



**CHAMBER OF COMMERCE AND INDUSTRY QUEENSLAND  
SUBMISSION**

◀ *Inquiry into School to Work Transition*  
Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training

31 July 2017

## Introduction

1. The Chamber of Commerce and Industry Queensland (CCIQ) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback to the Standing Committee on Employment, Education and Training (the Committee) on the *Inquiry into School to Work Transition* (the Inquiry).
2. CCIQ is Queensland's peak industry representative organisation for small and medium businesses. We represent over 414,000 Queensland businesses on local, state, and federal issues that matter to them. Our guiding focus is to develop and advocate policies that are in the best interests of Queensland businesses, the Queensland economy, and the Queensland community.
3. Businesses across Queensland are well aware of the challenges that face them and their communities when youth unemployment rates are high and young people are not on the path of upskilling themselves for current jobs and the jobs of the future. As such, businesses have a vested interest and rely on the education and training system to enable them to hire the right people, with the right skills, at the right time.
4. Furthermore, Queensland's labour market will be fundamentally reshaped by technological advances and numerous economic challenges over the next two decades. There is a very real risk of being left behind both nationally and internationally if we do not embrace progressive reforms in education and training to better prepare ourselves.
5. CCIQ recognises the importance of the VET sector in preparing workers with workplace-specific skills for a wide range of careers and industries including trade, office work, retail, hospitality and technology.
6. To this end, our organisation is involved with a number of workforce initiatives, including our own CCIQ Workforce Skills & Productivity Committee, our representatives within Jobs Queensland, the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry's Education, Employment and Training Committee and our ongoing work with the Department of Education and Training.
7. In this light, the following submission addresses in particular, the call for feedback on opportunities to better inform and support students in relation to post-school education and training, including the use of employment outcomes of students who undertake school-based vocational education or post-school tertiary pathways.

## Transition

8. CCIQ, along with the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry (ACCI) identified the transition from school to work has changed dramatically over the past few decades. Transitioning from school to work has multiple options including direct transition to tertiary and / or technical and further education (TAFE), full-time work and gap years. Deloitte Access Economics defined a good transition as one where the school leaver has over a period of four years achieved a minimum of three years of either full-time work,

full-time study at or above Certificate III level or a combination of part-time work and part-time study at or above Certificate III level<sup>1</sup>.

9. In the past 40 years, the transition has changed from a majority of younger individuals not completing secondary education and entering the employment market as unskilled, uneducated workers, to an education focus. Individuals are now, in increasing numbers, completing high school and entering post-secondary education, prior to moving into the professional work environment<sup>2</sup>.
10. Due to an increased number of graduates competing with those with higher levels of experience, effective school to work transition has stalled, there by resulting in increased unemployment rates, particularly across Queensland's regions. Secondary and tertiary education must therefore create more opportunities to engage in internships, volunteer work and gain employable skills prior to completing the school to work transition.

## VET in schools

11. Participation in school vocational programs can influence students' post-school plans, with the Queensland Government touting the VET in Schools program as being highly successful for the State.
12. A study<sup>3</sup> found that students who had intended to get a job straight after leaving school changed their post-school plans to include further VET studies or an apprenticeship or traineeship after participating in school VET programs.
13. For students who did not go to university, the initial post-school outcomes were more promising as a result of participation in school vocational programs. This is because they had higher chances of getting an apprenticeship, studying at a TAFE college or obtaining full-time employment<sup>4</sup>.
14. In general, schools that offer VET alternatives as part of the school curriculum (the school model) had higher retention rates for VET participants, whereas schools providing stand-alone VET programs (the TAFE model) had better initial post-school outcomes, in terms of students avoiding unemployment and being more successful in accessing tertiary study, apprenticeships and full-time work.
15. Queensland small businesses view VET favourably however recognise reputational issues surrounding VET in recent times. Unfortunately, a narrative has been created whereby there is a hierarchal view of tertiary education, with VET beneath Bachelor studies. By engaging with students whilst still in secondary education, greater participation rates can be achieved whilst diminishing negative connotations of the program with increased awareness and education of the program and benefits.

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<sup>1</sup> Deloitte Access Economics (2012), *Youth Transitions Evidence Base*

<sup>2</sup> Dusseldorp Skills Forum (1998), *Australia's Youth: reality and risk*

<sup>3</sup> Nguyen Nhi (2010), *The impact of VET in schools on the intentions and achievements of young people*

<sup>4</sup> Lamb & Vickers (2006), *Variations in VET provision across Australian schools and their effects on student outcomes*

## Apprenticeships

16. A key concern for CCIQ and Queensland small businesses is the decline of students failing to take up apprenticeships and / or failing to complete apprenticeships. As a proven successful transition mechanism, it is important state and federal governments focus on improving the apprenticeship sector.
17. Latest figures<sup>5</sup> showed apprenticeship graduates were employed after training, with a higher rate of employment when compared with VET students. Considering two thirds of VET students are employed prior to commencing studies, apprenticeships are a proven boon for employment.

## University Choice Awareness

18. Unemployment and underemployment of youth across Queensland is a major concern for the economy. It is critical youth are better informed and educated on not only their options to transition but also what the market trends look like to ensure students will not be underemployed in jobs that are inadequate with respect to their training.
19. Future planning by informing of the state of the market will develop better graduate outcomes and expectations, helping to usher students from school to the appropriate opportunities and employment.
20. Industry has a role to play in bridging the gap between education and employment. Governments must seek stronger and more connected industry representation on the higher education standards panel and other leadership groups in the system to ensure there is an industry voice in the setting of teaching and learning standards for higher education.

## Current Opportunities

21. CCIQ supports the Federal Government's Youth Jobs PaTH. The program seeks to build upon the foundations of the 'Learning to Work' programme providing a pathway to a full-time job. To date young Queenslanders are securing job outcomes as a result of the programme, demonstrating initiatives that bring jobseekers and industry together bridge the gap and assist transition into employment.

## Further Enquires

22. CCIQ thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide comment and welcome any feedback. Please contact Joseph Kelly, Advocacy Officer, at [jkelly@cciq.com.au](mailto:jkelly@cciq.com.au) for matters relating to this submission.

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<sup>5</sup> National Centre for Vocational Education and Research (2016) *Government-funded Student Outcomes 2016*