ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING

REPORT TO
NSW SKILLS BOARD AND DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY
12 DECEMBER 2018

CONSUMER INFORMATION INSIGHTS

VET COURSE INFORMATION TEMPLATES

ACIL ALLEN CONSULTING PTY LTD
ABN 68 102 652 148

LEVEL NINE
60 COLLINS STREET
MELBOURNE VIC 3000
AUSTRALIA
T+61 3 8650 6000
F+61 3 9654 6363

LEVEL ONE
50 PITT STREET
SYDNEY NSW 2000
AUSTRALIA
T+61 2 8272 5100
F+61 2 9247 2455

LEVEL FIFTEEN
127 CREEK STREET
BRISBANE QLD 4000
AUSTRALIA
T+61 7 3009 8700
F+61 7 3009 8799

LEVEL ONE
15 LONDON CIRCUIT
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA
T+61 2 6103 8200
F+61 2 6103 8233

LEVEL TWELVE, BGC CENTRE
28 THE ESPLANADE
PERTH WA 6000
AUSTRALIA
T+61 8 9449 9600
F+61 8 9322 3955

167 FLINDERS STREET
ADELAIDE SA 5000
AUSTRALIA
T +61 8 8122 4965

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CONTENTS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY V

1

INTRODUCTION 1
1.1 Project aims 1
1.2 Project approach 1
1.3 Context 2
1.4 Report structure 3

2

BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS AND EDUCATION 4
2.1 Behavioural insights 4
2.2 Behavioural insights and education 6
2.3 Information presentation 7

3

VET STUDENTS AS CONSUMERS OF INFORMATION 8
3.1 Choosing vocational education and training 8
3.2 Looking for information 9
3.3 Priority information 10
3.4 Student cohorts in NSW 10
3.5 Considerations for this project 12

4

TEMPLATES 14
4.1 Template development process 14
4.2 Target groups and consultations 14
4.3 School leavers 16
4.4 Career builders 17
4.5 At risk or disadvantaged students 19
4.6 Summary 20

5

WAY FORWARD 22
5.1 Promoting the course information templates 22
5.2 Considerations for the Skills Board 23

A

TEMPLATES A–1

B

SURVEY RESULTS B–1

C

MARKET DATA AND ANALYSIS C–1

CONTENTS

D

REFERENCES C–1

FIGURES

FIGURE 1.1	SMART AND SKILLED COMPLETION RATES (TOP 10 STUDY AREAS)	2
FIGURE 2.1	TRADITIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS	5
FIGURE 3.1	BROAD INFLUENCES ON STUDENT CHOICE IN VET	9
FIGURE 4.1	STUDENT DESIGNED COURSE INFORMATION SHEET	20

TABLES

TABLE 3.1	STUDENT TYPES	12
TABLE 3.2	MOST USEFUL INFORMATION (AS INDICATED BY A SURVEY OF VET STUDENTS)	12
TABLE 4.1	TEMPLATES AND THEIR AUDIENCES	14
TABLE 4.2	SUMMARY OF STUDENT CONSULTATIONS	15
TABLE 4.3	SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION PREFERENCES	17
TABLE 4.4	TOP FIVE INFORMATION PRIORITIES	17
TABLE 4.5	TOP FIVE INFORMATION PRIORITIES	18

BOXES

BOX 5.1	PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE IN INFORMATION PROVISION	24

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

The Consumer Information Insights Project (the Project) is motivated by the lack of clear, reliable and accessible information contributing to low completion rates by students undertaking Smart and Skilled courses in New South Wales. In 2015, 57 percent of Smart and Skilled students successfully completed their course.[1]

A recent research report commissioned by the NSW Skills Board (the Woolcott report) found that one of the drivers of non-completion in NSW is the quality and accuracy of information relied on by students when considering enrolment in vocational education and training. In that study, 19 percent of students cited 'training was not as expected' as the reason they did not complete their course.[2]

This project developed three templates for the communication of course information to cohorts of VET students. Based on research about VET students who most often struggle to complete their course in NSW, templates were developed for courses undertaken by:

- School leavers that engage in traditional apprenticeships
- At-risk young people that face multiple challenges in engaging in training
- Career builders, typically females over 25 years.[3]

In developing templates, the project canvassed insights offered by behavioural economics and VET related research about how students seek out and prefer to receive course information, and how they like it presented. This research highlighted that different cohort's information seeking behaviours and information priorities are strongly influenced by their 'life stage'. Mature women with family responsibilities look for different information about a VET course than school leavers, for example. Students prefer course information to be concise, and to simply focus on core information, such as the 'what, where, how and when' of a course.

The development of the templates involved focus groups (seven in total) with students enrolled in carpentry apprenticeships and certificates in community studies and childcare. 68 students were involved in the design of the templates, from across TAFEs in Meadowbank and Randwick and with training providers Health and Safety Advisory Service Pty Ltd, Learning Sphere Training Solutions Pty Ltd (trading as Learning Sphere) and Waverley Action for Youth Services (WAYS). This was followed by a short survey of 31 students (who had participated in the focus groups); the survey sought their views of the draft course templates.

Although the implementation of the templates was out of scope, the report concludes with the suggestion that the templates are promoted to training providers as 'better practice' in the context of the NSW Smart and Skilled Quality Framework.

[1] NSW Department of Industry, Market Data and Analysis. See Appendix C for a copy of the presentation provided to ACIL Allen on 3 May 2018

[2] Woolcott Research and Engagement (2017) *Drivers of Participation and Completion of VET*, NSW Skills Board.

[3] Woolcott Report (2017)

1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter outlines the aims and deliverables of the project, the approach taken to deliver on the project tasks, and the context and motivations for the research. It also briefly describes the structure of the report.

1.1 Project aims

This project aimed to contribute to efforts to address the issue of low completion rates for VET students in NSW.

The objective of this project was to develop a template course information sheet that will assist learners to make better informed choices when enrolling in VET. Drawing on research into behavioural insights, the project was to consider:

- What information do potential VET students require to make decisions about course selection that will maximise their chances of successful completion?
- How should the information be presented to maximise useability and comprehension?
- How can information be integrated within existing sources of course information?

The NSW Skills Board requested that template development involve desktop research, consultation with providers and testing and revising course information sheets with students.

Implementation of the findings was out of scope, however issues of implementation emerged throughout the project and have been outlined in the concluding chapter of this report.

1.2 Project approach

The development of the course information templates was informed by two activities:

1. *Desk-top research*: this included a review of:

   (a) behavioural insights literature, and research in relation to education, students and information provision

   (b) research by (or for) government agencies in relation to student choice and the vocational education and training sector in Australia.

2. *Consultation:* this included:

   (a) focus groups with students enrolled with private, public and not for profit training providers in metro and outer Sydney, and discussions with teachers and training provider managers

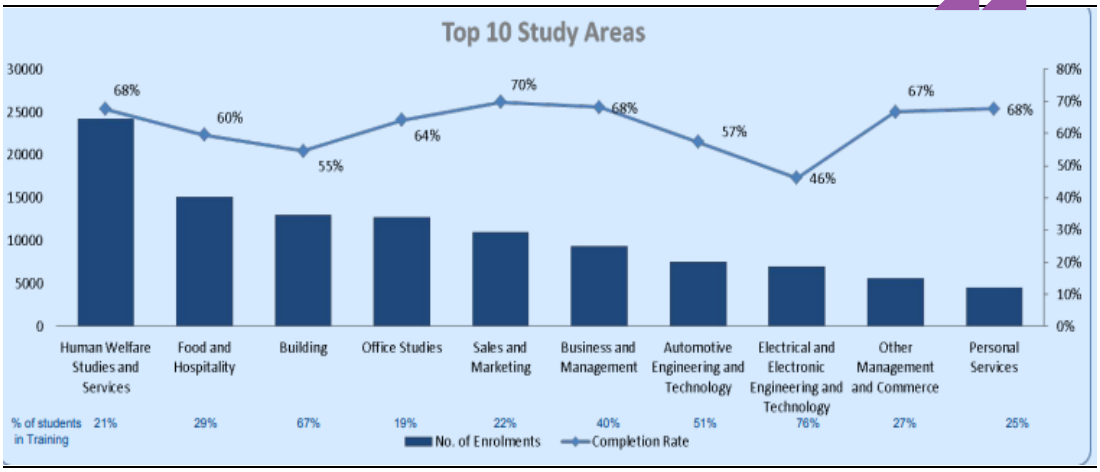
(b) a presentation and discussion of research and draft templates to the Skills and Economic Development Branch at the Department of Industry. Further information about who was consulted is provided at Chapter Four.

1.3 Context

In 2012, the National Agreement and the National Partnership committed Australian governments to a series of structural reforms to VET at the national and state and territory levels. One of the reforms was the introduction of an entitlement to government subsidised training up to at least a Certificate III. Smart and Skilled was introduced in 2015 as NSW's response to the introduction of an entitlement for government subsidised training.[4]

Figures from the NSW Department of Industry suggest that in 2015 only 57 percent of students in Smart and Skilled courses successfully completed their course. In the top 10 fields of education, in which 54 percent of NSW Smart and Skilled students are enrolled, the completion figures can be as low as 46 percent, as indicated in **Figure 1.1**.

FIGURE 1.1 SMART AND SKILLED COMPLETION RATES (TOP 10 STUDY AREAS)



SOURCE: NSW DEPARTMENT OF INDUSTRY, MARKET DATA AND ANALYSIS

NB: IN THIS FIGURE COMPLETION RATES DO NOT INCLUDE STUDENT WHO ARE STILL STUDYING (THIS NUMBER IS REPRESENTED BY THE '% OF STUDENTS IN TRAINING')

Research commissioned by the NSW Skills Board[5] in 2017 (the Woolcott Report) on the drivers of participation and completion identified a variety of reasons why students are not completing their courses. Some of these relate to the information that gives students 'front end insights' to support their course enrolment decisions.

"The research suggests that a lot of non-completion is driven by poor choice of course. This can be due to a lack of clear direction on the part of the learner before enrolling, poor assistance in navigating the myriad possibilities and ***difficulty in finding easy to use information and poor information on course content and expected student workload****."*[6]

The issue of quality and quantity of course information available to VET students has arisen in research about the effectiveness of the VET sector in other jurisdictions. Some research links the deregulation of the VET system and the increase in private providers and course offerings with problems in the way course information is marketed to students. For example, a 2015 Deloitte review argued that an effective training market is only possible when the consumers in that market (students

[4] NSW Skills Board (2015) *Smart and Skilled Year One Program Review*: Stage One.

[5] The NSW Department of Industry, together with the NSW Skills Board, work to maintain the NSW Skills List and implement the NSW Quality Framework. The NSW Quality Framework is based on principles that promote excellence, transparency and innovation in VET. One of the principles include 'informed consumers' who are able to access online consumer information and tailored information and advice through the Smart and Skilled website and through a dedicated enquiry line.

[6] Woolcott Research and Engagement (2017) *Drivers of Participation and Completion of VET*, NSW Skills Board.

and employers) are fully empowered to make appropriate choices. To address this, the review recommended that the government:

"inform consumer choice by making publicly available consistent, accessible and comparable performance information about RTOs including performance against quality indicators, employment outcomes, completion rates, consumer satisfaction results and completed and agreed audit results."[7]

The Department of Education and Training 2016 Discussion Paper on the VET system argued that prospective VET students have difficulty in finding and comparing course and provider information, which may reduce the incentives for providers to increase the quality of training:

*"**Students experience substantial challenges accessing suitable information** regarding the cost, quality and reputation of VET FEE-HELP providers, particularly when seeking to compare and differentiate between the various courses and charging models among different providers. This is compounded by the lack of easily comparable information about student outcomes regarding completions and employment outcomes."*

*"While some information is available online regarding completion rates, tuition fees and other factors that are likely to influence student choice (including through MySkills), **this data is spread across multiple websites and can be difficult to navigate.** The lack of accessible information to support student choice reduces the incentive for providers to strive for, and increase, the quality of their performance."*[8]

A 2017 NCVER Report on the student choice on training markets in Victoria likewise concluded that:

*"A key policy implication…is the need to **narrow the gap between what training information is provided to prospective students and the mechanisms through which it is provided AND what information is required and trusted by prospective students**…Training information should be customised and accessible to people from diverse backgrounds, rather than being a generic approach."*[9]

This research suggested that improving the quality of information provided to potential students can lead to more appropriate course selection, better managed expectations, and improved completion rates.

1.4 Report structure

The Report precedes as follows:

Chapter 2 outlines the insights that behavioural economics can contribute to this project in relation to students as consumers and the communication of course information. This chapter helps the reader to understand whether and in what ways behavioural insights can improve the communication of course information to NSW VET students.

Chapter 3 outlines research that considers VET students as information consumers and how they choose, look for and prioritise information (known as their 'choice architecture'). It also discusses recent research about the characteristics of potential and current VET students in NSW. This chapter helps the reader understand the audience for whom the templates are being developed.

Chapter 4 describes the three templates prepared for the project (for school leavers, for career builders and for at risk students) including a description of the information priorities of these target audiences and their input to template development via focus groups and a survey. The templates and versions of the template that have been populated with information are provided in Appendix A.

Chapter 5 discusses possibilities for the rollout of the templates to training providers in NSW. While implementation was not in-scope for the project, this chapter describes the existing regulatory and policy framework for Smart and Skilled in relation to services for students and offers a suggestion for the use of the templates in this context.

[7] Deloitte Touche Tohmatsu 2015, *Review of quality assurance in Victoria's VET system,* Department of Education and Training, Melbourne, p 14.
[8] Australian Government, Department of Education and Training 2016, *Redesigning VET FEE HELP: Discussion Paper,* p 39.
[9] Dr J Brown (2017) *In their words; student choice in training markets – Victorian examples*, NCVER.

2 BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS AND EDUCATION

This chapter outlines the insights that behavioural science brings to the understanding of VET student information needs. It provides an overview of behavioural science and why it has recently become of interest to government, before setting out relevant insights regarding the education sector and the provision of information to students.

2.1 Behavioural insights

Traditional economics assumes consumer behaviour is influenced by a limited number of predictable factors: consumers have a stable set of preferences; consumers base their choices on this set of preferences; and when properly informed, consumers make choices in their best interests.[10]

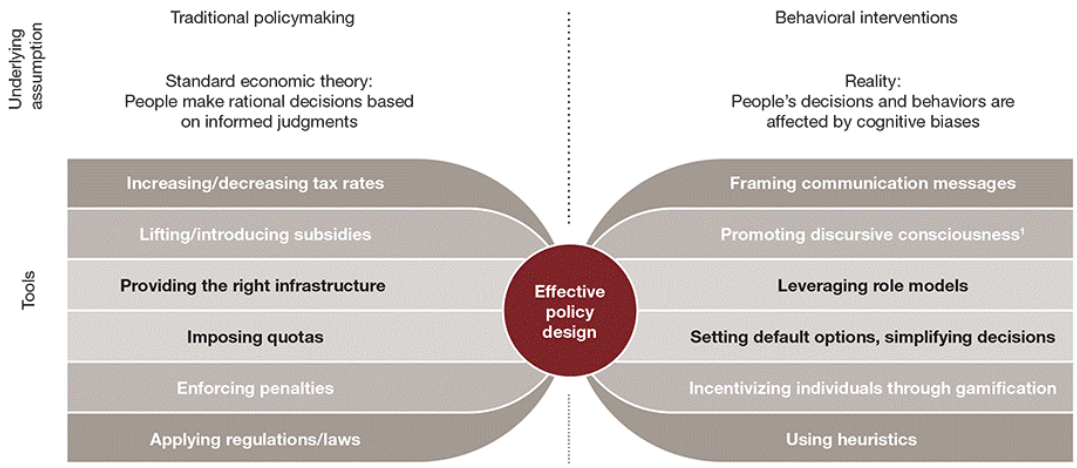
This understanding of human behaviour is based on rational choice theory. It assumes that individuals make choices by carefully weighing up the costs and benefits of all alternatives before choosing the optimal course of action that maximises their welfare. Based on these assumptions, governments typically seek to alter people's behaviour by relaxing budget constraints, altering the relative prices of goods and services, and/or influencing a person's preferences.[11] Examples of this include financial incentives, banning or limiting choices, or requiring the disclosure of certain information.

The emerging field of behavioural economics, which incorporates ideas from psychology, sociology and neuroscience, recognises that there are limits to human rationality and that people's decision-making can be influenced by many, competing and often irrational considerations.[12] Behavioural economics takes into account that consumer choices can be influenced by cognitive, social and emotional factors or 'biases'. For example, people commonly display a 'present bias' which means that they value present gains over those that that may occur in the future.[13]

As shown in **Figure 2.1**, effective policy design can be achieved by integrating behavioural insights and traditional policy levers. Changing the information for consumers (decision makers) is central to this, for example by framing communication messages to leverage deep cultural and psychological insights to enable desired change. However, this approach does not preclude other traditional approaches, such as direct regulation for product disclosure statements.

[10] Department of Prime Minister and Cabinet 2018 *A Better Practice Guide for NBN providers: improving information provision to customers using behavioural insights*, p. 8.
[11] Department of Finance and Deregulation 2012 *Influencing Consumer Behaviour: Improving Regulatory Design*
[12] Diamond et al 2012, *Behavioural approaches to understanding student choice*, The Higher Education Academy and National Union of Students, Leicester, England.
[13] Adra *et al* 2008, *Triggering change in the GCC through behavioural insights: An innovative approach to effective policy making*, The Ideation Centre.

FIGURE 2.1 TRADITIONAL AND BEHAVIOURAL INTERVENTIONS



SOURCE: ADRA ET AL (2018) TRIGGERING CHANGE IN THE GCC THROUGH BEHAVIOURAL INSIGHTS

2.1.1 Behavioural insights and consumer information

Insights about consumer behaviour from behavioural economics are often put into practice as a 'nudge'. A nudge uses behavioural insights to change the choice architecture (the context in which the choice is made) and seeks to influence the decision of an individual without restricting the set of choices available to them.[14]

Nudges include a variety of 'soft touches', for example, subconscious cues (such as painting targets in urinals to improve accuracy) or correcting misapprehensions about social norms (such as telling us that most people do not drink excessively). Nudges alter the profile of different choices (like making healthy food in canteens more prominent) or change the default option (such as having to opt out of rather than into organ donor schemes). Nudges can also create incentives for some choices or impose minor economic or cognitive costs on other options (for example, people who quit smoking banking the money they would have spent on cigarettes and only being able to withdraw it after passing a nicotine test).[15]

Communication can motivate change by addressing people's values and perceptions of social norms. To achieve this, the choice of message, messenger and channels used is important. Given that the scale and speed at which people are exposed to multiple forms of content is increasing rapidly, the source of information and trust in the messenger is crucial to influencing reactions to it and whether or not it positively changes behaviour.

Traditional approaches to consumer protection are premised on the assumption that providing people with more information and more choices is the best way to reduce information asymmetry. Behavioural insights challenges this by arguing that full disclosure of terms and conditions is typically not enough to encourage consumers to do what is in their best interests. Information needs to be disclosed in a structured way to help consumers overcome their behavioural biases, for instance by:

[14] Adra et al 2008; French & Oreopoulos 2017
[15] Rainford & Tinkler 2011, *Designing for nudge effects: how behaviour management can ease public sector problems*, LSE Research Online.

— Limiting the amount of information provided at any given time[16]
— Presenting information in a way that is streamlined
— Ensuring information is provided when consumers are making key decisions.

This can mean providing less information overall, but more relevant and targeted information that is delivered at the right time.

2.2 Behavioural insights and education

In an education and training scenario, rational choice theory suggests that a student would decide whether or not to undertake a particular course of study based on an informed comparison between the costs and the benefits of participating in, and/or graduating from, the course.[17] It assumes that VET students are "all-knowing consumers with perfect information processing capabilities".[18]

In reality, researchers have noted that the process of making choices in VET can be haphazard, passive and not necessarily follow a standardised, rational model. [19] Toner, for example, argues that "people do their best to make rational decisions, but they can be very easily persuaded, especially young people and disadvantaged young people, when it comes to making career choices".[20]

Relatedly, greater choice in training provider may not necessarily lead to better decisions because evaluating an abundance of choices requires cognitive effort. Lavecchia argues that at least two issues arise from increased choices: the first being that many people may find it too difficult to survey the menu of choices and identify the option that is most suitable for them; and the second being that people may not be able to easily keep all choices in mind when making their decision.[21]

In comparable jurisdictions, behavioural insights have identified influences on student decision making that resonate with the research about Australian VET students. For example, research about young people's career decisions in the United Kingdom found that:

— Online career advice is challenging to navigate. The information on the internet is dispersed across multiple sites, each offering different information in different ways. This contributes to some young people disengaging from the full range of available information.
— Information is available, but not accessible. Despite young people saying that they have access to the information they want, their knowledge and awareness of careers was generally low, outdated and in some cases inaccurate.
— Young people's aspirations did not align with the direction of the job market. The young people had a limited understanding of the breadth of opportunities in the jobs market. Even the most open and engaged young people demonstrated a low awareness of the range of potential careers open to them, particularly new jobs in emerging industries. Instead, they aspired to jobs that were around when their parents and teachers were entering the workforce.[22]

In the United Kingdom and the United States, researchers have explored a variety of behavioural strategies to improve educational achievement and attainment, both for school-aged youth and for adults who want to acquire new skills and qualifications. To improve student attendance and engagement, text messages are a common mechanism for motivating students. The following examples illustrate this point:

— a project conducted by the UK's Behavioural Insights Unit found that regular text messages sent to VET students from a friend or family member (a nominated 'study supporter') to ask them about their studies resulted in a 6 percent improvement in attendance rates.[23]

[16] Department of Premier and Cabinet 2018 ibid, p.9
[17] Brown J 2017 *In their words: student choice in training markets – Victorian examples*, NCVER Research Report.
[18] Toner cited in Mitchell, J 2012, *From unease to alarm: escalating concerns about the model of 'VET reform' and cutbacks to TAFE*, John Mitchell & Associates, Sydney, p 17.
[19] Brown J 2017.
[20] Cited in Mitchell, J 2012, p 41.
[21] Lavecchia *et al* 2014, *Behavioural Economics of Education: Progress and Possibilities*, National Bureau of Economic Research Working Paper 20609.
[22] http://www.behaviouralinsights.co.uk/education-and-skills/moments-of-choice-how-young-people-make-career-decisions/. Accessed 20 February 2018
[23] Gallagher, R 2017 Applying BI in Education: a case study, available at https://www.pmc.gov.au/sites/default/files/files/pmc/behavioural-economics/RG.pdf

— a large-scale field experiment, again in the UK, sent text message reminders to increase student attendance in government-sponsored literacy and numeracy programs for adults; text messages led to a 4 percentage point increase in average attendance relative to the control group in the initial weeks after implementation and using data from the full academic year there was a 7 percentage point increase over the full trial period, and an 8 percentage point increase in the likelihood of passing exams.[24]

— a UK study run jointly by the Department of Education and the Behavioural Insights Team over three years attempted to increase the number of high achieving students from less advantaged backgrounds to consider attending university. Through a large-scale randomised control trial, letters written by university students were sent to the target group in their final year of school encouraging them to 'aim higher in life' and the outcomes tracked over two years. The approach led to a 5 percent increase in applications to university by the target group.[25]

Castleman's research about how to apply nudges to students to encourage more informed decisions include consideration of timing and contextual factors, for instance:

— *Starting with critical junctures*: encouraging students to make active and informed decisions during 'critical junctures' such as the period when choosing which school to attend and which courses to take.

— *Prompting active engagement rather than giving directions:* nudges that are overly directive run the risk of distorting the choices students make, leading them to make choices that don't align with their goals or interests. In other words, nudges should encourage active thinking and decision making, not tell people what to do.

— Castleman also advises that nudges are only supplements to, not substitutes for, investment in education. Behavioural interventions should not replace other investments in ensuring quality education delivery. For example, interventions to promote more active and informed decision-making can only be successful if students are able to choose between quality training providers.[26]

2.3 Information presentation

In practical terms, guidance on information products like templates can be taken from the UK Behavioural Insights Team's EAST (easy, attractive, social, timely) Framework which has been designed to inject behavioural insights into policy interventions and has been adopted by the NSW Government.[27] The EAST Framework encourages government interactions, including information products, to consider ways to:

1. *Make it **Easy**:* reduce the hassle factor, simplify messages and harness the power of defaults
2. *Make it **Attractive***: use images, colour and personalisation
3. *Make it **Social***: encourage a commitment to others, use the power of networks, and show that most people perform the desired behaviour
4. *Make it **Timely**:* prompt people when they are likely to be most receptive, consider the immediate costs and benefits, and help people to plan their response to events.

As this project focused on the development of three course information templates, it has explored with students how these information sheets can be made easy to understand and presented in a way that mirrors their priorities. Insights about who they source the information from and when the information is most influential to their decision making were discussed with students and are conveyed in this report.

[24] Chande, R et al (2017) *Increasing attendance and attainment among adult students in the UK: Evidence from a field experiment*
[25] Sanders M et al (2017) *Encouraging people into university*, UK Department of Education
[26] Castleman 2015.
[27] See https;//bi.dpc.nsw.gov.au

3 VET STUDENTS AS CONSUMERS OF INFORMATION

This chapter summarises research about the nature and preferences of VET students as consumers of information, including the considerations for VET students in choosing VET and how students look for information to inform their enrolment decisions. The chapter also summarises research about student cohorts in NSW and their information preferences.

3.1 Choosing vocational education and training

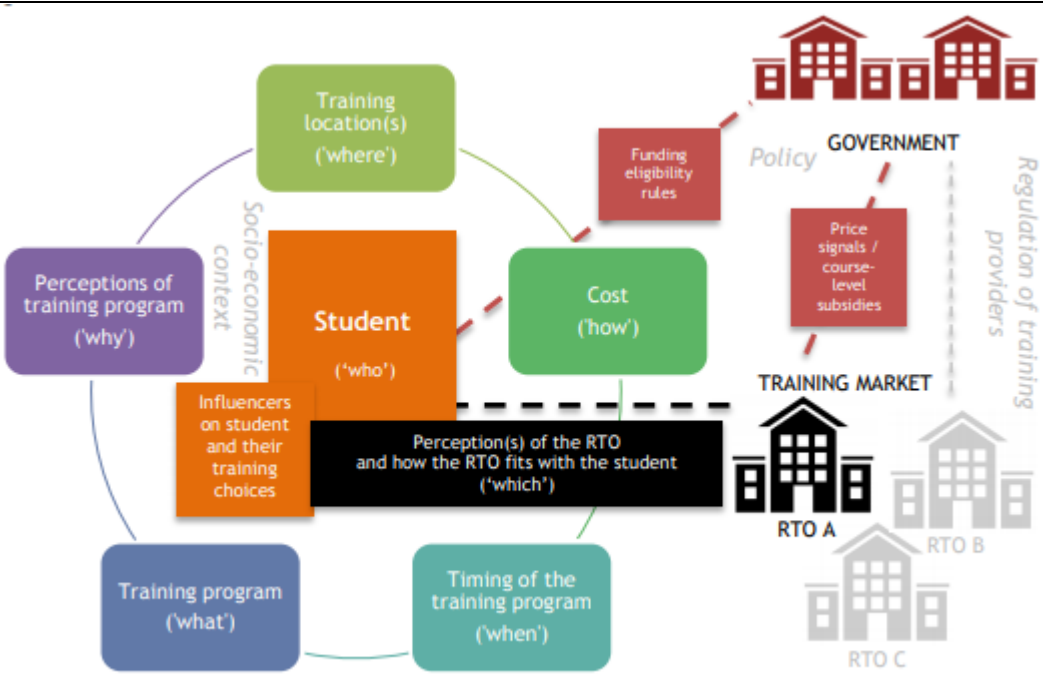
According to a 2015 review of VET funding in Victoria, student choice when considering training primarily relate to employment outcomes, such as getting a new or better job, or developing the skills needed by their employer.[28] However, a range of other factors, listed below, were also found to be important considerations for students:

- Training location (the '**where'**): proximity to home is a determining factor. This is a non-negotiable for many people, but particularly younger people limited by transport and mature-age individuals with family commitments
- Timing of the training program (the '**when'**): this is the need to adapt preferences and make compromises to fit the availability of offerings, often another determining factor
- Training program (the '**what'**): timetabling and content of programs is usually fixed and required them to adapt their preference to suit the available offering.
- Relevance of the training program (the '**why'**): this is usually related to employment prospects; however, it varies by market segment (for example, young people may take a 'taster' approach and be willing to try out several programs).
- Registered training organisation (the '**which'**): this is often a non-choice for students in non-metropolitan locations, where there may be only limited choice.
- Information (the source of advice on the 'where', the 'when', the 'how', the 'which', and the 'what'): while information availability is expanding and improving, many students have limited control over their choices in VET.

These factors and their relationship are illustrated in **Figure 3.1**

[28] Mackenzie B and Coulson N 2015 VET Funding Review: final report.

FIGURE 3.1 BROAD INFLUENCES ON STUDENT CHOICE IN VET



SOURCE:BROWN J 2017 'IN THEIR OWN WORDS: STUDENT CHOICE IN TRAINING MARKETS – VICTORIAN EXAMPLES, NCVER

Research has also confirmed that choosing to engage in VET can be influenced by a student's life stage. For students still at school, for instance, their first choice is shaped by their desired career and influenced by what they already know, such as their family's depth and breadth of knowledge of the types of jobs that are available or suitable.[29] For mature age students (aged 24 and older), a vocational pathway is still likely to be a priority, though immediate job entry may be the focus. These students may be reskilling or upskilling, with their course choice largely determined by the difference between their existing skill set and desired skill set. Within each life stage, the importance of various factors (family, friends, school, vocational interest etc) will change.

It is important to note that active choice (in VET enrolment) may only be relevant to students who have access to a large range of options, such as students in metropolitan areas. In regional areas, provider and course choices are severely limited and an institution's location has a much greater influence on decision-making. A student may resolve to undertake a course with a particular provider, despite negative feedback about the course or the provider, because there are no other options.

3.2 Looking for information

Research in NSW and Victoria has noted that the first step for prospective students to obtain information about VET qualifications was almost always doing an online search to find courses.[30] The primary information students search for are the course choices and where or how they are offered.[31] Young people not in education appear to be more likely to rely on online resources, partly because of the lack of alternatives such as school career counselling.[32]

Research also notes that students obtain information about VET from a variety of sources, including:

— RTO websites and course guides

[29] Guthrie & Nechvoglod 2011; Nguyen & Blomberg 2014; Behavioural Insights 2016.
[30] Woolcott Report 2017; Brown J 2017.
[31] This is unlike the search that students undertake to choose to go to University; in these circumstances the institution is more often the first port of call, followed by the choice of course. Woolcott Report 2017; Brown J 2017.
[32] Evans & Rallings 2013.

- government training and career advice websites
- school counsellors, careers advisors and teachers
- employers
- one-on-one discussions with people who have industry experience; these may be family members and friends.

Some students do not fully trust the information provided directly from RTO websites, and as such see value in attending open days and meeting the trainers to "bridge the gap" between advertising and reality.[33] Significantly, the Woolcott report found that non-completers were less likely to have considered a range of information sources, such as a government website.[34]

Other research has identified the necessity of 'vocational identity' as a support to best-fit course decision-making as well as course completion.[35] Vocational identity refers to the development of a perception of oneself as part of a broader trade or industry; where one benefits from the skills and knowledge of others and can imagine oneself acting within that industry and contributing to its development. Providing 'real life' information or experiences allows prospective and current students to see themselves in their intended career and to see themselves working as (for example) mechanics, hairdressers etc and increasing their commitment to completing the qualification.

3.3 Priority information

Research has found that there are core pieces of information that influence VET students training choice, which include:[36]

- Information on the training program to address concerns relating to content, requirements and structure (such as start or completion times, entry and attendance requirements and availability of work placements)
- Information on fees to address affordability concerns and consider value for money (such as total costs of tuition, materials and equipment and eligibility for government support and subsidies)
- Information on training and employment outcomes to address concerns about quality and the benefits of enrolling in a particular course or RTO (such as completion rates, graduate employment and salary rates, employer and student satisfaction and recommendations).

Where just the training program is being considered, a key factor is the number of hours the course takes to complete. While shorter courses might seem more attractive to some, students may have concerns about the quality of the education a shorter course provides. The length of important elements within the course, for example work placement, is also considered.[37]

3.4 Student cohorts in NSW

While insights into the characteristics of potential and actual VET students in NSW can be garnered from a number of sources, insights about the information sources and information preferences for NSW-based VET has been less closely studied. Three recent studies, summarised below, provide some insights to this project.

3.4.1 NSW Youth Week Forum (2018)

The NSW Youth Week Forum, hosted by The Office of the Advocate or Children and Young People together with the NSW Youth Advisory Council (2018), brought together 150 young people aged 12-24 years to discuss topics of importance to them.

NSW Government departments were able to put questions to the Forum, which were then the focus of small group discussions. The NSW Department of Industry asked:

[33] Brown J 2017.
[34] Woolcott report 2017.
[35] Chan 2011; Klotz, Billett et al 2014.
[36] Brown J 2017.
[37] Hargreaves and Osborne 2017.

'*What assistance do young people need to help them make decisions about future study, training or career pathways? If this was on the internet would it be helpful? Would you still use it even if it only included VET information?*'[38]

The responses salient to this project include:[39]

- There is a need for more careers advisors in schools and educational institutions as they have an important role in providing information about further study, training and career pathways. Career classes were a place where information could be provided, especially to younger years so students can start thinking about their future earlier rather than being left until senior years.
- Mentors are important to supporting students to make decisions about future study and careers; mentors can be teachers, industry and professional people, and peers.
- Create a digital platform with all career and study information in one place which has links to other sites (rather than having to navigate multiple sites) which can help young people access the most up-to-date information. Ensure the website is well advertised to all young people who might benefit from it.
- Excursions to educational institutions to attend open days; run initiatives like expos, guest speakers and 'taster' days where education and industry groups come into schools and speak with students.
- Provision of practical information about topics like costs of study, HECS and financial support and scholarships to ensure the cost of education is not a barrier to young people being able to undertake further study.

3.4.2 VET: Access and outcomes for young people experiencing disadvantage (2018)

This research was undertaken by Youth Action, Uniting and Mission Australia and involved community consultations and a survey to gather evidence of the challenges faced by young people who want to complete a VET qualification in NSW. It focused on cohorts of young people that have lower levels of VET enrolment and completion rates, specifically indigenous students, those experiencing homelessness, and students from migrant and refugee backgrounds or with disabilities.

The report made the following observations about information available to students and their likely success in completing a VET course:[40]

- Existing information about eligibility for Smart and Skilled, enrolment processes, fee structures and scholarships is complex and confusing for students, parents and service providers to navigate. This information needs to be provided in a simpler way which is easier for students to follow and understand.
- The most common ways young people hear about VET courses are through community service providers, schools and Centrelink or Employment Service Providers.
- Young people, particularly those who are planning to pursue careers in various trades that are physically demanding or have unusual working hours, may need to better understand the role and work demands before they enter into long-term financial commitments. Certain institutions provide 'try a trade' options where young people are provided with opportunities to have hands-on experience over a short period of time.

3.4.3 Woolcott report (NSW Skills Board) 2017

The Woolcott report provides a detailed categorisation of NSW VET students; it identified nine segments of students based on different 'mindsets' and motivations to start VET (see **Table 3.1**).

[38] Advocate for Children and Young People, NSW Youth Week Forum (April 2018) Consultation Reponses to the NSW Department of Industry

[39] Advocate for Children and Young People, NSW Youth Week Forum (April 2018) Consultation Reponses to the NSW Department of Industry.

[40] Youth Action, Uniting and Mission Australia (February 2018) Vocational Education and Training in NSW: Report into access and outcomes for young people experiencing disadvantage.

TABLE 3.1 STUDENT TYPES

General student category	Student mindsets
School leavers aged 21 or under, working or student before studying	– *Reluctant learners:* doing the course because they need a qualification to get a job – *Dreamers*: have a strong desire to do the kind of work the course would lead to – *Directionless*: have no clear idea about what job they want.
Career builders aged 22 and over, working or student before studying	– *Directed employees:* doing the course as it's a requirement of their job – *Re-inventors*: undertaking course to either help get the job they want, change job, set up or expand their own business – *Career aspirants:* doing course to advance career/get a promotion, increase pay, do job better or do more interesting work.
Other all ages and unemployed, or home duties and/or retired prior to studying	– *Mind stimulators:* studying for personal development/interest – *Benefit recipients*: undertaking course as a requirement for Government welfare benefits – *Re-starters:* doing course to help get the job they want, help get back into the workforce, or set up own business.

SOURCE: WOOLCOTT (2017) DRIVERS OF PARTICIPATION AND COMPLETION OF VET, NSW SKILLS BOARD

According to this research, the cohorts most likely not to complete their course are:

— Young, city-based males that are leaving school to engage in traditional apprenticeship roles and reluctantly undertake VET in order to (or as a requirement of) getting a job.

— Young females that are leaving school and attracted to Certificate I-III courses (preferably online) but are undertaking VET without a clear idea what they'd like to achieve. They are strongly influenced by careers advisers, sales persons from RTOs and social groups.

— Unemployed females that are over 25 years and prefer online courses that fit around their family responsibilities, particularly Diploma level courses in topics like childcare and community services.

The report suggested that to assist with course completion, certain cohorts benefit from receiving particular types of course information. For example, dreamers would benefit from clear information about different courses for comparison, information about different providers and access to more detailed course content.

Woolcott's research has also identified the kind of information students that do and don't complete a course find most useful (see **Table 3.2**).

TABLE 3.2 MOST USEFUL INFORMATION (AS INDICATED BY A SURVEY OF VET STUDENTS)

Typical course information	Non-completed students (%)	Completed students (%)
Summary of content and workload	48	67
Careers advice by training provider	48	55
Description of job potential	46	57
Information on industry demand	37	47

SOURCE: WOOLCOTT (2017) DRIVERS OF PARTICIPATION AND COMPLETION OF VET, NSW SKILLS BOARD

3.5 Considerations for this project

In summary, students have common requirements when it comes to considering enrolling in a VET course, such as where the training is provided and how long a course is, but there is no 'one-size fits all' approach to ensuring the information enables them to make an informed choice when enrolling.

Tailoring information for different cohorts of students, with an emphasis on what is important at their 'life stage' may support positive education and training outcomes. This means that course information

should be customised and accessible to people from diverse backgrounds, rather than being a generic approach as "no single journey fits a consistent template or notion of an idealised journey."[41]

It is also important to recognise that students look for information is different ways, and while online sources dominate in the digital age, students also rely on interpersonal relationships and trusted advisors at school, from training providers, social service providers like Centrelink, and employers. How to ensure that accurate and accessible information about courses is readily available through multiple channels should be a consideration for government.

A small body of research sheds light on the information preferences of VET students in NSW. This confirms that students seek out information from a variety of sources, not solely government websites, and value the opportunity to discuss their training choices with an informed individual. As Woolcott found, VET students can be segmented into nine groups, ranging from reluctant learners to restarters, and into three broad categories, depending on their age and motivations for engaging in study. This is particularly helpful in identifying which cohorts to target for the purposes of providing course information templates that may boost course completion rates.

[41] Brown J 2017.

4 TEMPLATES

This chapter discusses the templates prepared through consultation with students. It describes the three target groups (school leavers, disadvantaged youth and career builders) and the consultations that were undertaken with each. It describes what was learnt about the information preferences of these three groups, and how this is reflected in the templates.

4.1 Template development process

The templates have been developed after consultations with course managers at WAYS in Bondi Junction and with students at Learning Sphere in Blacktown, insights from these consultations are provided further below. The first draft of the templates were presented to the Department of Industry on 20 August 2018 for comment, and then sense-checked and tested with students via focus groups at TAFE (Meadowbank and Randwick) and other training providers (Health and Safety Advisory Service Pty Ltd and WAYS). Following this, the templates were refined and further tested through a survey.

The templates are provided at Appendix A. They include both a skeleton template and a populated template for each of the targeted cohorts. The populated templates are provided for illustrative purposes only.

4.2 Target groups and consultations

Templates have been developed for the following audiences:

1. School leavers doing apprenticeships
2. Disadvantaged or at-risk youth
3. Career builders

The characteristics of these three cohorts, garnered from consultations with teachers and available research, are summarised in **Table 4.1** below.

TABLE 4.1 TEMPLATES AND THEIR AUDIENCES

Template audience	Characteristics of non-completers include	Target group for consultation
School leavers	– Young males in traditional trades, city based. – Females in apprenticeships in male-dominated workplaces – Regional and remote students	– First year apprentices
Disadvantaged youth	– Experiencing unique and overlapping barriers – Need guidance through the options	– At risk youth

Template audience	Characteristics of non-completers include	Target group for consultation
Career builders	– Have been out of the system for some time and need information about time demands, limits of online study.	– Older women doing courses in childcare

4.2.1 Student focus groups

Consultations with students about how they access course information and the design of the templates was determined by the scope/timeframe for the project, and the willingness of RTOs to be involved.[42]

In the focus groups the students were led through a series of activities that encouraged them to reflect on how they source VET course information, what they do and don't prefer in terms of content and design of course information, and what they would include if they were to design a course template. Teachers also participated either in the focus groups or in discussions before or after the focus group.

Consultations were held in various locations in metro and outer Sydney, as summarised in **Table 4.2** below. When available, informal discussion about the project and course information needs of students were also held with teachers and administrators. This occurred at WAYS, Learning Sphere and Health & Safety Advisory Service Pty Ltd.

TABLE 4.2 SUMMARY OF STUDENT CONSULTATIONS

Student cohort	Training provider	Visit date	Course targets	Participants
School leavers	– TAFE NSW (Meadowbank)	– 31 October 2018	– Apprenticeship (Carpentry)	11
	– Health & Safety Advisory Service Pty Ltd (Emu Plains)	– 11 October 2018	– Apprenticeship (Civil Construction)	7
	– TAFE NSW (Randwick)	– 30 October 2018	– Apprenticeship (Carpentry)	14
Disadvantaged students	– Learning Sphere (Blacktown)	– 13 June 2018	– Certificate III (Warehousing)	9
	– Waverley Action Youth Service (Bondi Junction)	– – 11 October 2018	– Certificate II (Community Services)	5
Career builders	– TAFE NSW (Randwick)	– 30 October 2018	– Certificate III (Early Childhood Education and Care)	12 (approximately 85% were international students)
	– TAFE NSW (Meadowbank)	– 31 October 2018	– Certificate III (Early Childhood Education and Care)	10
				68 students

4.2.2 Student survey

Following the focus groups, the templates and example course information sheets were refined based on the feedback received from students. The revised course sheets and a survey seeking feedback on the sheets were then sent to 31 students,[43] being all of the students who agreed to be further contacted and who provided their email address.

[42] In addition to the training providers listed here, the project team approached others but were not able to secure their engagement (eg., TAFE Goulburn and TAFE Mt Druitt were approached by email and phone on 4 occasions each).
[43] 34 students provided their email addresses as an indication of their willingness to be involved in the survey. The course sheets and survey were sent to all 34 students, however 3 of the emails bounced back.

The breakdown of the 31 students across the different cohorts is as follows:

— 19 school leavers
— 8 career builders
— 4 disadvantaged youth.

Each cohort was only sent the course sheet designed for their group, however the survey questions for each cohort were identical.

Of those 31 students, 8 (26%) responded. The breakdown of responses per cohort is as follows:

— 4 school leavers (21%)
— 1 career builder (12.5%)
— 3 disadvantaged youth (75%).

Specific survey feedback is provided in the following discussion about each cohort. Full survey responses are provided in Appendix B.

4.3 School leavers

Consultations with school leavers were with first year apprentices in traditional topic areas. Consultations were held with 32 apprentices in carpentry and civil construction in both private and public training providers; the groups we had access to were dominated by young males.

4.3.1 Information seeking behaviours

The information seeking behaviour reported by these students includes:

— Being informed of training requirements and directed to a training provider by their employer
— Seeking information from friends and family, particularly when these people work in the relevant industry or have a business of their own
— Seeking information about courses from other apprentices who have completed/are completing the same course
— Infrequently using formal sources of information provided by government
— Infrequently using the training provider website for course information, preferring instead to visit the campus or call to talk to the relevant teacher directly
— Training typically ends when the employment opportunity ends (eg., construction contract concludes) or the apprentice is no longer required. In other words, students may wish to continue their course but are no longer able to because they lose employment or move locations.

These students described being confused by the roles and responsibilities of the different parties involved in organising an apprenticeship, which can include government, industry bodies, coordinating agencies, employers and training providers. It was suggested that a flow diagram setting out the steps in an apprenticeship application process or 'what to do next' would be useful. The option to have a live chat with training providers (via their website) to raise and resolve questions about courses was also suggested.

4.3.2 Course information preferences

In terms of course information, these students favour information that is simple and easy to comprehend, with links to other sources that provide more detailed information if needed. A summary of their presentation preferences is provided in the following table.

TABLE 4.3 SUMMARY OF PRESENTATION PREFERENCES

Information likes	Information dislikes
Simple, easy to read	Complex language
Less text, with links to more information	Dense text, multiple pages of information
Clear text indicators like bold headings	Graphs and statistics
Visual material (pictures, videos)	Testimonials (not believable)
Peer review (authentic student experiences)	

For these students, the information they would most like featured on a course information sheet are what the course is and where it is available, when it's on and for how long, what it costs and how to follow up with the provider.

Of a secondary priority is information about the outcomes that typically flow from enrolling in the course, such as career pathways and the top three industries that employ people with this qualification.

The information priorities for the consulted students is provided in the following table.

TABLE 4.4 TOP FIVE INFORMATION PRIORITIES

Randwick	Meadowbank	Emu Plains
Course description	Course description	Average course fee
Training provider contact details	Delivery options (FT/PT)	Course description
Course duration	Campus location	Top 3 job types
Financial information (fees)	Financial information (subsidies)	Course duration
Links to the Unique Student Identifier	Training provider contact details	Average salary

In summary, school leavers entering apprenticeships are most interested in:

- Course description and course duration
- Training provider details and location
- Course costs and financial assistance
- Employment and income opportunities to follow course completion

4.3.3 Survey response

The most important information for survey respondents in this cohort were the topics covered in the course and the career pathways. They also wanted more detail in the course description, course delivery and fees and charges information. Of less importance were stories (such as testimonies or case studies) from other students.

4.4 Career builders

Consultations with career builders was with students undertaking Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care in NSW TAFE (Randwick and Meadowbank). These were predominantly women aged 25 to 35 from international backgrounds.

4.4.1 Information seeking behaviour

The information seeking behaviour reported by these students includes:

- Seeking information from friends and family that have experience at the particular TAFE
- Seeking information online from the TAFE NSW website, government website (presumably Smart and Skilled but they couldn't recall) and training provider websites
- Visiting campus and meeting the teachers at open days
- Calling the training provider (emails were considered too slow for their decisions)
- Through study agencies from overseas and in Australia

These students described the terms and conditions of their visas in terms of hours that can be 'onsite', at a workplace in Australia and income that can be earned as important considerations for their VET enrolment, and that is often not featured on course information templates. They rely therefore on other parties to provide this information, including study agencies outside Australia.

As mature students (mostly women) other considerations for these students were recognition of prior learning, course entry requirements, the availability of childcare onsite and the availability of support with English literacy. For some, being able to compare the cost of providers is important.

4.4.2 Couse information preferences

In terms of course information, these students favour information that is simple and easy to translate, has minimal links and includes stories of the 'real life' application of the course to their lives. As noted, the implications of the course for people on international student visas, and the provision of information in different languages would help with accurate interpretation of the information.

Of secondary priority is information about other providers and how to choose them, stories from other students (both positive and negative) and the availability of student support services. Some indicated the information needed to be engaging – that is, to explain why it was an interesting course to do.

The information priorities for the consulted students is provided in the following table.

TABLE 4.5 TOP FIVE INFORMATION PRIORITIES

Meadowbank	Randwick
Course description and hours	Course description and hours
Course fees and assistance	Couse fees and assistance
Course location	Career pathways
Career pathways	Campus location and delivery options
Information about the Unique Student Identifier	Top occupations and average salary

In summary, career builders undertaking childcare related courses are most interested in:

- Course description and course hours
- Training provider location
- Course costs and financial assistance
- Employment and income opportunities to follow course completion

4.4.3 Survey response

For career builders, information about topics covered in the course, fees and charges (particularly fees for international students), and stories from students were the most important elements, followed by information about career pathways. Survey respondents in this cohort also wanted a much more detailed course description.

4.5 At risk or disadvantaged students

Consultations with at risk students was with inner city students, male and female, that attend WAYS in Bondi Junction and Learning Sphere in Blacktown. At Learning Sphere, students were in the final stages of a Certificate III in Warehousing and had been referred to the course and the RTO through a case worker via JobActive or National Disability Insurance Service providers.[44]

At WAYS, most were enrolled in a Certification II in Community Services and hoped to find work as youth workers. The cohort of students was aged 15-25 years and included students with disability, young mothers, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students, and those in crisis accommodation.

A significant body of research has examined the needs of groups that face a 'compromised state of labour market readiness' such as the long-term unemployed, Indigenous people and young people at risk of leaving school early (or have already done so) and has concluded that they require more intensive support to move successfully between education and training, the workforce and chosen careers.[45]

4.5.1 Information seeking behaviour

The information seeking behaviour reported by these students (and their teachers) is diverse. At WAYS, students come through a variety of pathways: word of mouth (from peers), local youth and training networks, referral from housing groups, school counsellors, posters outside advertising courses. In addition, some students are obliged by social security arrangements to undertake 25 hours a week of study or work activity.

Contrary to expectations, these providers note that course completion rates are at around 95 percent because the training is delivered in small groups, is highly practical (hands on) and is paced to accommodate students' needs such as low literacy and learning disabilities.

Other points of interest include:

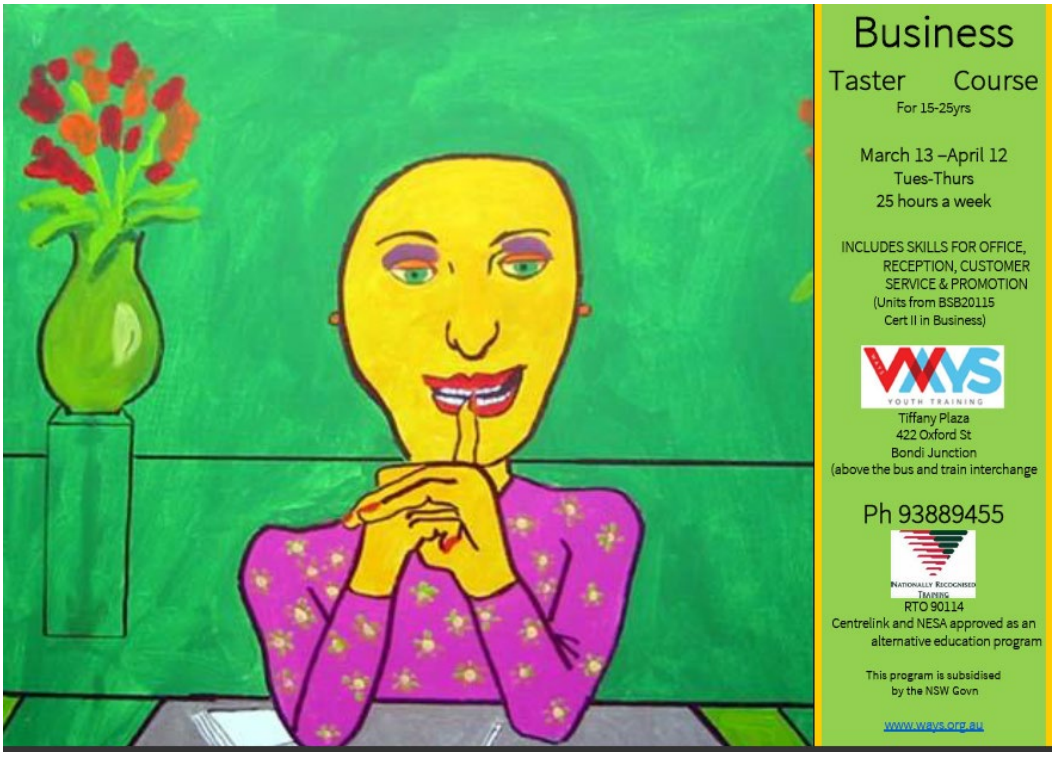
- Students taking a limited active role in decisions about VET studies because they are referred to a training provider by a case worker that selects and suggests the training options and course requirements for (or in discussion with) the student.
- Information about the training provider such as its proximity to public transport, support levels and the character of the people who work there is crucial.
- It is important to manage student expectations – that is, that courses can involve tests and that some jobs can be boring and hard work.
- Non-completion can occur for a variety of reasons, including positive outcomes like gaining employment. Both providers maintain contact with their students after course completion and provide support with CV writing and interview preparation.

4.5.2 Course information preferences

While third-parties play a key role in communicating course information to these students, they also prefer highly visual material, and interactive or social media materials. WAYS use student designed materials to market their courses to students, and once students have arranged an interview they then offer a one on one conversation to identify exactly what would suit the student and how to assist them to complete a course. An example is provided below.

[44] These students engage in VET studies in a highly mediated way and had very limited insights into their information seeking or course information preferences and were not approached for focus group or survey input.
[45] Bretherton 2011; Holman 2014; Education Review Office 2015; Polvere & Lim 2015; Bowen & Kidd 2017.

FIGURE 4.1 STUDENT DESIGNED COURSE INFORMATION SHEET



SOURCE: WAYS, BONDI JUNCTION

The information students seek is very practical: when the course starts, fees, course duration. This information is typically on WAYS brochures, but they still prefer asking about and confirming this face-to-face with coordinators.

At WAYS, the students prioritised the course information as follows:

- Course description
- Course duration
- Fees and financial options
- Course provider location
- Provider contact details

4.5.3 Survey response

Survey respondents in the at-risk cohort also ranked information about the topics covered in the course as the most important element. This was followed by information about fees and charges and career pathways. This group was satisfied with the level of detail provided in the course description and course delivery sections, and placed less value on the importance of stories from other students.

4.6 Summary

In summary, depending largely on their 'life stage', students are drawn to VET studies for different reasons (such as further career development), seek information from different sources (such as careers expo or a family member) and seek out different information about a course (such as whether it recognises prior learning or whether there are additional equipment fees). The more that is understood about the characteristics of a student 'cohort', the more success government and training providers will have in effectively conveying course information to them.

The consultations with the three cohorts have also shown that students share preferences for clear, simple, well set out core information with links to more specific details should they need it. Although the order in which information is presented may be different, the core information includes:

- a course title and a description that provides a quick guide to what the course covers and the career options it may provide them
- clear statements about campus, course delivery and course duration[46]
- clear statements about course fees, available subsidies and other assistance
- contact details of the training provider and teachers so that follow-up questions can be answered easily and quickly.

Interestingly, some students expressed a degree of scepticism about testimonials from students that had completed the course, which are common on training provider websites, and view these as marketing materials that don't always provide an accurate portrayal of the course. Descriptions of common career pathways and average salaries are however of interest to them.

[46] Woolcott's research on the needs of VET students in NSW noted that information about course or work load would be beneficial. This was not raised by students in the focus groups.

5 WAY FORWARD

Although implementation of the templates is out of scope for this project, the purpose of the templates and how the Skills Board could use them was a recurring question for RTOs and students in the course of the project. This chapter discusses these considerations. It focuses on the existing best practice advice and compliance frameworks that inform the relationship between the NSW Department of Industry and the VET training providers providing Smart and Skilled courses. [47]

5.1 Promoting the course information templates

Smart and Skilled providers operate under a Consumer Protection Strategy that was developed and propagated by the NSW Department of Industry. The framework includes:

- Smart and Skilled NSW Quality Framework
- Smart and Skilled Contract Terms and Conditions
- Smart and Skilled Operating Guidelines
- Statement of Expectations for Smart and Skilled providers

Together, these documents set out the obligations of training providers to protect and advance the rights of consumers (students). In addition to obligations to provide a consumer feedback and complaints process, training providers are obliged to conduct their marketing activities with integrity, accuracy and transparency, and provide the training and support necessary for a consumer to achieve training competency.

Two elements of the Strategy make specific reference to the provision of information to students: the NSW Quality Framework and the Statement of Expectations for Smart and Skills providers, both discussed below.

NSW Quality Framework

The NSW Quality Framework was developed in consultation with training providers and industry and is based on principles that promote excellence, transparency and innovation in VET. Ten principles underpin the Framework, including 'informed consumers'.

According to the Framework, 'informed consumers' means that prospective students are able to access online information and advice through the Smart and Skilled website and through a dedicated

[47] At the Commonwealth level, in 2017 the Australian Skills Quality Authority (ASQA) recommended that the Department of Education and Training, together with industry stakeholders, develop a template Product Disclosure Statement for use by training providers. The template would require RTOs to specify the key features of their training and assessment strategy, including specifying in hours the estimated duration of the training, and other non-supervised learning activities that contribute to the course outcomes. Further information is available at Recommendation 3 in ASQAs report on issues related to unduly short training.

enquiry line. The website is to provide much of the same information that students that participated in this project are interested in, including:

- Local subsidised training opportunities
- Student fees, including exemptions and concessions
- Qualifications linked to occupations
- Relevant information about subsidised accredited course or qualification on the MySkills website
- The types of skills to be gained from training
- Possible career options and pathways to further education and training
- Student scholarships
- The benefits and opportunities from having a vocational qualification

5.1.1 Statement of expectations

The Statement of Expectations operates under the principle that all students enrolling with a Smart and Skilled training provider should be confident in the services delivered by the organisation and will be the same quality across private, TAFE and community education providers.

Concerning information provision, the Statement requires training providers:

- Ensure prospective students are properly informed about their subsidised training entitlements, their fees and their responsibilities and obligations
- Provide clear, current and easily accessible information to all students and prospective students, including a clear fee and refund policy
- Deliver training, assessment and support services that are high quality, flexible and improve students' qualification completion rates

Contracts between the NSW Government and the training provider enable the Government to take action if providers do not meet the expectations.

5.2 Considerations for the Skills Board

The NSW Government has committed to a 65 percent completion rate for apprenticeships and traineeships by 2019.[48] It may be argued that the existing Strategy recognises the importance of information in ensuring students are making the right decisions about enrolment. This project has demonstrated how this information can be tailored to better meet the needs of different student groups and, hopefully, improve the likelihood of completing their chosen course.

It was noted in consultations that mandated templates about courses would not be welcomed by some RTOs because it would stifle the innovation and flexibility to market their courses in ways that they know to be the preferences of their student audiences. This is evident in the course material produced by WAYS and NSW TAFE, both of which have developed a distinct brand.

Given that there are existing regulatory and contractual mechanisms to pursue training providers' compliance with the Strategy and considering the strategic advisory role of the NSW Skills Board, it is recommended that course information templates are not mandated. Rather, that the templates developed in this research project are the basis of 'better practice' that the Board encourages RTOs to consider.

It is common for 'better' or 'best' practice to be complemented by a set of principles, or guidelines. A good example of this has recently been published by the Australian Communications and Media Authority (see **Box 5.1**). Addressed to VET providers, the guidelines could summarise the salient points from the behavioural and related research about VET student information preferences, and include checklists for information provision that are relevant to all channels of course information delivery (website, forms, social media etc).

[48] NSW Smart and Skilled Statement of Expectations (https://training.nsw.gov.au)

BOX 5.1 PROMOTING BEST PRACTICE IN INFORMATION PROVISION

The Australian Communications and Media Authority (ACMA) together with the Australian Government's Behavioural Economics Team (BETA) has developed a Better Practice Guide for National Broadband Network (NBN) providers to improve the provision of information to customers. With the shift to NBN, retail service providers are the main point of contact for consumers and have a responsibility to ensure consumers make an informed choice about their services.

The Guide sets out which behavioural biases prevent consumers from understanding their broadband needs and sets out a fact sheet to show retailers how to present NBN service plans using behavioural insights principles. These include:

- Draw out key facts
- Be short and to the point
- Present information in a standard way
- Use of combination of text, diagrams and tables
- Order information carefully
- Use conversational language
- Use standard terminology

SOURCE: DEPARTMENT OF PREMIER AND CABINET 2018 A BETTER PRACTICE GUIDE FOR NBN PROVDERS

A

TEMPLATES

When completing this template providers should ensure the information is detailed yet concise

TEMPLATE FOR CERTIFICATE II IN COMMUNITY SERVICES
Designed for disadvantaged students

COURSE TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

Overview of the course content and duration. This section should clearly outline what the student can expect from the course, what skills they will acquire and what career path(s) the qualification may lead to. It should also state the overall course duration.

COURSE DELIVERY

This section should contain information about how the course will be delivered to students. It should include the following:

- *How: e.g. face to face, online, on/off campus*
- *When: specific details about days/dates/hours of delivery*
- *Where: campus or other location*
- *Any other relevant information*

PRE-QUALIFICATIONS

This section should contain information about whether students require any other qualifications or certifications before they can commence the course. Any relevant links to such pre-qualifications should be provided.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

If applicable, this section should contain information about how a student's prior learning can be assessed to determine the amount of credit that can be put toward the course. Any relevant links to more detailed information should be provided.

STUDENT SUPPORT

This section should contain information about key support services or benefits available to students throughout the course, such as learner support and student amenities.

FEES AND CHARGES

All relevant information about fees and charges should be provided in this section, such as:

- *Course fees (subsidised and full)*
- *Service & amenity fees*
- *Material costs*
- *Payment plans*
- *VET FEE-HELP*
- *International student fees*

Relevant links to more detailed information should also be provided.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This section should contain details to inform students how the course is structured so that they know what it entails. This should include details of:

- *Core subjects*
- *Electives*

MORE QUESTIONS?

This section should contain the campus address, contact details and website.

It should also include other useful or relevant links, including (but not limited to):

- *Industry pay rates*
- *Unique Student Identifier (USI)*
- *Information about quality of VET providers*
- *Information for international students*

CERTIFICATE II
Community Services

This course aims to enhance student's employment prospects or further education opportunities within a broad range of community service related industries. A career in community services is rewarding and this course aims to introduce the student to the field of community services.

This qualification will provide you with the practical skills and knowledge to provide assistance and support to clients accessing a service, assist clients to meet their immediate needs and to develop relationships to assist clients in a crisis situation. You will learn about the community services sector and ethical behaviour.

Students will develop skills in communication, information provision and processing, administration support, networking and group support.

This course is for anyone who is thinking about entering or re-entering the workforce and has an interest in working as a community services worker.

The course duration is 8 weeks.

SAMPLE ONLY

COURSE DELIVERY

This 8 week course will run 25 hours per week, three days per week (Tuesdays – Thursdays), from 23 October to 20 December 2018 at WAYS in Bondi Junction.

The course includes industry visits and relevant guest speakers and project based work with peers. Students will have access to staff and mentors in various program areas, as well as network partners and other industry links.

PRE-QUALIFICATIONS

There are no entry requirements for this qualification.

RECOGNITION OF PRIOR LEARNING

You may be eligible for recognition of prior learning. For more information see **Training Services NSW.**

STUDENT SUPPORT DURING COURSE INCLUDES:

- Career guidance and working on individual strengths
- Links to further education and training pathways
- One on one tutoring where required
- Links to support services
- Assistance with preparing and looking for work; including a resume, cover letter, and assistance with interview techniques and other job application support as required.

COURSE STRUCTURE

This Certificate has 9 units of competency:

- Prepare to Work in the Community Services
- Interact Effectively with Others at Work
- Organise and complete Daily work Activities
- Participate in Workplace Health and Safety
- Undertake Basic Administrative Duties
- Work with Diverse People
- Promote Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander cultural safety
- Communicate and Work in Health or Community Services

JOB OPPORTUNITIES

GRAPHIC WITH LINK TO CAREER STORY

FEES and CHARGES

TUITION FEE TYPE	ESTIMATED FEE*
Government subsidised**	$434.00
Full fee	$2,814.00

SERVICE FEES	
Service & amenities	$150
Core skills support	$70
Annual material fees	Nil

**Fees may vary depending on the units you are enrolled in so an estimated amount has been shown.*

*** To find out if you are eligible to access government subsidised training visit the* ***Smart and Skilled website.***

Some students may be eligible for a fee exemption or a Fee-Free Scholarship.
For more information see **Fees and Financial Assistance.**
For international student prices contact **WAYS Bondi.**

MORE QUESTIONS

Contact WAYS Bondi on ph (02) 9230 XXXX or at ways@bondi.com.au or visit www.ways.org.au

See also:
Industry pay rates, Unique Student Identifier (USI), Compare institutions, Information for international students

When completing this template providers should ensure the information is detailed yet concise

TEMPLATE FOR CERTIFICATE III IN CARPENTRY

Designed for school leavers

COURSE TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

Overview of the course content and duration. This section should clearly outline what the student can expect from the course, what skills they will acquire and what career path(s) the qualification may lead to. It should also state the overall course duration.

COURSE DELIVERY

This section should contain information about how the course will be delivered to students. It should include the following:

- *How: e.g. face to face, online, on/off campus*
- *When: specific details about days/dates/hours of delivery*
- *Where: campus or other location*
- *Any other relevant information*

CAREER PATHWAYS

This section should contain links to more detailed information about possible career pathways

Job opportunities

Job example
Graphic with link to career story

FEES AND CHARGES

All relevant information about fees and charges should be provided in this section, such as:

- *Course fees (subsidised and full)*
- *Service & amenity fees*
- *Material costs*
- *Payment plans*
- *VET FEE-HELP*
- *International student fees*

Relevant links to more detailed information should also be provided.

PROVIDER DETAILS

This section should contain information about how to contact the provider, including the provider's:

- *Name*
- *Address*
- *Phone number, email address, website*

MORE QUESTIONS?

This section should contain other useful or relevant links, including (but not limited to):

- *Industry pay rates*
- *Unique Student Identifier (USI)*
- *Information about quality of VET providers*
- *Information for international students*

CERTIFICATE III

Carpentry

Become a qualified carpenter by completing this qualification as part of your apprenticeship. With construction one of the three largest industries in Australia, demand for qualified carpenters is high. Up to 50,000 job openings are expected over the next five years.

In this course, you'll learn how to construct, install, finish and repair structures and fixtures for residential, commercial and industrial developments. You will work with a range of tools, equipment and materials to construct frames for walls and ceilings, construct pitched and advanced roofs and eaves, and erect and dismantle formwork for footings and slabs on the ground.

This 3 year course, delivered by our highly experienced and passionate teachers, will see you graduate with the skills that will allow you to become a qualified carpenter or joiner.

SAMPLE ONLY

COURSE DELIVERY

This 3 year course is delivered in specially designed facilities where an emphasis is placed on providing hands on, practical training wherever possible.

The course duration is 6 semesters part-time (10 blocks each year, with a block being 3 x 8 hour days every 3 weeks) – duration may vary depending on the individual's progress through competencies

Classes will generally be run during school holidays to take advantage of traditional workplace 'down times'.

You will have at least 4 X 8 hour workplace visits each year.

You will be expected to complete an average of two hours of self-paced study each week.

This course is offered at the TAFE NSW Hunter, Maitland campus.

PROVIDER DETAILS

TAFE NSW Hunter
Maitland Campus, New England Highway
Metford, NSW 2323

PHONE: (02) 9230 XXXX

EMAIL: contactus@tafensw.edu.au

WEBSITE: www.tafensw.edu.au

FEES AND CHARGES

TUITION FEE TYPE	ESTIMATED FEE*
Government subsidised	$434.00**
Full fee	$2814.00

SERVICE FEES	
Service & amenities	$150
Core skills support	$70
Annual material fees	$135

* Fees may vary depending on the units you are enrolled in so an estimated amount has been shown

** To find out if you are eligible to access government subsidised training visit the Smart and Skilled website.

Some students may be eligible for a fee exemption or a Fee-Free Scholarship. For more information see Fees and Financial Assistance.

For international student prices visit the TAFE NSW International website.

CAREER PATHWAYS

- Carpenter
- Carpenter and Joiner (stairs)
- Joiner
- Shopfitter

JOB OPPORTUNITIES
LINK TO CAREER STORY

MORE QUESTIONS
See ...

- Industry pay rates
- Unique Student Identifier (USI)
- Compare institutions
- Information for international students

When completing this template providers should ensure the information is detailed yet concise

TEMPLATE FOR CERTIFICATE III IN EARLY CHILDHOOD EDUCATION AND CARE

Designed for career builders

COURSE TITLE AND DESCRIPTION

Overview of the course content and duration. This section should clearly outline what the student can expect from the course, what skills they will acquire and what career path(s) the qualification may lead to. It should also clearly state the overall course duration.

COURSE DELIVERY

This section should contain information about how the course will be delivered to students. It should include the following:

- *How: e.g. face to face, online, on/off campus*
- *When: specific details about days/dates/hours of delivery*
- *Where: campus or other location*
- *Any other relevant information*

COURSE STRUCTURE

This section should contain details to inform students how the course is structured so that they know what it entails. This should include details of:

- *Core subjects*
- *Electives*

FEES AND CHARGES

All relevant information about fees and charges should be provided in this section, such as:

- *Course fees (subsidised and full)*
- *Service & amenity fees*
- *Material costs*
- *Payment plans*
- *VET FEE-HELP*
- *International student fees*

Relevant links to more detailed information should also be provided.

STUDENT SUPPORT

This section should contain information about key support services or benefits available to students throughout the course, such as learner support and student amenities.

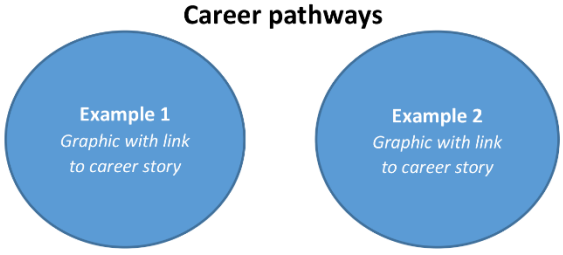
MORE QUESTIONS?

This section should contain the campus address, contact details and website.

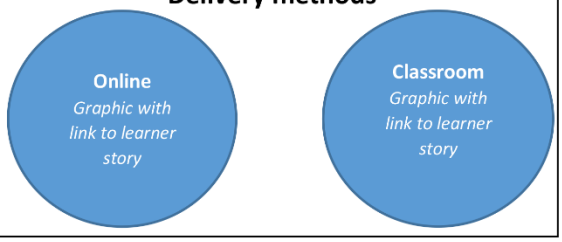
It should also include other useful or relevant links, including (but not limited to):

- *Industry pay rates*
- *Unique Student Identifier (USI)*
- *Information about quality of VET providers*
- *Information for international students*

Career pathways



Delivery methods



CERTIFICATE III in Early Childhood Education and Care

Get a head start on your career in early childhood education and care with this entry-level course.

This qualification is the minimum requirement for early childhood settings in Australia and will set you up with the foundation skills to get ahead. The number of early childhood roles is expected to grow steadily in Australia and employers are seeking qualified staff for roles across a wide range of settings.

This course covers a number of core skills, including how to plan, implement and evaluate early childhood educational programs, support healthy meal times for children and foster individual development.

You will also learn how to comply with legal and industry requirements. Our highly-experienced team of industry professionals will provide you with one-on-one guidance in simulated working environments to give you the foundations you need to enter the sector.

Successful completion of this course will allow you to confidently seek employment in a range of entry-level early childhood education and care roles, and equip you to complete further studies in the field.

This is a 32 week online course with full day workshops held once each month on campus and a compulsory 120 hour work placement. **For more information see Course delivery below.**

SAMPLE ONLY

COURSE DELIVERY

For this 32 week online and in person course you will undertake your learning and assessment via scheduled workshops at the North Coast TAFE Bathurst Campus, Coffs Harbour, using the Moodle learning platform. You will also complete independent studies and compulsory 120 hours of work placement in a Registered Early Childhood Education and Care setting.

COURSE STRUCTURE

The course covers a range of core unit competencies such as developing cultural competence, ensuring the health and safety of children, promoting and providing healthy food and drinks, developing positive and respectful relationships with children, using an approved learning framework to guide practice and using information about children to inform practice.

STUDENT SUPPORT

Tutorial support will be available on a weekly basis to support your learning via phone, email or face to face.

FEES AND CHARGES

TUITION FEE TYPE	ESTIMATED ANNUAL FEES*
Government subsidised**	$3432.00
Full fee	$9438.00
SERVICE FEES	
Service & amenities	$150
Core skills support	$70
Annual material fees	$135

Some students may be eligible for a fee exemption or a Fee-Free Scholarship. For more information see Fees and Financial Assistance.

If you have difficulty paying for the full cost of the course upfront, you may be eligible for payment plan. Learn more

For international student prices visit the TAFE NSW International website.

** Fees may vary depending on the units you are enrolled in so an estimated amount has been shown.*

*** To find out if you are eligible to access government subsidised training visit the **Smart and Skilled website.***

MORE QUESTIONS?

Contact North Coast TAFE on **(02) 9230 XXXX** or at **contactus@tafensw.edu.au** or visit **www.northcoasttafe.edu.au**

See also:
Industry pay rates
Unique Student Identifier (USI)
Compare institutions
Information for international students

See also ...

DELIVERY

EXAMPLE 1 *Link to learner story*

EXAMPLE 2 *Link to learner story*

CAREER PATHWAYS

EXAMPLE 1 *Link to career story*

EXAMPLE 2 *Link to career story*

B

SURVEY RESULTS

Following the focus groups, the templates and example course information sheets were refined based on the feedback received from students. The revised course sheets and a survey seeking feedback on the sheets were then sent to 31 students,[49] being all of the students who agreed to be further contacted and who provided their email address.

The breakdown of the 31 students across the different cohorts is as follows: 19 school leavers; 8 career builders; 4 disadvantaged youth.

Each cohort was only sent the course sheet designed for their group, however the survey questions for each cohort were identical.

Of those 31 students, 8 (26%) responded. The breakdown of responses per cohort is as follows:

- 4 school leavers (21%)
- 1 career builder (12.5%)
- 3 disadvantaged youth (75%).

Question 1. Is the COURSE DESCRIPTION a useful overview?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'not at all useful' and 5 being 'very useful'), respondents ranked the course description information on their sheet as follows:

- School leavers: **4**
- Career builder: **1**
- Disadvantaged youth: **5**

Question 2. How important is it to have information about the topics covered in the course?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'not at all important' and 5 being 'very important'), respondents ranked the importance of information about the topics covered in the course as follows:

- School leavers: **5**
- Career builder: **5**
- Disadvantaged youth: **5**

[49] 34 students provided their email addresses as an indication of their willingness to be involved in the survey. The course sheets and survey were sent to all 34 students, however 3 of the emails bounced back.

Question 3. Does the COURSE DELIVERY information contain everything you want to know?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'no', 3 being 'somewhat' and 5 being 'yes'), respondents ranked the course delivery information on their sheet as follows:

— School leavers: **4.5**

— Career builder: **1***

— Disadvantaged youth: **5**

* In the optional comments field this survey respondent stated that they would like the course delivery information to contain information about international fees. This feedback was incorporated into the final revision of the course template and information sheet, however the international fee information has been added to the 'Fees and charges' section instead of the 'Course delivery' section.

No other students provided further feedback.

Question 4. Does the FEES AND CHARGES information contain everything you want to know?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'no', 3 being 'somewhat' and 5 being 'yes'), respondents ranked the fees and charges information on their sheet as follows:

— School leavers: **4.5**

— Career builder: **1**

— Disadvantaged youth: **4.25**

n.b There was an optional comments field to provide feedback on this question, however no students provided further feedback.

Question 5. How important is it to know what the CAREER PATHWAYS are for the course?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'not at all important' and 5 being 'very important'), respondents ranked the importance of career pathway information as follows:

— School leavers: **5**

— Career builder: **4**

— Disadvantaged youth: **4.75**

Question 6. How much would you like STORIES (such as testimonies or case studies) from other students on course information sheets?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'really dislike' and 5 being 'really like'), respondents ranked the importance of stories from other students as follows:

— School leavers: **3**

— Career builder: **5**

— Disadvantaged youth: **3.25**

Question 7. What EXTERNAL WEBSITE LINKS should be provided in the template? (tick all that are relevant)

Unique Student Identifier registry

— School leavers: 66.67% of respondents ticked yes

— Career builder: respondent did not tick yes

— Disadvantaged youth: 33.33% of respondents ticked yes

Facts and figures (pay rates) about jobs

— School leavers: 66.67% of respondents ticked yes

— Career builder: 100% of respondents ticked yes

— Disadvantaged youth: 66.67% of respondents ticked yes

Information for international students

— School leavers: 33.33% of respondents ticked yes

— Career builder: respondent ticked yes

— Disadvantaged youth: 66.67% of respondents ticked yes

Information about the quality of the training provider

— School leavers: 66.67% of respondents ticked yes

— Career builder: respondent ticked yes

— Disadvantaged youth: 33.33% of respondents ticked yes.

Question 8. Does the order of the information match your interests and priorities?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'no', 3 being 'somewhat' and 5 being 'yes'), respondents ranked the order of information on their sheet matching their interests and priorities as follows:

— School leavers: **4**

— Career builder: **3**

— Disadvantaged youth: **3.75**

n.b There was an optional comments field to provide feedback on this question, however no students provided further feedback.

Question 9. Is the information clear and easy to understand?

On a scale of 1 to 5 (with 1 being 'not at all useful' and 5 being 'very useful'), respondents ranked the clarity of information on their sheet as follows:

— School leavers: **4.5**

— Career builder: **4**

— Disadvantaged youth: **5**

Question 10. Overall, does the sheet provide all the information you need to decide whether the course is right for you?

From the options of 'yes' or 'no':

— School leavers: 100% said yes

— Career builder: said yes

— Disadvantaged youth: 66.67% said yes.

n.b There was an optional comments field to provide feedback on this question, however no students provided further feedback.

C

MARKET DATA
AND ANALYSIS

NSW GOVERNMENT | Department of Industry

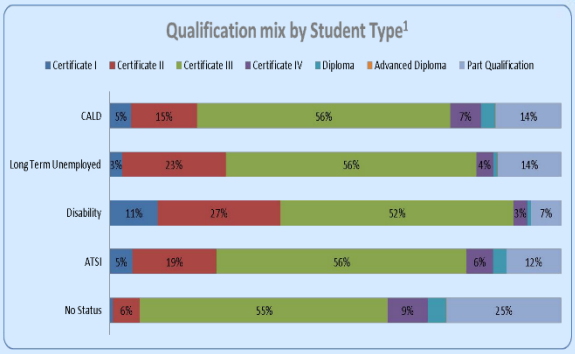
Market Data & Analysis

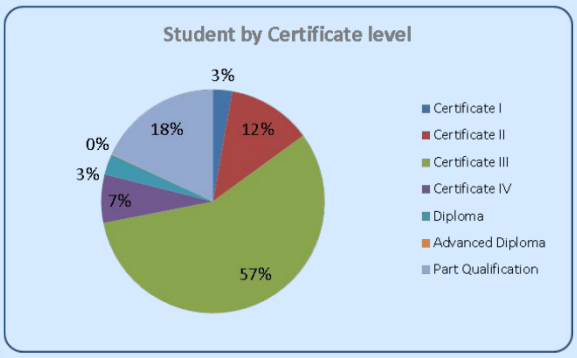
Smart and Skilled Disadvantaged Groups

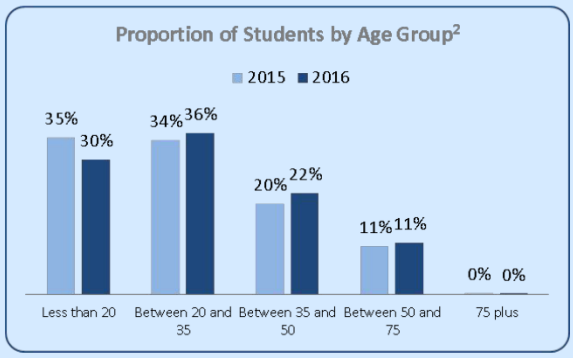
Smart and Skilled Student Profile

In 2016, 57% of Smart and Skilled enrolments were at Certificate III level. Certificate III was the most undertaken qualification level across all student types.

Majority of students were aged between 20 and 35 years. From 2015 to 2016, the proportion of students shifted from the youngest age group (20 and under) to older age groups between 20 and 50 years which grew by 4%.







[1] No status is defined as a student who has not being flagged as ATSI, Disability, Long Term Unemployed, CALD or Welfare recipient. Students can fall into multiple categories.
[2] Student age is at time of enrolment

NSW GOVERNMENT Department of Industry

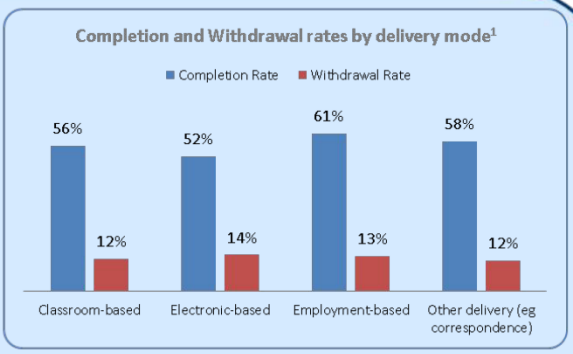
Smart and Skilled Student Profile

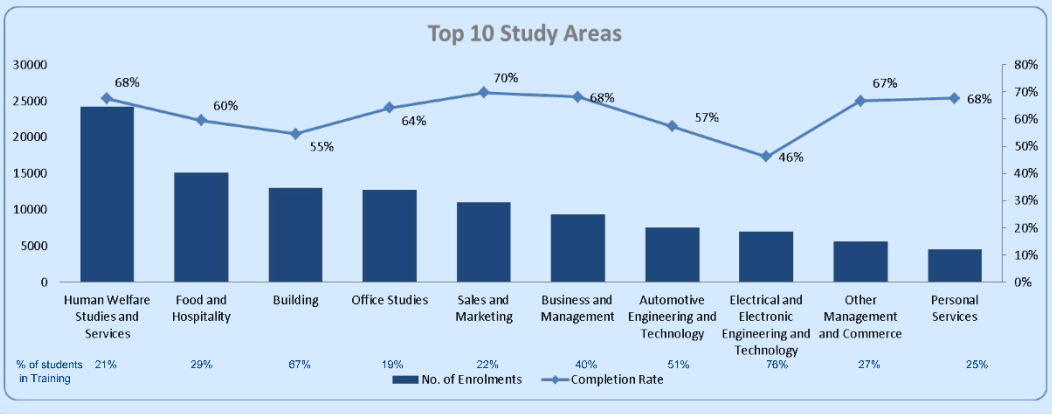
In 2015, the overall completion rate[1] was at 57%. However, this varies across delivery modes and qualifications.

Employment-based training has the highest completion rate at 61%, and electronic-based delivery has the lowest completion at 52%.

54% of total enrolments are represented below in the top 10 Fields of Education.

Sales and Marketing has the highest completion rate of 70%, whilst Electrical and Electronic Engineering has the lowest completion rate of 46%, however 76% of students in this field are still in training and are yet to complete.





[1] Withdrawal rate is based on 2016 withdrawals from qualifications. See Explanatory notes for the full completion rate definition

NSW GOVERNMENT Department of Industry

Popular Qualifications among Disadvantaged Students

Ten most popular qualifications for ATSI Students	Total Students	Percentage of student cohort
Certificate III in Business Administration	883	5.23%
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	813	4.82%
Certificate III in Individual Support	637	3.77%
Certificate I in Access to Work and Training (Introductory)	524	3.10%
Certificate III in Civil Construction Plant Operations	520	3.08%
Certificate III in Hospitality	474	2.81%
Certificate II in Business	306	1.81%
Certificate IV in Business	284	1.68%
Certificate II in Retail Services	280	1.66%
Certificate III in Education Support	278	1.65%
Total Top 10 Quals	4999	30%
Total	16881	100%

Ten most popular qualifications for Students with Disability	Total Students	Percentage of student cohort
Certificate III in Individual Support	637	4.71%
Certificate III in Business Administration	629	4.66%
Certificate II in Business	550	4.07%
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	524	3.88%
Certificate I in Access to Work and Training	438	3.24%
Certificate III in Information, Digital Media and Technology	408	3.02%
Certificate I in Access to Work and Training (Introductory)	388	2.87%
Certificate II in Retail Services	368	2.72%
Certificate II in Animal Studies	316	2.34%
Certificate III in Warehousing Operations	309	2.29%
Total Top 10 Quals	4567	34%
Grand Total	13511	100%

NSW GOVERNMENT Department of Industry

Popular Qualifications among Disadvantaged Students

Ten most popular qualifications for students who are long term unemployed	Total Students	Percentage of student cohort
Certificate III in Business Administration	641	6.83%
Certificate III in Individual Support	615	6.55%
Certificate III in Warehousing Operations	517	5.51%
Certificate II in Retail Services	486	5.18%
Certificate III in Hospitality	402	4.28%
Certificate III in Retail Operations	384	4.09%
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	362	3.85%
Certificate III in Business	264	2.81%
Certificate II in Business	247	2.63%
Certificate II in Hospitality	177	1.88%
Total Top 10 Quals	4095	44%
Grand Total	9391	100%

Ten most popular qualifications for students who speak a language other than English at home	Total Students	Percentage of student cohort
Certificate III in Early Childhood Education and Care	2640	6.35%
Certificate III in Individual Support	1557	3.74%
Certificate III in Business Administration	1166	2.80%
Certificate III in Hospitality	1060	2.55%
Certificate III in Electrotechnology Electrician	846	2.03%
Certificate II in Warehousing Operations	825	1.98%
Certificate III in Warehousing Operations	774	1.86%
Certificate I in Basic English Language Skills	658	1.58%
Certificate III in Commercial Cookery	657	1.58%
Certificate III in Driving Operations	633	1.52%
Total Top 10 Quals	10816	26%
Grand Total	41595	100%

NSW GOVERNMENT Department of Industry

D

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