

SUBMISSION FROM AUSTRALIAN LEARNING LECTURE

Background

In May 2018 the Australian Learning Lecture hosted a forum in conjunction with the Mitchell Institute, to consider what reform is needed to ensure all young people find a 'line of sight' to an adult life path where they can develop the skills, livelihood and community connections that enable them to sustain a fulfilling and active life in Australia's changing society and economy.

The idea for such a forum emerged from the Australian Learning Lecture's 2017 lecture *The New Success* and Mitchell Institute's *Crunching the Number* report which urged a national conversation on transition from senior secondary to tertiary education (vocational, work or higher education).

The forum, hosted by PwC, attracted 50 participants including three Vice-Chancellors, representatives from TAFEs and several schools, as well as Universities Australia, ACER, Victorian Curriculum and Assessment Authority, the NSW Department of Education, Grattan Institute, FYA, the Smith Family and other non-profit community organisations.

The forum reflected on the key issues of Curriculum, Assessment and Pathways –to provide a vision of what a transformed education system should look like. Despite the diversity of stakeholders there was a strong common commitment to find a better model of transition for the future.

Two working parties were set up to develop proposals/ solutions to the concerns emerging from the forum. A draft paper *Realising the future of education, our vision to support 15–19 year olds to thrive in a changing world* is now being finalised.

Executive Summary

We need to do better for all young people. Many young people are failing to flourish. One in five students fails to complete year 12, and despite relatively high levels of post school qualifications, one in four young people are still not fully engaged in education or employment.

In *Realising the future of education*, Australian Learning Lecture outlines an ambitious vision to support all young people to thrive within and beyond the school education system.

It articulates four proposals for change to ensure that all learners can develop the knowledge know how, skills, attitudes, values, beliefs and confidence they need.

The challenges for improving transition

Complex pathways

Learning journeys for young people are unclear and complex, with gates and barriers that require navigation. Some pathways are very expensive, some less so. Some options are well known and well documented, whilst many others are obscure and need to be uncovered or created. Some post school options are heavily competitive, some are open. The opportunities are myriad, but hard to navigate.

Value of Applied Learning and VET not clearly understood

Young people and their families often mistakenly view VET as principally the pathway to traditional trades, rather than to a wide range of careers including technologically advanced roles and applied learning in the creative industries.ⁱ The real value of educational routes within and between VET, higher education and schooling are not clear.

Career planning is variable

Access to career planning is variable across schools and states, with many students navigating on their own or reliant on parent advice and family networks.ⁱⁱ Career planning needs to work for most young people who will not enter university, as well as those who do. All students should be supported to achieve learning equivalent to Year 12 or a Certificate III.

ATAR

The ATAR can distort student choice of subjects, and later courses.ⁱⁱⁱ Many students and schools are reduced to considering the attainment of a 'good ATAR' to be the dominant goal of this phase of education, with the importance of a good score overshadowing everything else.^{iv}

Change is underway but not systemically

Many Australian education leaders are grappling with how to create better outcomes for students in today's world.^v To progress through education and into employment and a thriving adult life, students need to understand and develop their capabilities, and showcase these to selectors and employers. In addition to core knowledge students need capabilities such as critical thinking, communication skills and social and emotional skills like resilience and teamwork. A range of different approaches are emerging across schools and systems, each seeking innovative ways to support young people. The International Baccalaureate, Big Picture schools, and Swinburne's ATEP program are examples.^{vi}

Many of Australia's tertiary institutions are experimenting with broadening the pool of candidates and making selection procedures more sensitive to young people's full range of attainments and aspirations, opening new pathways and credit arrangements.^{vii} A range of reviews and inquiries are in train or foreshadowed, each seeking to update the curriculum or the qualifications frameworks to ensure that the Australian education system evolves to meet the changing needs of young people and the changing social and economic circumstances, and to ensure Australia remains competitive globally.

Our vision

In *Realising the future of education* Australian Learning Lecture we set forth a vision for systemic change to support all young Australians in their individual journeys to a productive thriving adulthood. Our four proposals are:

Proposal One: THAT the age 15-19 stage of education be re-cast as a distinctive phase of education in which young people are supported to combine a more diverse mix of learning experiences to develop knowledge, skills and capabilities. All learners must be supported through this phase.

Proposal Two: THAT the education system sets standards for a core of mandated learning domains complemented by students' elective subjects. Standards of attainment are as important as a greater focus on capabilities. A national Australian Qualities Framework that assisted this would be helpful.

Proposal Three: THAT a graduate profile be adopted to guide assessment and reporting on the educational attainments and broader attributes and interests of young people in their transition years, and to which all jurisdictions can map their outcomes.

Proposal Four: THAT the tertiary sector develops broader entry mechanisms to better assess students' strengths and likelihood of success, and reflect a contemporary understanding of the capabilities that we need all learners to develop.

Together these proposals provide young people clearer guidance through the current maze of transition, strengthen their preparation for the future by mandating and measuring broader capabilities, and provide a better base for informed recruiting among post school institutions.

ⁱ Gore, J, Ellis, H, Fray, L, Smith, M, Lloyd, A, Berrigan, C, Lyell, A, Weaver, N & Holmes, K 2017, Choosing VET: investigating the VET aspirations of school students, NCVET, Adelaide

ⁱⁱ Mitchell Institute submission to the 'Inquiry into career advice activities in Victorian schools' accessed at https://www.parliament.vic.gov.au/images/stories/committees/eejsc/Career_Advice_Activities/Submission_67_-_The_Mitchell_Institute_15122017.pdf

ⁱⁱⁱ Oo, A. (2017). Why aren't students studying higher level maths? How ATAR scaling may affect maths uptake. NSW Centre for Education Statistics and Evaluation. Retrieved from: <https://www.cese.nsw.gov.au/publications-filter/why-aren-tstudents-studying-higher-level-maths>

^{iv} Finkel, A. (2018). Speech at Universities Australia Conference 'Winning the game of Faculty'. Retrieved from <http://www.chiefscientist.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/Universities-Australia-dinner-address.pdf>

^v Such as AQF review, NSW curriculum review, Review of Melbourne Declaration, Federal Opposition proposed post-secondary review

^{vi} See <https://www.ibo.org/>, <https://www.bigpicture.org.au/>, <https://www.lindfieldlearningvillage.com/>

^{vii} A wide range of universities have processes for special entry provisions, or alternative bridging pathways programs