section X below) NEIS is offered from over 250 sites with about 6,800 job seekers being helped at any one point in time.
- *Work for the Dole (WfD)* – introduced in 1997 for approximately 10,000 young people. WfD aims to develop work habits, generic work skills and work experience to job seekers through projects of benefit to the local community. It is compulsory for 18 to 19 year olds receiving income support three months after completing Year 12, and for other 18 to 24 year olds receiving income support for six months.

The initiative is the best example of a program based on the principle of Mutual Obligation – that it is fair and just that people be asked to contribute to the community in return for the community's support.

WfD has dramatically increased since 1997 (\$105 million for 2000/01 enabled 50,000 participants) making it one of the largest funded government programs for unemployed youth. There have been a range of reviews of the program with the following three limitations often quoted:

- it does not have employment outcomes as its chief objective
- projects are not required to provide recognised training, specific skills development, or structured pathways to other forms of assistance, and
- projects are not tailored to individual needs or participant career aspirations (Dearn, 2001)

- *Indigenous Employment Program* – includes two programs –
 - *Wage Assistance* -a wage subsidy paid to employers over 26 weeks providing on going employment,
 - *Structured Training and Employment Projects (STEP)*, where employers who provide at least 5 jobs, generally with accredited training and a minimum period of 12 months receive assistance.

Currently there are no specific participation targets for young indigenous people, despite their growing demographic significance (see Section III above).

- *Community Support Program* – helps disadvantaged job seekers access counselling, stable accommodation, alcohol or drug rehabilitation and other activities addressing significant needs. Young people not on income support or in full time education or training are eligible. Referral to the program is for up to two years. \$45 million has been provided over four years, and nearly all contracts for its operation are held by community based organisations.

Young people may obtain information about the assistance available under Job Network through the Job Network Internet site – <http://www.jobnetwork.gov.au>. This information is also available on a local telephone call line.

The national government also has an online employment service site – the Australian Jobsearch Internet site (<http://jobsearch.dewrsb.gov.au>). The services available through Jobsearch include ‘*Find a Job*’, ‘*Resume Builder*’, ‘*Find Staff*’, and ‘*Advertise-a-Job*’. People can use ‘*Resume Builder*’ to advertise their resume directly on the Internet.

Two other major services of Jobsearch are ‘*Job Outlook*’ and ‘*Skill Search*’. *Job Outlook* provides job descriptions, up-to-date statistical information and job prospects in an easy to use format. *Skill Search* enables users to access course and provider information for around 400 occupations.

Information from the Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business shows that in the year to end March 2001, commencement by job seekers in the various types of labour market assistance included:

- 318,000 in Job Matching
- 305,700 in Intensive Assistance
- 71,900 in Job Search Training
- 6,300 in NEIS
- 6,400 in the two programs of the Indigenous Employment Program
- 49,700 in Work for the Dole
- 3,300 in Return to Work
- 16,900 in the Community Support Program

The Department quotes the level of positive outcomes ¹ for the program as:

- 70.7% for Job matching
- 43% for Intensive Assistance
- 52% for Job Search Training
- 85% for NEIS
- 34% for Work for the Dole
- 57% for Indigenous Employment Program – STEP
- 68% for Indigenous Employment Program – Wage Assistance
- 47% for Return to Work

Table 16 below summarises the positive outcome rates for these programs for teenagers and young adults.

Table 16 Positive Outcomes for Young People in Labour Market Assistance Program in the year to 31 March 2001		
Program	15-20 years	21 to 24 years
Job Matching	74.8%	73.0%
Intensive Assistance	48.4%	47.1%
Job Search Training	57.9%	59.6%
NEIS	87.9% for 24 years or less	
WfD	40.3%	36.8%

Source: Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business, March 2001

The Department for Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business undertook an evaluation of the Job Network in 2000. Along with indigenous Australians and people with disabilities, this evaluation suggested that young people are not participating proportionally as well as others in the Job Network. Young people are also not participating proportionally in Intensive Assistance.

The national government also provides specialised employment assistance for people with disabilities through the *Employment Assistance for People with Disabilities Program* to foster the development of environments and supports that encourage participation and choice for people with disabilities, including young people.

There is an extensive network of services available including:

- Open employment services – provide training and employment placement with ongoing support in the open employment market;

¹ positive outcome is defined as achievement of employment and/or education training option, three months after leaving assistance.

- Business Services – provides paid employment in a supported environment for people with disabilities who need extra help; and
- CRS Australia – provide vocational rehabilitation and injury management that is tailored to meet individual needs.

From a youth perspective, there are several other programs administered by other national government departments that have been very successful in terms of job placement, training and work experiences, namely:

- *Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) Program* – operating since 1997 this initiative involves \$74.4 million over four years, and targets young people at risk of homelessness and other disadvantaged persons¹. 90% of participants are between 15 and 19 years.

JPET seeks to overcome major barriers to successful transition outcomes with assistance with:

- securing appropriate housing,
- addressing drug and alcohol abuse,
- addressing sexual abuse or violence and behavioural problems.
- developing relevant life skill,
- attaining educational qualifications,
- gaining work experience and skills,
- addressing issues relating to dysfunctional family backgrounds, and
- obtaining appropriate structures and reducing barriers associated with refugee background, such as torture and trauma.

A recent external evaluation of the program followed up participants who could be contacted, at three and six months post program exit. They found:

- access to safe accommodation increased from an overall prevalence of 58% on entry to 80% on exit, ultimately increasing to 85% six months post exit¹
- participation in education/training increased from an overall prevalence of 19% on entry to 44% on exit and 41% at six months post exit,
- employment increased from only 1% on entry to 27% on exit and 29% at six months post exit.

This is a popular initiative with young people, and a relatively cost effective program, yet there are strict age restrictions (15 to 21 years) and only 137 projects nationally, thus limiting its geographical availability.

- *Green Corps* – provides young people aged between 17 and 20 years with the opportunity to volunteer to work on environmental and heritage conservation projects. Project activities include landcare, habitat protection and restoration, and flora and fauna survey work. Projects are community based, of six months duration and primarily located in

¹ JPET participant group covers disadvantaged young people who are:

- students and homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- not in regular employment and homeless or at risk of homelessness;
- current or former wards of the state;
- refugees, who are not necessarily homeless, or
- ex-offenders, who are not necessarily homeless.

regional and remote locations of Australia. The national government has committed \$90 million over four years to Green Corps, and this will support 6,800 young people. During the last year 180 projects were created with places available for 10 young people per project. Green Corps is the only national government funded program that incorporates training and work placement. It provides a training wage and accredited training. Green Corps is an excellent example of a government funded initiative delivered through a non government organisation, namely the Australian Trust for Conservation Volunteers. Green Corps has restrictive age and eligibility criteria.

The environmental output achieved by Green Corp participants after just 624 projects are quite extraordinary and include:

- propagating and planting over four million trees;
- erection of more than 2,000 kilometres of fencing;
- removal over 29,000 hectares of weeds;
- collection of over 5,000 kilograms of seeds, and
- construction or maintenance of 1,600 kilometres of walking track.

Besides national programs, there is a wide range of state government and non government initiatives assisting job placement. A range of best practice examples follow.

Best Practice Example

The *Youth Employment Project* is an initiative of the South Australian Office of Employment and Youth. It supports community organisations to either initiate pilot projects that address the barriers young people face in gaining employment, and/or develop a local Youth Employment Strategy.

web: www.employment.sa.gov.au/employ

Best Practice Example

The *Job Link Program* of the Western Australian Department of Training has operated over the last 15 years to provide support to community organisations to provide a range of activities to assist local job seekers into employment or training. Job Link services and activities include:

- employment counselling
- advice with assistance with job search techniques
- support for school leavers to access employment

A total of 41 Job Link projects exist initiative by a wide range of organisation including migrant resource centres, Rotary Clubs, indigenous agencies and churches.

web: www.training.wa.gov.au/sub-sites/jobsearch/Joblinks

Best Practice Example

The Breaking the Unemployment Cycle Initiative is a major employment initiative of the Queensland State Government, which seeks to assist the following disadvantaged groups in the labour market:

- young people, particularly disadvantaged in the labour market (young offenders, those at risk of offending, early school leavers and homeless);
- indigenous people;
- people with a disability;
- people from a non-English speaking background, and
- mature aged people over 40 years.

The initiative contains a wide range of specific programs, namely –

- *Community Employment Assistance Program* – provides funding for community and public sector organisations to assist long-term unemployed people to find work
- *Community Jobs Plan* – funds community organisations to provide unemployed people with paid work and job experience on community projects for three to six months
- *Community Training Partnerships* – enables communities to identify their current and future employment needs aligned to economic and social development, and to purchase the appropriate training
- *Worker Assistance Program* – represents an early intervention program supporting workers displaced or about to be displaced through large scale or regional retrenchment
- *Private Sector Employment Initiative* – provides incentives to private sector employers and group training organisations to employ additional apprentices or trainees in industries suffering skill shortages
- *Public Sector Employment Initiative* – supports additional employment in the public sector
- *Start-Up Assistance Program* - provides a reimbursement of up to \$300 for specialised equipment for new apprentices and trainees
- *Get Set for Work Program* – a wage subsidy program for private employers, organisation and local governments to take on young people, 15-24 years old
- *Youth for the Environment and Local Communities* – funds public sector agencies and not for profit community organisations to employ trainees over two years in the areas of environment protection, horticulture and waste management

web: www.employment.qld.gov.au/Jobseeker

Income Support Measures

Over the last 30 years there have been significant developments and changes in government income support for young people in training and education. The Tertiary Education Assistance Scheme was introduced in 1973 to help tertiary students. AusStudy was introduced in 1987 and broadened the eligibility. Prior to July 1998, young people may have been eligible for income support under a variety of schemes depending on their main activity – options included AUSTUDY, Youth Training Allowance, Sickness Allowance and Family Allowance. This system was criticised for its inflexibility and complex nature, requiring recipients to change schemes when changing their main activity.

In July 1998, the national government introduced a common allowance, namely the Youth Allowance. Young people under 18 years of age are now required to participate in full time education or training in order to be eligible. Mutual Obligation¹ requires recipients of income support over 18 and not studying to commit to activity agreements that increase their chances of gaining employment.

Activities permissible under Mutual Obligation are:

- part time paid work
- part time study in an approved training or education course
- Work for the Dole program
- Community Development Employment Projects
- voluntary work
- Green Corps
- approved literacy and numeracy training
- New Apprenticeships
- Job Search Training
- Advanced English for Migrants Program
- Intensive Assistance
- Job Pathways Program
- Job Placement, Employment and Training Program
- career counselling

Since 1 July 2000, job seekers have been required to enter into a '*preparing to work agreement*' to claim unemployment benefit support, which includes nomination of which Mutual Obligation activity they will undertake.

As illustrated by Table 17, since the introduction of Youth Allowance, there has been a decline in the number of young job seekers receiving income support, while the number of full time students has increased significantly.

¹ Mutual obligation is based on the principle that people should contribute to the community in return for government assistance.

Table 17	Full-time students and job seekers (15 to 24 years) receiving income support				
	Jobseekers	%	Full-time studies	%	Total
July 1997	127,000	32%	271,000	68%	397,000
July 1998	106,000	29%	261,000	71%	366,000
July 1999	94,000	23%	308,000	71%	402,000
May 2000	86,000	22%	304,000	78%	391,000

Source: Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001

IX. ACTIVE YOUTH LABOUR MARKET POLICIES AND PROGRAMS – DEMAND SIDE

Australia has had a long history of directly supporting demand side initiatives to facilitate greater youth employment opportunities.

(a) Job Creation and Public Works

As illustrated in Section VIII above, Australia through a variety of job placement and school to work transition programs supports direct job creation. In addition, governments are seeking new ways to maximise employment creation through public works programs. Below is a best practice example from the state of Western Australia.

Best Practice Example

Priority Access Policy is a new initiative of the West Australian government aimed at using government procurement and contracting policy to increase the training and employment opportunities for young Western Australian job seekers. It aims to create a strong training culture within Western Australian industry, while rewarding employers with commitment to training and youth employment.

The Priority Access Policy provides for the registration of employers who participate in training and employment activities such as employment of apprentices and trainees, employment of graduates from the VET sector, participation in accredited work place training, and demonstrated support for structured work experience programs.

In order to gain registration as a Priority Access Employer, a business needs to gather a minimum of 100 points. The registration will be a pre requisite for businesses wanting to tender for most large State Government contracts including:

- all government building and construction contracts valued at \$150,000 or more
- all government goods and services contracts valued at \$500,000 or more

web: www.priority.training.wa.gov.au/content

(b) New Apprenticeship Development

New apprenticeships are viewed by national government as ‘a key element to maintain a skilled and flexible workforce’ (Youth Bureau, 2001). There has been a significant take up of apprenticeships and traineeships over the last five years. Nearly 45% of all teenagers in the full time workforce are in a New Apprenticeship. Up to 25% of young people are likely to enter a New Apprenticeship by the age of 19 (Youth Bureau, 2001). Table 17 below shows that during the early 1990’s, there was a 23% decline in apprenticeships from 1990 to 1995, while the number of trainees remained static.

Table 17	Apprentices and Trainees in Australia 1985 to 1995		
	Apprentices	Trainees	Total
1985	129,000	0	129,000
1990	161,000	12,000	173,000
1995	123,000	12,000	135,000

Source: Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001

However, this position has changed dramatically following the introduction of the modern Australian Apprenticeship and Trainee System from 1 January 1998. This new system includes both apprenticeships and traineeships under an agreed national framework for training. By June 2000 there were 275,630 new apprentices and trainees in training. The fastest growth has been in service industries where traditional apprenticeships were not common in the past. Currently there are 500 occupations where New Apprenticeships are possible.

The main differences to the former apprenticeship/trainee system is that there is no eligibility restriction by age, wider choice about training provider and more flexible training packages. Further information is available from the website - www.newapprenticeships.gov.au.

Three national government programs exist to encourage take up of apprenticeships –

- *New Apprenticeships Incentive Programme* offers a range of incentives to both apprentices and employers, including support for employers employing apprentices with disabilities and indigenous job seekers;
- *New Apprenticeships Access Programme (NAAP)* – assists disadvantaged young people into apprenticeships, particularly those who have left school. Last year 5,400 participants commenced a NAAP placement, with 3,000 progressing to a New Apprenticeship or general employment. Over 70% of participants in this programme are aged 14-24 years.
- *New Apprenticeships Centres* – operating from over 300 sites nationally, these centres are responsible for:

- providing information about New Apprenticeships to employers, New Apprentices and other interested people;
- marketing and promotion of New Apprenticeships;
- administering New Apprenticeship Support Services including processing payments for Commonwealth incentives;
- working with State and Territory Training Authorities; and
- establishing relationships with Job Network members and other organisations who can assist people obtain New Apprenticeships.

Two successful apprenticeship initiatives over the last five years have been the establishment of Group Training Companies and school based apprenticeship opportunities. Group Training Companies are not for profit community companies that provide a system whereby apprentices and trainees are indentured/registered to a Group Training Company and placed with host employers on a rotational basis to provide workplace training experience. This has been a most successful initiative to expand the employment of young people in small to medium enterprises. The national government has a number of programs to assist the expansion of the group training arrangement, namely:

- *Group Training New Apprenticeships Targeted Initiatives Programme*
- *Commonwealth Loan Guarantee Programme*
- *Group Training Special Incentive Payment*

The second initiative worth highlighting is school based apprenticeships which provide the opportunity for students to be involved in a two year course that includes one day a week on the job training and 15 weeks per year paid work experience. School based apprenticeships have certainly helped improve relevance and retention within the education system, and particularly providing an enthusiastic option within indigenous communities. There are now over 7,000 school-based apprenticeships in operation.

Best Practice Example

The *Charters Towers School Rural Industry School Based Apprenticeships Program* involves 22 students from four high schools (public and private) in the rural community of Charters Towers. The program focuses on the pastoral industry. All the students are registered as apprentices with the State training agency. The program is administered on behalf of the schools by Rural Industry Training and Extension Inc, a group training company which employs apprentices throughout northern Australia. The program is an excellent example of collaboration between schools, community and the private sector.

Best Practice Example

The *Aboriginal School Based Traineeship Program* is coordinated through the Western Australian Department of Training in Perth with assistance from the VET branch of the Education Department. Established in 1999 with six project areas operating in the state, each managed by a Group Training Company or equivalent.

The Traineeship model is as follows:

- minimum age of participants is 15 years, and are principally drawn from post compulsory school years,
- participants are enrolled in the Western Australian Certificate of Education concurrently with a Certificate 2 level traineeship,
- participants participate in 15 hours of paid work per week, and usually 3 days at school,
- a wide range of traineeship areas are available,
- students are selected for their potential and motivation to complete the program.

In 1999, 39 traineeships commenced, with 33 trainees still participating in 2000 (85% retention rate). Due to the success of the current trainees and the enthusiasm for the program from both Aboriginal communities, schools and employers, an additional 100 places were created in 2001, with 160 places for 2002 – thus in 2002 there will be 260 trainees in training.

web: www.training.wa.gov.au/training

With its declining full time work opportunities for young people, the creation of the apprenticeship type arrangements is obviously a very important vehicle for young people to access employment with career prospects.

(c) Youth and the Information Economy

The Information sector is increasingly being seen as a growth sector for employment creation, especially youth job creation. The findings of Australia's most comprehensive survey of the demand for IT skills in Australia (IT and T skills Taskforce) estimated that employers will be seeking thousands of additional IT staff over the next year. Below are two best practice examples from state governments.

Best Practice Example

Go For IT is a Victorian State Government initiative aimed at assisting people, especially youth to gain employment through an IT, communications or multi media traineeship. It aims to place 740 IT trainees in the IT industry sector in the next two years. Examples of job areas being targeted are:

- computer/software sales
- helpdesk support
- communications representatives
- web designers
- call centre operators
- network technicians
- database administrators

web: www.employment.vic.gov.au/employment/employops

Best Practice Example

The Science and Technology Strategy was established by the Western Australian Department of Training for the vocational education and training sector to help it respond to the science and technology skill needs of the Western Australian workforce. One of the primary elements of the Strategy is the Science and Technology Innovation Fund (\$1 million). This fund provides financial support for Western Australian training providers to collaborate with industry, universities, government and other bodies to undertake innovative science and technology projects.

web: www.training.wa.gov.au/sub-sites/ScTech/home

The national government also operates the Building on IT Strengths (BITS) Program. BITS aims to build on the strength and competitiveness of the Australian information industries sector. In particular the program seeks to:

- foster link and networking between participants in the information industries sector; and
- facilitate the availability and use of leading-edge network technologies by the information industries sector.

Finally, the federal government provides \$3-7 million to the rural focussed organisation Questacon to implement the best practice initiative below to raise awareness of science and technology innovation in regional and rural Australia.

Best Practice Example

Smart Moves seeks to:

- inspire secondary students to become tomorrow's innovators and entrepreneurs, creating new business and employment opportunities, particularly those relating to merging science and technology fields; and
- encourage secondary students to take up careers in science and technology, including cutting edge fields such as photonics, biotechnology, medical technology, energy, and information and communication technology.

Funded as part of *Backing Australia's Ability* program, the aim of *Smart Moves* according to the Minister for Communications, information, Technology and the Arts is 'to encourage young people to be innovative, to take risks, to be entrepreneurial, and to consider careers in emerging high tech industries. *Smart Moves* will achieve this through a variety of media including interactive exhibits, online resources and face to face presentations by science communicators'. (Youth Bureau, 2001).

(d) Subsidy Wage Employment

During the 1970's and 1980's, wage subsidy programs were a major employment strategy of national government. However there has been a significant reduction in the proportion of employment resources allocated to this program. Section VIII above highlighted some examples where this remains, namely:

- *Intensive Assistance* – provides subsidised and integrated work placement and training;
- *Indigenous Employment Program Wage Assistance* – wage subsidy over 26 weeks paid to employers of indigenous people who provide ongoing employment;
- *Community Development Employment Projects* – administered by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission, this scheme provides opportunities for part-time work paid at the equivalent of unemployment allowances to residents of indigenous communities in remote locations. From February 2002, certain CDEP sits have also become Indigenous Employment Centres;
- *Green Corps* – environmental and heritage conservation projects which pay teams of ten young people a training allowance for six months.

However, several state governments have maintained major programs involving wage subsidy. The Victorian government through its Youth Employment Scheme (YES) offers wage subsidies to public sector agencies to assist in the recruitment of additional trainees and apprentices and to fund training costs associated with these positions. The scheme was implemented in 2000/2001 with 650 placements available. A YES subsidy of \$12,500 per

year is available for each additional apprentice/trainee employed by public sector departments and agencies.

In Queensland, as part of the *Breaking the Unemployment Cycle Strategy*, (see above) the following subsidy arrangements exist:

- *Community Jobs Plan* – funds community, local government and government agencies to provide unemployed Queenslanders with paid work on community projects for three to six months. A range of diverse projects have been funded including:
 - community projects, eg, establishing visitor information centres, coordinating community events etc
 - landcare and environmental restoration projects
 - public works projects, eg, improving public spaces, constructing tourist facilities etc
 - innovative projects eg, developing websites, video production, community radio.
- *Private Sector Employment Initiative* – provides wage incentives to private companies to employ additional apprentices or trainees in industries suffering skill shortages
- *Public Sector Employment Initiative* – provides support for public sector agencies to employ more trainees and apprentices
- *Get Set for Work Program* – supports employment of unemployed school leavers through provision of a wage of up to \$4,400 per eligible young person
- *Youth for the Environment Program* – funds public sector agencies and not for profit community organisations to employ 1,200 trainees over two years in the areas of environment protection, horticulture and waste management

(e) Junior Rates of Pay

The national government believes strongly that it has improved the employment prospects of young people through the preservation and expansion of junior rates. *'This has been an integral element of the Government's strategy to improve the competitiveness of young people in the labour market, promote youth employment and assist in reducing youth unemployment'*. (Youth Bureau, 2001).

Efforts to strengthen the direction were rejected by the Senate in August 2000.

(f) Promoting Self Employment

Since the early 1980's, Australia has had at the national and state levels a number of initiatives which have assisted unemployed people to explore and enter the self employment option. Some current initiatives worth highlighting are:

- *New Enterprise Incentive Scheme (NEIS)* - this program was established in 1986/87 and provides support and training for eligible job seekers who wish to pursue the option of self-employment. Assistance through NEIS includes:

- training in small business management, business skills and business plan development,
- an allowance for up to one year,
- business advice and mentor support during the first year of business operation.

To be eligible for funding, proposed business idea must:

- be new and not yet operating on a full time basis;
- be independent and be reputable;
- be assessed as commercially viable;
- not compete directly with existing businesses, unless it can be demonstrated that there is an unsatisfied demand for the product or service, or the goods or services will be provided in a new way.

Approximately 10% of the total number of NEIS participants are young people. One restriction on youth related to NEIS is a minimum age of 18 is required.

In the twelve months up to the end of March 2001, a total of 627 young people (out of 6,717 entrants) participated in this program. Overall, 87.9% had a positive outcome. This is higher than for overall population –85.1%. The NEIS Program has always experienced higher outcomes compared to other types of labour market assistance. This is due in part to the careful selection of viable business ideas by NEIS providers prior to the commencement of assistance, as well as the enterprising characteristics of the job seekers involved.

In a meeting between the Minister for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs and the National NEIS Association in November 1997, the impressive results of the NEIS program were shared:

- approximately 38,000 NEIS businesses had been established since the program was created in 1986/87;
- 82.3% of participants are still in unsubsidised employment 15 months after completing their NEIS training;
- there are 7.6 additional new jobs created for every ten NEIS businesses established;
- there are 3.9 additional new jobs for every 10 youth NEIS businesses established;
- 63% of participants were unemployed for six months prior to NEIS commencement – 39% for over twelve months;
- Net cost to the federal government for each NEIS job was \$5,089 (NEIS Association, 1997)

These figures illustrate why NEIS is a very popular initiative by all interest groups, and explains its long-term survival as an initiative (15 years).

- *Self-Employment Development Scheme* - a national program that allows job seekers to undertake approved activities to develop self-employment opportunities for three months. People may use it for business ideas that do not meet NEIS eligibility, eg for a franchise or taking over an existing business.
- *Indigenous Small Business Fund* – aims to foster the development of businesses owned and run by indigenous people and promote indigenous employment opportunities.

- *Aboriginal Enterprise Development Officer Program* – a state of New South Wales initiative to:
 - assist the establishment and retention of viable locally designed Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander businesses,
 - to encourage an entrepreneurial culture within Aboriginal communities.
- *Aboriginal Economic and Employment Development Officer Program* – a Western Australian state program which aims to promote and assist the involvement of indigenous communities and organisations in developing locally based enterprise, employment and training initiatives.
- *BusinessWorks* – a Western Australian program that provides training, support and access to finance for young people wishing to establish their own business.
- *You're the Boss* – an informative tool in Western Australia to assist qualified tradespeople to set up their own sub-contracting business or other forms of self employment.

Best Practice Example

The Youth Desk of the Department of Industries and Business in the Northern Territory provides young people interested in self employment with access to a variety of business services and information. This contact point operates the following comprehensive range of programs:

- Getting Started seminars – covers topics like business structures, market research, taxation, business planning and finance,
- Business Consultations – free consultations are provided to any young person exploring self employment or already in business,
- Workshops – free practical business workshops are available to any young person in business or thinking about going into business,
- Operation Livewire – a Youth Business competition that offers a young person (18-28 years) interested in business, a mentor and the means to develop a comprehensive business plan,
- Youth in Business Network Group – a group which meets regularly to discuss a variety of business topics.
- Getting Started Business Assistance Scheme – a grant program available for 18 to 24 year olds wishing to start a new business operation – provides up to \$5,000,
- School/University Visitation Program – provides students information about business and the self employment option,
- Youth Business Award – cash prizes are provided for Year 11 and 12 students operating a part time business as part of a Small Business Management Unit, and
- Young Australian of the Year Award – recognises the achievements of young Territorians, and provides the opportunity to compete in the national Award Program.

web: [www. nt.gov.au/dib/business](http://www.nt.gov.au/dib/business)

Finally, there is a wide range of school, university and community organisation programs to assist young people develop awareness of self-employment and the business sector. (See Appendix 4 for summary).

Best Practice Example

C.R.E.A.T.E (Creating Rural Entrepreneurial Attitudes Through Education) – is an initiative being implemented across Australia. It seeks to promote awareness and the skills of entrepreneurship in rural young people. The program is part of the Youth at the Centre initiative, and incorporates the following elements:

- a secondary school entrepreneurship program
- ‘Rural Entrepreneurs of the Future’ five day workshop for left school youth
- a national mentoring initiative to link rural young people with a business idea with someone in rural Australia who successfully runs a similar business
- courses for workers with youth on facilitating enterprising behaviour in young people.

web: www.bankofideas.com.au

(g) Supporting Small Business Development

It has long been recognised in Australia that maximum job creation occurs within the small and medium business sector, with 60%-80% of new job creation emerging from business expansion (as opposed to business creation). Both national and state governments have consistently attempted to both create a conducive environment for business growth (especially through reform of government red tape and business taxes) and practical support programs. State governments have agencies devoted to the establishment and growth of small business, and championing their cause. For example, in Western Australia, the Small Business Development Corporation exists with the following goals:

- pursuit of opportunity;
- removal of barriers and impediments to business growth;
- improvement of business skills in the small business sector;
- fostering an enterprise culture;
- promoting the value and success of small business; and
- facilitation of regional small business development.

The national government administers two programs which have supported the growth of existing small business, namely:

- *Small Business Enterprise Culture Program (SBECP)* – over \$2 million each year is provided to enhance the business skills of small business owners and managers and

demonstrate the contribution that such skills can make to business vitality and growth. Another key element of SBECF is assistance to women in business;

- *Business Incubator Program* – Business Incubators are designed to assist new and growing businesses to become established through shared workshop facilities. Incubators provide premises, advice seminars, shared facilities and support. During 2000/01, \$5 million was provided for the establishment of new incubator facilities.

Two community based business support programs are worth highlighting as best practice examples.

Best Practice Example

Business Enterprise Centres (BEC) were created in Western Australia in the 1980's through the Department of Employment and Training. Now numbering 35, these centres operate in city and country communities, providing a range of services to both establish and grow businesses. These services include:

- free practical business assistance,
- referral to specialist advisors,
- assistance through the maze of government departments and regulations,
- business workshops,
- business information, and
- problem solving.

A management committee with representatives from business, private sector organisations and local government, support a facilitator/manager to implement the above services.

All BECs would support business initiatives involving youth and unemployed people.

web: www.sbdc.com.au

Best Practice Example

The Business Retention and Expansion program was introduced into Australia in 1996 by the Bank of I.D.E.A.S. Based on the USA model, this strategy supports through a defined process and set of tools, a community organised business visitation program. The purpose of the visitation program is to ascertain from local businesses their perceptions and ideas about what can happen locally to help existing businesses do better, expand and create more local jobs. A host of rural and urban communities have utilised this community and economic development strategy.

web: www.bankofideas.com.au

(h) Community and Economic Development Initiatives

Since the early 1970s when unemployment became a significant issue in Australia, local communities and regions have always been actively involved in mounting local initiatives to increase the net number, quality and variety of job opportunities. A host of community and regional economic and employment development agencies and committees exist.

Over the last five years, national government has become increasingly aware of the importance of building communities (including their job creation capacity) from the 'inside out' as opposed to the traditional 'top down – outside in'. Senator Vanstone, Minister responsible for the Department of Family and Community Services expressed this sentiment well – *'we recognise that governments, alone, can never hope to fix every social problem. The days of governments telling communities what's good for them are over. After all, the best ideas usually come from the 'bottom up' rather than the 'top down'.'*

Today a range of national programs exist to foster such initiatives including:

- *Area Consultative Committees (ACC)* 56 regionally based organisations responsible for acting as a catalyst for local initiative in terms of job creation and economic development (see section XI below for more details).

Funded by the national government, these ACCs administer the *Regional Assistance Programme* (RAP) funding. This funding provides support for local based projects that can generate sustainable employment, stimulate local economic development and build the skill base of the region. A total of \$30 million is available. The following two best practice examples illustrate what can be achieved.

Best Practice Example

Changes in the timber industry in East Gippsland, Victoria, placed 110 jobs at risk. RAP funding of \$64,000 established the *Integrated Timber Industry Development Project*. As a result of the project, 10 sawmills in East Gippsland have signed a joint venture agreement to develop a timber value-adding plant, including state of the art kiln drying facilities. This plant alone employs 55 people.

Best Practice Example

In 1999, *Seahorse World* received a \$30,000 RAP grant to carry out a feasibility study into the potential of developing a tourist and public education centre. The Seahorse World complex opened in December 2000, and attracted 8,000 people in its first month of operation.

In addition to ACCs and RAP grants, the national government has supported community based employment and economic development through a range of other initiatives including:

- *The Regional Solutions Programme*- a \$90 million program over four years which aims to help regional communities to build their own capacity to identify and implement development opportunities. It assists communities to move beyond planning by providing assistance to implement community initiatives, including community infrastructure. Regional Solutions is a flexible program aimed at finding local solutions to local problems. Grants of between \$1,000 and \$500,000 are available;
- *The Stronger Families, Stronger Communities* - - a \$240 million initiative over four years. Includes a 'Local Solutions to Local Problems' fund to assist 500 local projects over four years (\$15.4 million) and 'Potential Leadership in Local Community' to help 400 communities over four years (\$37.1 million). This latter initiative has a strong focus on young people;
- *Dairy Regional Assistance Program* - \$15 million in 2000/01 to assist regional communities to ameliorate the negative impacts of dairy industry deregulation, and explore new community employment initiatives.

X. ACTIVE YOUTH LABOUR MARKET POLICIES – AREAS FOR IMPROVEMENT

The 2001 OECD Economic Survey of Australia makes a simple but powerful comment – '*despite the encouraging growth in structured education, scope remains to improve school to work transition*' (quoted in Curtain, 2001).

During 2001, there were a number of major reports released in Australia that analysed and commented on issues/barriers affecting the participation of young men and women in the labour market, and commented on areas for improvement among current labour market support programs. These reports included:

- *Footprints in the Future – Report of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce*;
- *Creating Better Educational and Employment Opportunities for Rural Young People* (National Youth Affairs Research Scheme);
- *Negotiating the Maze – An Analysis of Employment Assistance for Young People* (Brotherhood of St Laurence et al);
- *Pathways to Work – Preventing and Reducing Long-Term Unemployment* (The Boston Consulting Group); and
- *OECD Economic Survey of Australia* (2000 and 2001).

A summary of their observations for labour market program improvement is as follows:

- **School relevance**

The 2000 OECD Economic Survey of Australia recommended reform of the curriculum to make senior secondary school more relevant and useful to potential school leavers. The constraining nature of the school curriculum and dissatisfaction with the school environment are commonly cited as causes for school leaving (Dearn 2001, Dwyer et al 1998). Dearn (2001) challenges schools to be more relevant to all students including those disenfranchised by mainstream school – *‘a special need is to reinforce the responsibility of education systems to provide accessible and supportive opportunities for disengaged students to return to formal learning at a later stage in life. Interestingly, the National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century ... makes no reference to this as a formal goal of Australian education systems’*.

- **Lack of option visibility**

Many young people appear unaware of the opportunities available to them. There is a need for better resources in helping young people identify and negotiate the complexity of the labour market system and its options.

The loss of Youth Access Centres with the demise of the old Commonwealth Employment Service eliminated that ‘one stop shop’ facility. There is a need to recreate the ‘one stop shop’ concept which integrates information, resources and guidance relating to employment, education, training and welfare services and options.

- **Age and eligibility restrictions**

Given that young people travel different transition journeys, there is no guarantee that programs will be available at points in a young person’s life when they require them most. For example:

- Job Pathways Project (JPP) is restricted to 15 to 19 year olds
- Job Placement, Employment and Training (JPET) is restricted to 15 to 21 year olds
- Reconnect is restricted to 15 to 18 year olds
- Green Corps is restricted to 16 to 20 year olds
- Work for the Dole is restricted to those 18 and above
- New Employment and Incentive Scheme is restricted to those 18 and above

In addition, there are restrictions enabling the linking of participants in different program combinations. Some examples include:

- participation in JPET prevents accessing other JPET, JPP, Intensive Assistance and Reconnect
- participation in NEIS/SED prevents accessing Job Search Training and Intensive Assistance
- participation in Green Corps prevents accessing JPET
- participating in WfD prevents accessing Intensive Assistance

Restrictions on program participation needs examination.

- **Gender equality**

There is certainly a greater understanding of the needs of those most ‘at risk’ in terms of issues related to age, race, ethnicity, location and disability. An awareness of the reality that young women continue to experience high levels of unemployment, and higher participation rates in casual, part-time and low skilled work areas is not reflected in resource allocation and creative programming options. ‘The National Commitment to All Young People’ has no specific gender reference. The Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce made no specific gender focussed recommendations.

- **Lack of opportunities for subsidised work places**

Wage and training subsidy programs have always been a significant strategy in Australia’s employment programs. However, the current government has scaled back their importance. Apart from the Intensive Assistance Program there are few mainstream labour market initiatives that now provide subsidised integrated work placement and training.

However, one evaluation (ACOSS, 2000b) claims that less than 20% of Intensive Assistance clients were receiving job specific skills training or opportunities for paid employment assistance. The Social Partnership in their document ‘*Pathways to Work*’ were particularly critical of the levels of funding for Intensive Assistance – ‘*present funding levels for Intensive Assistance are not sufficient for Job Network providers to offer systematic help (to long-term unemployed). A stronger financial commitment to employment and training assistance appears to be required from the Federal Government. While comparisons are difficult given the different institutional structures, Australia lags behind most comparable OECD countries in its expenditure on employment assistance for job seekers...*’ (The Boston Consulting Group, 2001).

Wage and training subsidy program options perhaps need re-considering in Australia. Referring to the studies of Webster (1998), Martin (1998) and DEWRSB (2000b), the Key Social Partners in their collaborative document also advocate more focus on subsidised paid employment experiences – ‘*there is a strong body of evidence suggesting that well designed employment assistance schemes can significantly improve employment prospects ... the evaluation literature suggests that paid employment experience in a Mainstream job is a particularly effective form of employment assistance for long term unemployed people, whether on its own or combined with relevant training*’ (The Boston Consulting Group, 2001).

- **Lack of coordination and linkage**

A dominant theme in all the reports on the Australian labour market is the lack of collaboration and integration between education, training and employment program providers. The challenges include:

- operation of a highly segmented dual strategy approach to school to work transition with education and employment sectors operating often unconnected programs. The

recent focus on combinations of school and work based learning (eg, school based apprenticeships) are helping in building better linkage;

- poor links between schools and TAFE - the 2000 OECD Economic Survey of Australia encouraged TAFE and high schools to cooperate better with each other;
- lack of linkage between the wide variety of employment and training programs. Dearn's (2001) summarises it well – *'paths are too often fractured and disjointed with the possibility of programs being inaccessible, inappropriate or unavailable at the key transition points when they might be needed'*;
- competitive environment between agencies encouraged by the government's use of open tendering for program contractors;
- poor linkage between government programs at the local level. The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001) encouraged the national government to look at ways to improve the local coordination of a number of its own youth related programs, including the examination of *'tendering and contractual arrangements to ensure they promote appropriate co-ordination in local communities'*;

- **Lack of support and navigation for individuals moving through the system**

There is strong support for the creation of a system that all young people up to 24 not in full time work or full time education be provided with an individual pathway brokered or negotiated to ensure integrated support.

The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001) recommends an even more comprehensive support package beginning with age 13 –

- *'a "flexible learning pathways plan" for every young person from Year 8 which would be developed with parents, teachers, friends and others, and which would map out the student's preferred pathway through school and beyond ...;*
- *access to professional career and transition support which makes available to young people information that is accessible and well presented, backed by guidance and follow-up services which integrate education, labour market and social support;*
- *the development of structured mentoring programs for young people;*
- *a clear allocation of responsibility for following up and supporting young people as they move along the paths they have chosen and into the next stages of their lives;*
- *special additional assistance for young people with special needs who are likely to need extra help to achieve their goals, and brokering services that would support those young people who might need assistance in negotiating training, further education placements or work experience opportunities in order to reach their desired outcome'*.

An initial step in this process needs to be the implementation of a monitoring and follow-up process of ex-students by secondary schools. OECD (OECD 2000) has recommended this innovation and sees one immediate benefit being to *'refocus schools objectives, making it clear that an important objective is to assist the student in making a successful transition to adult working life'*.

- **Lack of monitoring of outcomes**

Jack Dusseldorp of DSF summarises this concern well – *'the absence of up to date outcomes measures particularly at a regional and service delivery level is a key obstacle hindering better coordination. Implementing a comprehensive and decentralised*

reporting system is a major test of capability for all stakeholders involved in the school to work transition process. It is a necessary step to showing that governments and service providers can improve service delivery to meet more effectively the needs of the most vulnerable of Australia's young people' (Curtain, 2001).

The Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce (2001) recommends that Australia develops a framework of transition goals and indicators. Specifically, the Taskforce recommended that national, state and territory governments and other relevant stakeholder groups –

- *'develop clear and measurable goals and indicators for young person's transitions to work, further learning and independence that are appropriate for secondary schools, tertiary education and training providers, and other agencies working with young people;*
- *ensure that reporting of transition outcomes for young people is incorporated into regular reporting on performance by secondary schools, tertiary education and training providers, and other agencies working with young people, and that such reporting be made available to local communities, and funding providers, with the receipt of public funding contingent on adequate reporting; and*
- *develop regular public reporting on young people's transition outcomes at regional, state, territory and national levels. Where feasible, reporting should be developed for a variety of groups of young people, including those classified according to gender, location, social background, educational background, language background other than English, indigenous status, disability and being the subject of child protection or juvenile justice orders'.*

- **Commitment to Youth entrepreneurship**

Despite the growth in programs supporting enterprise education and self employment, resource allocation is a minor component of overall employment strategies. Education is very much about preparing young people to work for someone else, with much of enterprise education about learning how to operate within a small business. Exposure to the self employment option requires greater attention and serious program support.

Finally in terms of specific changes to key national labour market programs it is worth noting recommendation 23 of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce:

'The Taskforce recommends that:

- *the Commonwealth Government promote effective integration of Job Network services and local youth support strategies including:*
 - *more opportunities for young people to benefit from Intensive Assistance; and*
 - *an increased awareness of the needs of young people by Job Network providers and of the impact of breaching penalties.*
- *the Commonwealth Government work with State and Territory governments to develop:*
 - *arrangements which allow a greater number of young people to access New Apprenticeship preparation programmes with entry levels appropriate for young people without adequate basic education competencies, as well as structural and*

- industrial arrangements which make part-time and school-based New Apprenticeships attractive to employers;*
- *New Apprenticeship placements in the government, private and community sectors for disadvantaged young people; and*
 - *a recognition of the importance of education outcomes for young people in New Apprenticeships Access Programme.*
- *to ensure that young people with high support needs can access New Apprenticeships there must be:*
 - *adequate pre-placement preparation and post-placement support of young people;*
 - *on-going mentoring;*
 - *careful selection, training and support for host employers;*
 - *a staged induction process developed in consultation with young people; and*
 - *recognition and assessment of prior learning and a creative approach to structured workplace learning.*
 - *the Work for the Dole programme be enhanced so that it incorporates:*
 - *adequate preparation of participants in their understanding of occupational health and safety requirements;*
 - *local programme development processes which consult with young people and community groups in planning and delivering the programme; and*
 - *clear articulation into traineeships, employment or accredited training’.*

XI. PARTNERSHIPS

In Australia, renewed attention is being given to a general notion of partnerships that promises an enhanced engagement of the broader community to help conceive, develop and deliver government programs and services. It is recognised in Australia that the creation of positive employment outcomes for young people does not lie with a single level of government, business, unions or the non government sector. Positive employment outcomes will be maximised if all these sectors, firstly collaborate in partnership, and secondly that this partnership becomes functional at the community and regional levels.

The recent collaborative statement by all the key social partners ‘*Pathways to Work*’ made two relevant recommendations to improve school to work transition, namely –

1. *‘Community partnerships should be developed and strengthened at the regional level between industry, schools, health organisations and Job Network services, and other non-government agencies, to identify those who have left school early or are at risk of doing so, and to support them in securing employment or further education and training’*
2. *‘An agreed mechanism should be established to ensure that an identified body is accountable for increasing the participation in work, training or education of school leavers within each region’ (Boston Consulting Group, 2001)*

In addition, the document reinforced the partnership principle with this recommendation –

‘Employers and unions should work together with community organisations at the industry, enterprise and regional level to open up additional job and employment experience opportunities for long-term unemployed people.’

The recent Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce has made three specific recommendations about strengthening community partnerships, and focussing on local based response:

Recommendation 5 – *‘the Commonwealth Government work with State, Territory and Local Governments to resource a process for developing community partnerships which brings together key local individuals, employers, community agencies, religious groups, government departments and young people to address the following issues:*

- *the provision of innovative education, training, leadership and employment opportunities which respond to the particular needs of their local community;*
- *the development of local programs that build the confidence and self esteem of young people as they identify and promote their capacity and contribution to their community;*
- *the promotion of positive images of young people which celebrate their achievement and counter negative stereotypes;*
- *the establishment of policies, practices and protocols that promote prevention, early identification and intervention approaches appropriate to the needs of local communities;*
- *the creation of coherent local networks of support for all young people;*
- *the sharing of information and the promotion of good practice, innovative responses, quality assurances and standards in the delivery of programs to all young people’.*

Recommendation 6 – *‘Government*

- *promote the development of transition support networks in local communities by bringing together key agencies committed to supporting young people and their families and enabling them to:*
 - *set up their own locally relevant objectives within agreed frameworks;*
 - *design their own young advisory and planning structures that would be empowered to initiative local project development and delivery;*
 - *design and operate their own local action structures, and*
 - *pool the expertise and resources of local, State and Commonwealth bodies to support local initiatives.*
- *initiate demonstration projects to trial a range of models which respond to local youth transition priorities;*
- *encourage integrated service provision (at local level)’.*

Recommendation 19 – *‘Governments ensure*

- *community based networks are identified in each local government area to develop localised approaches which identify and support young people not in education or employment;*

- *all young people living without adequate support are linked to a social service network with an individual worker or agency assigned a key support responsibility;*
- *appropriate, accessible and affordable services for young people with high needs are available in all local communities;*
- *local community based networks should assist young people with high support needs to reconnect with peers, family and community; and*
- *local support services commit to delivering an integrated response to young people which offers holistic support across community and government jurisdiction’.*

Recognising the limitations of government acting alone, the Australian national government is basing its social policy within a framework it calls ‘The Social Coalition’ (see appendix 5 for details of the philosophical basis). The current Australian Prime Minister has described social coalition as ‘*a partnership of individuals, families, business, government, welfare and charitable organisations, each contributing their unique resources and expertise to tackle disadvantage as its source*’ (DFACS, 2001).

As a consequence, the government is increasingly seeking the involvement of the wider community to conceive, develop and deliver government programs and services. The government believes that this approach achieves ‘*a balance between excessive involvement and regulation by government, which may stifle community capacity and people’s ability for self reliance*’ (DFACS, 2001). It believes this approach can provide:

- *‘opportunities for creative and diverse business and community sector input into the policy and implementation process;*
- *higher trust in government through an open collaborative approach to policy making. Higher trust can create a more productive economy;*
- *opportunities for great social networking and the creation of further partnership opportunities;*
- *resource effectiveness by ensuring all the available resources and perspectives are brought to bear on social policy issues; and*
- *a broader strategic role for Government as a facilitator, connecting the community sector, the business sector and individuals to worthwhile and often much needed local issues or projects’* (DFACS, 2001).

One of the prominent illustrations of this philosophy in action is the creation of the Prime Minister’s Community Business Partnership. This initiative has been initiated to promote a culture of corporate and individual social responsibility in Australia. Chaired by the Prime Minister, with the Minister for Family and Community Services as Deputy Chair, the Partnership is made up of eleven prominent business and community leaders. It seeks to foster new partnerships between government, business and community. The level of Trade Union participation is notable by its absence in membership!

The government has also committed \$10 million over four years for community business partnerships to encourage employment initiatives for disadvantaged groups. The Prime Minister has also instigated an annual Prime Minister’s Awards for Excellence in Community Business Partnerships to showcase best practice.

Best Practice Example

In Queensland, the partnership between *Fiber Glass International and Mission Australia* provided hands-on experience and training for 55 unemployed people to build an Olympic class yacht for people with disabilities. The boat offered an opportunity for athletes to enter the Paralympic Games for the first time. Significantly 85% of graduates from this project moved into employment or further training and Mission Australia has been able to use the partnership to build a business network, its public profile and capacity to enter into further business partnerships.

At the regional level, the national government has created and supported the operation of 56 Area Consultative Committees. These committees comprise approximately 20 volunteer business and community leaders, and exist to promote a social coalition between the national government, business and local communities to build stronger communities and generate opportunities for jobs, skills development, business success, regional economic growth and improved delivery of government services. 43 of these committees are in rural and remote Australia.

The current Australian government see creating successful partnerships '*as a major way of developing a more productive, caring and creative society*' (DFACS, 2001).

XII. CONCLUSION

Despite a decade of exceptional economic growth in Australia, youth unemployment remains unacceptably high with significant numbers of young men and women failing to make the transition from full time education to full time employment. The Australian youth labour market has seen a decline in full time employment options and a corresponding growth in dependence on part time work.

The concept of a simple and linear transition from school to work eludes Australia. Dearn's (2001) summarises the reality for many Australian youth – '*it is not uncommon for young people to combine full time and part time study with periods of full time, part time and casual work and unemployment. Disproportionately high rates of youth unemployment, diminishing opportunities for full time work, and the persistence of casual and part time work as the most ready employment options, mean that transition from school to employment may be fractured, extended and uncertain*'.

The simple reality is that young people have more difficulty than any other age group in gaining access to work. Young people are currently experiencing two and a half times the level of unemployment of adults aged 25 to 54. This disproportionate ratio emphasises that economic growth alone will not ensure positive employment for young people.

Policy and program initiatives from all levels of government, and with increasing involvement from social partners and non government organisations have lead to a wide range of responses. However the key challenges remain. Besides the growth in New

Apprenticeships over the last three years, there have been little inroads into reducing the proportion of young people suffering unemployment disadvantage.

Of particular concern is the realisation that the Australian labour market is not as ‘youth friendly’ as other countries with better coordinated and resourced school to work arrangements.

The Prime Minister’s Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Report – *Footprints to the Future* has provided a clear analysis of the challenge, and its *National Commitment to All Young People*, a framework for positive action. The next 12 months is critical for both national and state governments, social partners and local communities. The blue print is available – deliberate action and commitment, improved coordination and linkages and adequate resourcing is now required.

The foundation stones for creating positive employment options for young people in Australia are now clearly recognised and articulated:

- improved school retention mechanisms
- better combinations of school and work based learning
- stronger links between education, training and employment sectors
- improved collaboration between agencies and services
- greater attention to the needs of those most ‘at risk’, namely school leavers, young women, indigenous youth, rural youth, young people with disabilities and young people from Non English Speaking Backgrounds

- greater focus on the quality and outcomes of school to work transition initiatives with appropriate measurement, monitoring and reporting mechanisms
- development of more effective and holistic local responses to the needs of young people through building stronger local community responsibility and capacity and integrated local service provision
- more promotion of the self employment option
- more effective tracking of individual young people over time to provide continuous support, personal guidance, mentoring and brokering, especially for those most at risk, and
- greater program and institutional flexibility.

Such foundation stones reflect the priorities of the U.N. High-Level Panel on Youth Employment, namely –

- *Employability* – invest in education and vocational training and improve the impact of these investments;
- *Equality* – give young women the same opportunities as young men, and
- *Entrepreneurship* – make it easier to start and run enterprises to provide more jobs for young men and women.

Experience and recent government commitments show that ‘*employability*’ is certainly a key priority and major focus. ‘*Equality*’ is understood, but the commitment is not reflected in resource allocation. *Entrepreneurship* through building a stronger small and medium enterprise sector is a strong national priority, though the concept of youth entrepreneurship is still more a novelty than a serious resourced policy and program direction.

ACRONYMS AND ABBREVIATIONS

ABS	Australian Bureau of Statistics
ACOSS	Australian Council of Social Service
AQF	Australian Qualification Framework
BEC	Business Enterprise Centre
BITS	Building on IT Strengths Program
CES	Community Employment Service
CDEP	Community Development Employment Projects
DEET	Department of Employment, Education and Training
DEST	Department of Training, Employment, Science and Training
DETYA	Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs
DEWRSB	Department of Employment, Workplace Relations and Small Business
DFACS	Department of Family and Community Services
DSF	Dusseldorp Skills Forum
ECEF	Enterprise Career Education Foundation
ESB	English Speaking Background
JPET	Job Placement, Employment and Training Program
JPP	Job Pathways Program
MCEETYA	Ministerial Council in Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs
NAAP	New Apprenticeships Access Programme
NCIS	National Career Information System
NCVER	National Centre for Vocational Education Research
NEIS	New Enterprise Incentive Scheme
NESB	Non English Speaking Background

OECD	Organisation of Economic Cooperation and Development
RYIS	Rural Youth Information Service
SBECF	Small Business Enterprise Culture Program
STEP	Structured Training and Employment Projects
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VET	Vocational Education and Training
WfD	Work for the Dole
YEO	Young Entrepreneurs Organisation
YES	Youth Employment Scheme

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Appendix I

A National Commitment to all Young People

The Taskforce recommends that the Commonwealth Government work with State and Territory governments to develop a National Commitment to All Young People which underpins and sustains their transition to independence.

All Young People need

THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

- complete 12 years of schooling or its vocational equivalent, including strong literacy and numeracy foundation;
- undertake vocational education and training and structured workplace learning;
- obtain employability and life skills which enable them to be active members of the community;
- engage with professional career and transition support;
- benefit from effective peer and family support; and
- learn and participate in environments that are inclusive of and responsive to their cultural and linguistic diversity.

THIS WILL REQUIRE:

- cultural and paradigm shifts in many of our community institutions and systems;
- Commonwealth, State, Territory and local governments to work together;
- integrated supported networks which create opportunities and respond to the diversity of challenges faced by young people:
- focused and collaborative partnerships at the local level involving schools, industry, business, government and non-government agencies, communities, young people and their families;
- the development of learning pathways plans for each young person, transition follow-up and mechanisms and transition indicators;
- the development of a comprehensive career and transition support system and the development of employability and life skill learning programmes; and
- appropriate income support, health care and housing foundations.

Young People at risk of becoming disconnected need

- early intervention services that work with young people, their families and the community;
- peer support networks in schools and local communities; and
- a range of cultural, artistic, sporting and other recreational activities.

THIS WILL REQUIRE:

- schools with established policies, protocols and practices that promote early recognition and intervention; and
- early response plans developed through collaborative networks.

Young People who have become disconnected need

- a diverse range of vocational learning and employment opportunities; and
- effective service responses with individualised long term support.

THIS WILL REQUIRE:

- co-ordinated support networks in all regions of local government areas;
- better linkages between schools and community service providers; and
- new approaches including partnership outreach education models basing education in community settings.

To realise this commitment, young people, families, schools, governments, business and communities will need to work together to recognise and act on their shared responsibility to equip young people for the future.

(Produced by the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, 2001)

Appendix 2

The Adelaide Declaration on National Goals for Schooling in the Twenty-first Century (April 1999)

Preamble

Australia's future depends upon each citizen having the necessary knowledge, understanding, skills and values for a productive and rewarding life in an educated, just and open society. High quality schooling is central to achieving this vision.

This statement of national goals for schooling provides broad directions to guide schools and education authorities in securing these outcomes for students.

It acknowledges the capacity of all young people to learn, and the role of schooling in developing that capacity. It also acknowledges the role of parents as the first educators of their children and the central role of teachers in the learning process.

Schooling provides a foundation for young Australians' intellectual, physical, social, moral, spiritual and aesthetic development. By providing a supportive and nurturing environment, schooling contributes to the development of students' sense of self-worth, enthusiasm for learning and optimism for the future.

Governments set the public policies that foster the pursuit of excellence, enable a diverse range of educational choices and aspirations, safeguard the entitlement of all young people to high quality schooling, promote the economic use of public resources, and uphold the contribution of schooling to a socially cohesive and culturally rich society.

Common and agreed goals for schooling establish a foundation for action among State and Territory governments with their constitutional responsibility for schooling, the Commonwealth, non-government school authorities and all those who seek the best possible educational outcomes for young Australians, to improve the quality of schooling nationally .

The achievement of these common and agreed national goals entails a commitment to collaboration for the purposes of:

- further strengthening schools as learning communities where teachers, students and their families work in partnership with business, industry and the wider community
- enhancing the status and quality of the teaching profession
- continuing to develop curriculum and related systems of assessment, accreditation and credentialing that promote quality and are nationally recognised and valued
- increasing public confidence in school education through explicit and defensible standards that guide improvement in students' levels of educational achievement and through which the effectiveness, efficiency and equity of schooling can be measured and evaluated.

These national goals provide a basis for investment in schooling to enable all young people to engage effectively with an increasingly complex world. This world will be characterised by advances in information and communication technologies, population diversity arising from international mobility and migration, and complex environmental and social challenges.

The achievement of the national goals for schooling will assist young people to contribute to Australia's social, cultural and economic development in local and global contexts. Their achievement will also assist young people to develop a disposition towards learning throughout their lives so that they can exercise their rights and responsibilities as citizens of Australia.

Goals

1. Schooling should develop fully the talents and capacities of all students. In particular, when students leave school, they should:

- 1.1 have the capacity for, and skills in, analysis and problem solving and the ability to communicate ideas and information, to plan and organise activities, and to collaborate with others.
- 1.2 have qualities of self-confidence, optimism, high self-esteem, and a commitment to personal excellence as a basis for their potential life roles as family, community and workforce members.
- 1.3 have the capacity to exercise judgement and responsibility in matters of morality, ethics and social justice, and the capacity to make sense of their world, to think about how things got to be the way they are, to make rational and informed decisions about their own lives, and to accept responsibility for their own actions.
- 1.4 be active and informed citizens with an understanding and appreciation of Australia's system of government and civic life.
- 1.5 have employment related skills and an understanding of the work environment, career options and pathways as a foundation for, and positive attitudes towards, vocational education and training, further education, employment and life-long learning.
- 1.6 be confident, creative and productive users of new technologies, particularly information and communication technologies, and understand the impact of those technologies on society.
- 1.7 have an understanding of, and concern for, stewardship of the natural environment, and the knowledge and skills to contribute to ecologically sustainable development.
- 1.8 have the knowledge, skills and attitudes necessary to establish and maintain a healthy lifestyle, and for the creative and satisfying use of leisure time.

2. In terms of curriculum, students should have:

- 2.1 attained high standards of knowledge, skills and understanding through a comprehensive and balanced curriculum in the compulsory years of schooling encompassing the agreed eight key learning areas:
 - the arts;
 - English;
 - health and physical education;
 - languages other than English;
 - mathematics;
 - science;
 - studies of society and environment; and
 - technology.

and the interrelationships between them.

- 2.2 attained the skills of numeracy and English literacy; such that, every student should be numerate, able to read, write, spell and communicate at an appropriate level.
- 2.3 participated in programs of vocational learning during the compulsory years and have had access to vocational education and training programs as part of their senior secondary studies.
- 2.4 participated in programs and activities which foster and develop enterprise skills, including those skills which will allow them maximum flexibility and adaptability in the future.

3. Schooling should be socially just, so that:

- 3.1 students' outcomes from schooling are free from the effects of negative forms of discrimination based on sex, language, culture and ethnicity, religion or disability; and of differences arising from students' socio-economic background or geographic location.
- 3.2 the learning outcomes of educationally disadvantaged students improve and, over time, match those of other students.
- 3.3 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students have equitable access to, and opportunities in, schooling so that their learning outcomes improve and, over time, match those of other students.
- 3.4 all students understand and acknowledge the value of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander cultures to Australian society and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, reconciliation between Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians.
- 3.5 all students understand and acknowledge the value of cultural and linguistic diversity, and possess the knowledge, skills and understanding to contribute to, and benefit from, such diversity in the Australian community and internationally.
- 3.6 all students have access to the high quality education necessary to enable the completion of school education to Year 12 or its vocational equivalent and that provides clear and recognised pathways to employment and further education and training.

Appendix 3

PRINCIPLES THAT ENHANCE MEANINGFUL YOUTH PARTICIPATION

- Make it fun, challenging and exciting.
- Ensure participation by choice.
- Don't pigeon hole young men and women – be careful about generalising behaviour, opinions, attitudes or ideas.
- Set up for success – provide information, training, support, resources, time and space – especially support to promote success and handle setbacks.
- Involve experiences respected by young people, peers and the community.
- Create as many opportunities for young men and women to lead and teach.
- Always start with the gifts, talents, assets and skills of young people – never with their needs, problems or deficiencies.
- Maximise decision making by young people and their accountability.
- Involve young men and women from the start.
- Generate experiences which address their issues and needs that are perceived as real and relevant by young women and men – avoid tokenism.
- Develop activities that raise young people's awareness of the social, political, economic, cultural and personal aspects of the issues affecting them.
- Make sense of, and demystify adult structures and processes.
- Create opportunities for building active and supportive working relationships between young people and other members of the community.
- Identify activities that provide opportunities for training and skills development.
- Provide opportunities for young people to reflect and analyse their experiences.

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Appendix 4

NATIONAL YOUTH ENTERPRISE DEVELOPMENT PROGRAMS

Programs listed below are national initiatives which support young men and women develop enterprising behaviour, and/or help them explore and enter the self employment option.

a. **Operation Livewire**

Operation Livewire encourages young Australians between the ages of 18 and 25 to establish their own business ventures. It encourages entrants to think through their business ideas to create a formal, documented business plan.

To provide guidance and practical advice, each accepted entrant is allocated a Mentor. The role of the Mentor is to maintain close contact over a three month period while 'Livewires' are developing their ideas and preparing their business plans. Mentors give entrants the opportunity to talk through their ideas with someone who has business experience and who can help with general advice about working for yourself, and about the financial and marketing aspects of running a small business.

b. **Australis Self Made Girl Program**

The Australis Self Made Girl programme teaches young women the skills to achieve financial independence. The programme expands on what is being taught in schools by providing a first hand look into the real world working alongside successful business women on a series of activities.

The program assists young women by: –

- expanding their career options – by working face-to-face with adult women from a variety of different industries (one adult works with 8 girls);
- building self-confidence and esteem – girls learn about economic achievements of their Australian foremothers and how to make a “powerful impression”;
- encouraging creativity – girls create a product from scrap materials and write a business plan;
- considering self employment as a real option; and
- motivating them to become self reliant and financially independent.

c. **Nescafe Big Break**

“Nescafe Big Break” gives young people the chance to do what they want with their life. It's for people (16-21 years) who have ambition or dream and are just getting started. “Nescafe Big Break” has been running since 1990 and 167 winners have shared in \$1.5 million. Many have gone on to build successful businesses or gain artistic acclaim. Past examples (1999) include:

Polyurethane horse shoes;
Zero till planting system;
Pool alarm system;
Ergonomic computer keyboard; and
Community service announcement aimed at discouraging teen drug use;

d. Plan Your Own Enterprise Competition

The “Plan Your Own Enterprise” competition is conducted by Business Educators Australasia. It targets secondary students and offers prizes on both a national and state level. Students are required to prepare a 2000 word business plan overview comprising a description of their product or business idea and its potential, staff and management requirements, and market and financial analyses.

e. Australian Business Week (ABW) School Program

The ABW School Program is designed to provide year 11 students with an opportunity to learn about business by running their own company through a computer simulation of the Australian economy. Each company team develops a company name and logo, their own product, a company report and a range of promotional material. Business decisions made by the students for each ‘quarter’ are then entered into a computer, and the resulting printout is used to inform decisions for the next quarter.

f. Young Achievement Australia (YAA) Business Skills Program

Business Skills is a VET accredited cross-disciplinary program, aligned with the Small Business Management Competency Standards to ensure that students cover the skills and knowledge that underpin real world commercial success. The program runs over 16-24 weeks, bringing together 12-25 senior secondary or tertiary students with three to five advisers from business and industry. During this time together, students plan, create, implement and dissolve a business. The flexibility of the program extends business skills opportunities to people with disabilities, youth at risk, indigenous groups and youth not in full-time study or employment.

g. ‘E’ Teams

‘E’ Teams are structured workplace experiences for Year 11 students, developed and conducted by the AQC. It is coordinated by the Australian Quality Council. Teams of five students each learn and apply the tools and principles of quality and business improvement during a week’s workplace experience in a host organisation. At the end of the five days, the students prepare a report, and present their recommendations to management of the host organisation for improving a particular business process.

h. Mindshop Excellence Program (MEP)

MEP is an innovative program specifically targeted at providing Year 10 students with work experience that contributes substantially to “job readiness”. It is targeted at students who are about to embark on the transition from education to employment.

The program also allows schools to be continually in touch with best practice business philosophies by encouraging them to integrate MEP into their standard Work Experience curricula. MEP teaches the basic Mindshop tools that address issues such as self esteem, thinking skills, values, public speaking, motivation, team work, change processes, strategic thinking, brainstorming, flow charting, cause and effect analysis, goal setting and mind mapping.

i. The National Enterprise Days Initiative (NEDI)

The NEDI is designed to link businesses, schools and the community in the conduct of Enterprise Days. By linking schools with their local businesses and communities, it is hoped to establish ongoing partnerships aimed at helping students to identify opportunities, earn a living and generally prosper in a rapidly changing world. Business and communities can also benefit through the showcasing of innovation, creativity and enthusiasm in their local area.

j. Australian Network of Practice Firms

‘Practice firms’ provide an innovative training strategy for the development of business skills and business thinking. Students who are enrolled in secondary college or TAFE programmes establish and run their own businesses with the help of a facilitator and a real business partner. The Network consists of all the trading practice firms, which together generate a simulated market economy.

k. Promoting Young Entrepreneurs Initiative

A national government initiative launched in October 2000. This awareness raising program aims to help build both a culture of entrepreneurship in young people at secondary school and tertiary level, as well as in the broader educational and business communities.

It has two main thrusts:

- marketing the achievements of Australia’s successful entrepreneurs; and
- facilitating the development of the entrepreneurial capacity of tertiary students.

l. Young Entrepreneurs Organisation

National support has been provided to the Young Entrepreneurs Organisation (YEO), a global non-profit organisation that assists the endeavours of young entrepreneurs. YEO chapters across Australia provide young entrepreneurs with a supportive environment, access to international networks and other resources and peer mentoring. YEO has a national secretarial and electronic newsletter.

Appendix 5

BUILDING A SOCIAL COALITION

The Government is committed to supporting a modern safety net. But it seeks to put in place more than a social safety net – the creation of a new social coalition, strong enough to respond to entrenched problems, flexible enough to respond to new difficulties as they arise.

KEY POINTS:

PROTECT DIGNITY of the individual so as to strengthen families and local communities.

BUILD NETWORKS AND TRUST within a community to promote honesty, self reliance, cooperation and respect.

DEVELOP PARTNERSHIPS between individuals, families, business, government and the community.

ENCOURAGE PEOPLE TO TAKE RESPONSIBILITY for themselves and for those they love and assist others who genuinely need help.

PROVIDE INCENTIVES for people to avoid disadvantage and to help themselves out of it.

GREATER MUTUAL OBLIGATION – a philosophy that draws deep upon the great Australian values of fairness, independence and living up to a work ethic.

DRAW UPON UNIQUE SKILLS of individuals, business, government and the community.

TAP THE VOLUNTEERING SEGMENT of individuals and the willingness of business to engage with their communities.

EMBRACE PREVENTION as much as cure.

INVOLVE BUSINESS more deeply in the community is the next step towards creating a stronger Australia.

(Compiled by the Policy Strategies Section of the Department of Family and Community Services, 1999)