

**First Progress Report**

**Co-ordination and Evaluation of the**

**POEM and CAT Pilots**

**Status: Working Draft in progress towards  
Final Report**

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# 1 Background

## 1.1 The Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce Report - *Footprints to the Future*

In response to the Report of the Prime Minister's Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce, *Footprints to the Future*, which presented a vision of governments and communities working together to assist young people, DEST called for submissions from appropriate organisations and/or collaborative groups to undertake the following pilot projects in 2002:

- Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) pilot projects to trial new ways of engaging young people (who have become disconnected from mainstream education, and possibly their families and communities) in community learning environments. A variety of approaches to reengage young people on a learning pathway are being trialed. All POEM pilots focus on providing education, training and support in settings where vulnerable young people feel comfortable; using approaches that are developed in consultation with young people and their families and that take into account their preferred learning styles and cultural, social and physical needs.
- Career and Transition (CAT) pilot projects to explore methodologies for enhancing career and transition support to all young people aged 13-19 years; partnership models which support young people's transitions; and ways of tracking the transitions of young people after they leave school.

A third set of pilots, the Innovative and Collaborative Pilots for Youth Servicing (ICYS) were developed in response to *Footprints* and advertised at this time. These projects are managed by the Department of Family and Community Services.

*Footprints to the Future* argued that education and training (which includes timely and relevant career and transition support) is the foundation for effective transition to productive and meaningful work and inclusive community life. Its 24 recommendations sought to strengthen the capacity of communities to support young people's transitions to independence and to improve educational systems and the provision of career and transition support to all young people, including those who are at risk and those who have already disengaged.

The report raised concerns about the quality and availability of career advice and transition support in Australia. Some of the weaknesses in current arrangements (noted in the report) included fragmentation between institutions and services, lack of responsiveness within services, lack of accountability for broader outcomes and lack of, or fragmented information about pathways.

Issues such as the need for greater support in selecting career pathways, help in negotiating the maze of available information, and the lack of local information especially in rural and remote areas were just some of the problems cited. Even though new initiatives such as the National Goals for Schooling are aimed at improving education systems, the report suggested that much more could be achieved in the area of curriculum design and delivery to prepare students for life beyond school and to engage all students.

The report examined in detail the particular needs of young people who have disconnected from education, their families and sometimes their communities and advocated new approaches for “engaging young people in community learning environments” (*Footprints*, p 90). It referred to the evidence that education and training can be vehicles for reconnecting young people to their communities. It suggests that effective educational models need to be sensitive to all issues impacting on a young person’s life, and that education and training should be delivered flexibly in settings where young people are comfortable and in ways that address their particular needs.

The Taskforce concluded that there could be no single outreach education or career and transition support model, which would apply equally to every community or set of circumstances. Rather a continuum of options for both should be provided on the basis of need, delivered through schools and community based agencies in partnerships that resulted in ‘joined up’ services.

DEST responded in 2001 by inviting organisations throughout Australia to submit proposals to participate in Career and Transition (CAT) or Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) pilots. Preliminary comments on the selection of the pilot projects are found in Section 8.4.

## 1.2 The National Co-ordination and Evaluation Project

In October 2002, Miles Morgan Australia Pty Ltd was appointed to undertake co-ordination and evaluation of the CAT and POEM pilot projects.

The main evaluation task of the project is to build on the action research that the pilots have been undertaking, and to summarise the achievements, the difficulties and the learning that has flowed from those experiences.

It is envisaged that this information will further understanding of:

- career and transition strategies that (in particular contexts) assist young people to make effective transitions through school and on to further education, training or work.
- outreach education models that (in particular contexts) assist young disconnected people to re-engage and re-establish themselves on a learning pathway.

- the ways in which community partnerships contribute or add value to both.
- the ways in which action learning contributes to service development, delivery and evaluation.
- the place of career and transition advisers and partnership outreach education models in a national transition system.

The co-ordination element of the project is designed to provide opportunities for the projects to interact with fellow providers from across Australia so that people can share and learn from the experiences of colleagues working in a variety of settings.

### 1.2.1 Progress of the NCEP

The NCEP team was appointed on the 17<sup>th</sup> October 2002. At its initial meeting, the steering committee, which oversees the project, endorsed the evaluation plan and work on the project began in earnest.

The first major requirement of the NCEP was to organize and facilitate two National Action Forums for CAT and POEM providers. The National Action Learning Forum for POEM providers was held in Melbourne on 11/12 November 2002 and on the 13/14 November for CAT providers. Delegates included 2 representatives from each pilot project, national and state representatives from the Department of Education, Science and Training, and members of the co-ordination and evaluation team. Reports, which summarise the key themes and issues of each, are at appendices A and B.

Following the forums, the focus of the NCEP team has been to:

- Transcribe and synthesise notes and recordings from the forums in order to prepare a summary report.
- Read and commence analysis of information contained in establishment and quarterly reports and action learning diaries that have been submitted to DEST and made available to the NCEP.
- Visit the 2 POEM and 3 CAT pilots situated in Western Australia.
- Contact all pilot projects and undertake phone consultations with those that were available in order to clarify information in their reports or following up on issues raised at the forum. Given the time of year, it was not possible to contact a small number of projects.
- Locate literature to inform the evaluation and to be reviewed prior to writing of final evaluation reports.
- Prepare this first report.



## 1.2.2 Scope of this Report

This first interim report is largely descriptive. Given this early establishment stage of the evaluation, its observations are of a preliminary nature because they are based primarily on the views of those providing the services. While the reports and the action learning diaries of pilots contain feedback from young people and members of steering committees and community partnerships, the evaluation team has not consulted directly with project participants or other community stakeholders.

All projects will be visited during the first quarter of 2003 and face-to-face and telephone interviews will be conducted with as many community partners and participants as possible. Future reports will therefore, capture more **directly** the experiences and views of a wider range of community stakeholders, including young people, mainstream education and training providers, youth services providers and other community partners.

Given the short timeframe and its co-incidence with projects winding down over the school holiday period, it was not possible to visit all projects to fully explore the unique experiences of each project. The final evaluation report for each set of pilots (CAT evaluation due June 2003 and POEM evaluation February 2004) will contain detailed case studies that document fully the goals; achievements; successes and challenges of each individual project. The final report will also consider relevant literature reviewed for the purposes of this project.

At the time of preparing this report, the co-ordination and evaluation team had access to the 1<sup>st</sup> Quarterly Report and Action Learning Diary for most POEM providers, and the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarterly Reports and Action Learning Diaries for CAT providers. They did not have access to contracts or financial data, so cost effectiveness and related funding issues have not been addressed.

## 2 The POEM Pilots

Finding new methods of re-engaging disconnected young people in community-centred learning environments was a key recommendation contained in the *Footprints to the Future* report. The report recognised that some young people in Australia live in situations that prevent them from participating fully in education and training or community activities. The report challenged governments, industry, schools, service providers, young people and their parents to work together to create a network of support for disconnected young people.

### 2.1 POEM Guidelines

In response, the Commonwealth government has funded 21 pilots to develop community-based projects to re-engage disconnected young people between the ages of 13 –19 years in learning activities. The pilots are designed to trial strategies that:

- engage the targeted disconnected young people in the project;
- provide comprehensive and flexible learning opportunities delivered in appropriate community-based settings and that will lead to accredited qualifications;
- give participants the opportunity to start achieving the education, life skills and employability skills needed to participate autonomously and fully in work and community life;
- encourage re-engagement with learning through the development of Learning Pathways Plans, and the involvement, where appropriate, of mainstream education providers in the project as deliverers of education and training or as partners in the project
- provide participants with the appropriate support to help them with social, legal, health, family or emotional issues during their involvement with the project;
- develop networks of support for disconnected young people which are sustainable beyond the pilot; and

### 2.2 An Overview of the POEM Projects

At the National Action Learning Forum in November, providers, meeting each other for the first time, discovered:

*how different our models are and how different the people that we work with are as well. Even though we talk about disconnected young people, they are all different. So we are working with different groups of young people within that larger group. The one thing this group of young people has in common is that they don't fit in. They don't know where they*

*fit in. But they are all looking to find their place.* (Feedback from discussion group at National Action Learning Forum).

Rather than developing a prescriptive 'one size fits all' model that had to be implemented, the POEM guidelines outlined a vision for the delivery of outreach education services and then asked providers to develop methodologies for achieving the vision in their local communities.

Communities, some of which had been working towards or had in fact been providing outreach education services in a more limited way, seized the opportunity to put their ideas into practice or to expand available services for young people who had disconnected from mainstream education; those with a tenuous connection to school; or those at risk of disconnecting.

This has resulted in an incredibly diverse range of pilots being co-ordinated by organisations whose core business activities lie in education, juvenile justice, vocational education and training, community or religious based youth and community service provision, or local and state government service provision.

It seems that the way that each POEM Pilot has developed is not only a reflection of the local circumstances in which they operate, but is also a reflection of the core values and prior experience of the lead agency and their most active partner organisations.

A number of religious and community based youth and community service organisations, which already attract disconnected young people through the provision of accommodation, welfare, health and recreation services, are now providing or expanding flexible educational options for young people through their POEM projects.

For example, the SMART Project offered by the Beenleigh Area Youth Service brings a new education option for otherwise disconnected young people living in the northern Gold Coast area of Qld. Enrolled in the Brisbane School of Distance Education, young people are supported by youth workers to identify their goals and to work through personal issues in order to meet their social, educational and employment goals.

Oasis Salvation Army is delivering a POEM project in Surrey Hills, with their major project partner, Waverley Action for Youth Services Incorporated (WAYS) delivering a project at Bondi Junction. At Oasis, young people aged 16–22 are dealing with legal issues, drug dependence issues and chronic homelessness. Their programme is sufficiently flexible to accommodate the fact that participants need to deal with these issues as they arise. At WAYS, where the participants are living in more stable situations and have been disconnected from learning for a shorter period, the programme is more structured.

Building on an existing initiative, the Salvation Army in Brunswick is expanding the number of places available to young people, and offering additional places in the Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA), new vocational training options, and accredited short courses to develop employability skills.

The Leichhardt Community Youth Association is using its networks with a range of youth-related service providers to engage disconnected youth and to support them to become self-directed learners. This project is finding successful ways to engage with Indigenous young people from the Redfern area through music and other exciting activities as a precursor to accessing other accredited learning options.

The jyss.comet programme, offered by the Joondalup Youth Support Service, is establishing a small learning centre in the Clarkson Youth Centre. As the major provider of a range of youth services in the high youth population areas of Joondalup and Wanneroo, Joondalup Youth Support Service has, through POEMs, added educational services to its extensive range of services in order to facilitate connected provision for young POEM participants.

POEM funding has enabled the St Philips Christian Education Foundation to expand its Dale Young Mothers programme from two days to five days per week, thereby providing a supported environment for young mothers and young pregnant women to access distance education modules to complete their high school education. Outcomes for graduates from this project will include university entrance.

Both Wyong Workwise and Rivskills have experience of offering employment, training and transition support services and youth-specific services such as JPET. Both have RTO status and offer Work for the Dole Programmes. Wyong Workwise, which also offers employment and training assistance to mature workers; literacy and numeracy skills training and Links to Learning Programmes (NSW Government programme), is developing a learning centre for 13-19 year olds who are disconnected from mainstream education and training to gain their year 10 equivalent and use this milestone to access other education pathways.

Rivskills, which is also a Job Network provider, and a Jobs Pathway Programme provider, offers disconnected young people the opportunity to undertake life skills development and vocationally oriented training that is presented and assessed in a way that the young people can achieve competency, develop their self esteem and move on to further training, back into mainstream education or gain employment.

The VIP Plus project in WA had its roots in crime prevention. The project re-engages young people in learning, employment, art and sport activities through a variety of initiatives involving *The Back on Track Programme's* CGEA (Certificate of General Education for Adults) curricula. Wherever possible CGEA learning outcomes are met using tasks addressing youth issues – health; STDs; drug and alcohol use and abuse; being a sexually responsible adult; crime and the repercussions of poor choices of action; homelessness and life skills.

A joint venture by the SA Department of Education and Children's Services, the Department of Human Services and non-government agencies has enabled the Youth Education Centre in SA to offer education outreach services for young people at risk/within the juvenile justice system. It has campuses within the Magill and Cavan Training Centres (juvenile remand and detention of male and female young offenders and

a Flexicentre that caters for young people between the ages of 15 – 18 years of age at risk and/or within the Juvenile Justice system. A virtual school spreads out from the Magill Flexicentre to multiple sites through South Australia – where young people can participate in learning at local community agencies (ie members of the Virtual School) and gain recognition for their skills through an auspicing arrangement with Regency TAFE.

Local government is providing a management structure for the delivery of four projects being developed in the shires of Wellington and East Gippsland under the auspices of the Wellington Shire Council. Adult Community Education Sale, Bairnsdale Adult Community Education, Lakes Entrance Community Health Outreach and the East Gippsland Aboriginal Community Development Employment Program (CDEP) Cooperative have developed four unique POEM projects for totally disengaged young people, those at risk, and those living in really small rural towns.

The Mildura Rural City Council (Youth Services), with its history of being involved over the last few years in early intervention and prevention programmes (including a school-focused youth service and a truancy project), has taken the opportunity to further develop partnerships in their region to engage young people in their Reality.Com POEM project. Unlike other POEM pilots, they primarily contract out the delivery and assessment of the education and training programme.

A number of other projects are building on existing State or community-funded alternative school education programmes. They are developing more holistic interagency approaches; extending operating hours; increasing participants numbers and available curriculum and lowering student/teacher ratios.

For example, in the ACT, POEM funding has enabled expansion of an existing outreach education programme. The POEM pilot, co-ordinated by the Anglicare Council, is now able to offer an integrated approach to meeting the personal, social and educational needs of students.

In NSW, Centacare and the Narromine High School had been running a programme to assist young people who had disconnected or were at risk of becoming disconnected from mainstream schooling. With POEM funding, the programme has expanded from one day a week to a full time programme.

In Qld, an existing partnership between Murgon State High School and the Edmund Rice Foundation has been expanded through the POEM pilot and students are now intensively developing their literacy, numeracy and computing skills and being provided with youth support services. The pilot's wider partnership base will also enable the Indigenous Rural Workers Certificate to be offered from a 420-acre property in Cherbourg.

Alice Outcomes, in the NT, was originally funded through the Full Service Schools Programme. With additional funding through the POEM pilot, the existing service has been able to establish an additional site, expand curriculum options to include academic studies, VET music and media

modules and community studies and move to a student: staff ratio that enables more intensive assistance for young people.

POEM funding has also enabled other schools, working in partnership with their communities, to establish **new** outreach education alternatives. For example, Cooktown State School in Qld is providing centralized support to POEM Partnerships that are being established in Coen, Laura, Hope Vale and Bloomfield/Rossville/Wujal Wujal.

The local school at Papunya in the NT is establishing an alternative education programme to engage small groups of young people in Art, Music or Building Construction activities.

The Southern Vocational College is the coordinating agency for the Southern Adelaide Youth *Choices* project. The project has two operating arms (the *Hallett Cove Youth Pathways CHOICES Programme* which is based at the O'Halloran Hill Campus of Onkaparinga TAFE and *Onkaparinga Pathways* based at the Southern Youth Exchange in Christies Beach). The Hallett Cove project has been in operation for some time and delivers SACE accredited curriculum while participation in POEMs has enabled the learning of this project to inform the development and scope of Onkaparinga Pathways.

A POEM project, situated within the Victoria University of Technology, is enabling the university to develop its youth services by forging links with schools and community service providers in the western suburbs, as it offers disconnected youth a pathway back into education, training and community activities.

There are a number of other ways that the pilots could be grouped in terms of their similarities and differences. Several pilots (East Gippsland; Papunya; Murgon; Cooktown, Boggabilla and Centacare at Narromine) are offering services to Indigenous youth only, and others such as Leichhardt and Alice Outcomes cater for large numbers of Indigenous young people.

Octopus-like models of service provision are developing in Cooktown, Wellington and through the YEC in SA. All pilots operate from a central hub with a number of partners offering services from a growing number of small, geographically dispersed sites.

Some projects use an open enrolment system with participants being accepted on a continuous intake basis. Others use a closed system because of concerns related to the impact on the dynamics of the group, especially where intensive upfront social development activities are offered to participants.

The degree of structure/flexibility built into the projects varies enormously according to the nature of the client group, their age, and the severity of the life issues that they are dealing with. In Papunya, where there is a history of volatile substance abuse, engaging small groups of young people in community art activities one or two mornings a week is a significant achievement. Victoria University reports that its approach has

become more structured over time in response to early feedback and that later arrivals were described as 'very motivated'.

Even in the more highly structured programmes, there is a great deal of flexibility for participants to deal with issues in other areas of their life that need to be handled. Clearly young participants find it difficult to focus on their studies when they don't know where they will sleep at night, or they are caring for a parent, or dealing with legal issues that may result in sentencing.

Despite the diversity of service provision, it is clear, even at this very early stage of the evaluation that POEM providers are sure that what they are doing really makes an important difference. They share a strong commitment to supporting young people whose circumstances make it extremely difficult for them to participate in education, training or in community life.

## 2.3 Participation Stats

Projects are required to report against two categories of participation – Strand 1 and Strand 2.

Strand 1 comprises those young people who become full time (or what constitutes a full time capacity for an individual) POEM students. Strand 2 reporting comprises those young people who are either students 'at risk' who maintain regular school classes while attending POEM activities part time or intermittently or they are young people who are disconnected from education, but they are not ready to become full time enrolled POEM students.

It should be noted that not all data were available for the reporting period. Available data show that at the end of the first quarter, a total of 360 young people were enrolled as full time participants in POEM projects throughout Australia, compared to an enrolment of 191 participants at the commencement of the quarter.

Fifty eight per cent of the 360 enrolled at the end of the quarter were male and 42% female. Two fifths (151) of enrolments at the end of the first quarter were Indigenous participants. Around 30% of those referred, assisted, and enrolled in the project were aged 16. Fifteen year olds were the next largest group of participants, followed by 17 year olds.

In addition, a total of 211 young people were reported as having been involved on a part-time or intermittent basis (Strand 2 clients) in five POEM projects. This brings the total number assisted under Strand 1 and Strand 2 during the reporting period to 663 young people.

## 3 Key Programme Elements/Deliverables

Each pilot is required to report on the strategies that they have developed to test/trial the essential elements of the partnership outreach education model proposed by the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce.

What follows are some preliminary observations on the approaches that are being tried as the projects develop.

### 3.1 Strategies for Locating and Engaging Young People

*Our programmes are based on the fact that young people are not connected and not engaged, and yet when they come to us, they want to be engaged – whether it's with one another or even back to the wider community. (Feedback from discussion group at National Action Learning Forum)*

The primary aim of the POEM pilots is to re-engage young people on a learning pathway. The process by which that is achieved is a multi-faceted one that involves assisting young people to make a series of 'connections' with new people and new activities. These include the adults/teachers/youth workers providing the POEM service, and other POEM participants. In most cases, young people are first invited to engage in informal learning, social and community activities (designed to develop their confidence and the skills and attitudes that will support their work/life goals). Participants are then encouraged to engage with formal learning provided in flexible ways, in alternative settings and with a curriculum that has been designed to accommodate their particular learning needs and styles. And in those cases, where it is appropriate, they are invited to re-engage in formal education and training *programmes* that are offered through mainstream institutions.

The ways in which the projects assist young people to make these connections vary enormously from project to project and from young person to young person.

#### 3.1.1 Locating Young People

Disconnected youth are not a stable, easily contactable population. Most projects, some of which developed information kits/pamphlets/flyers to introduce their service and to clarify its purpose, relied on their existing networks and new links that were forming between POEM partnering organisations and through project steering committees. Referrals came from other youth service providers; health and community service agencies, police-youth liaison officers, and from schools.

Dale Young Mothers is producing a professionally filmed video, which will not only engage young people in its production, but also act as a promotional tool for liaising with referral agencies and community service agencies working with prospective programme participants.

Other projects, such as Narromine and Lakes Entrance used more direct door-knocking/grassroots approaches, especially when seeking to identify young Indigenous people. At East Gippsland ACDEP, the co-ordinator drove round inviting young people to come in and have a look.



Where the lead agency (as in the case of the OTEN/Boggabilla and Toomelah project) did not have such networks firmly established, the initial engagement of young people proved extremely difficult. It was only after a Koori worker was appointed that the ACDEP project in East Gippsland quickly overcame its initial difficulties in recruiting participants. 15 young people are now engaged in the project.

In organisations, such as those offering JPET or supported accommodation services, or in small rural communities, potential POEM clients were already known to project staff. And, as the projects are developing many participants are self-referring, as word of mouth information about the projects spreads between young people themselves. In cases such as the VIP Plus Project, which has been built on an established programme, the siblings of previous participants are now self-referring. Other projects, such as the Youth Education Centre also report direct queries from young people, as the word spreads.

#### 3.1.1.1 Referrals

21.8% of all those accepted into POEM projects were referred by schools, compared to 30.9% of those who had been referred by Youth Service Providers; 18.7% from self/family/ other community referrals; 10.5% from Juvenile Justice/police and the rest from a range of sources.

While all projects acknowledge the importance of establishing strong links with schools in their community, discussions at the Action Learning Forum revealed that referrals from schools presented some difficulties. There were reports (as yet unsubstantiated) that some schools saw POEM programmes as a convenient placement for 'difficult' students rather than disconnected young people (who by definition are not enrolled in school and not visible to them), or a 'welfare programme that kept them off the streets' and some school referrals reflected this. On the other hand, other projects reported that referrals (including those from schools) were running smoothly.

Many projects reported that they were receiving far more referrals than they were able to take. Reasons for not offering young people a place included limited project capacity; locally imposed age restrictions; and the young person's readiness to make a full time commitment. The size of the unmet demand will be further explored through the evaluation because it seems that there is likely a huge untapped demand in the community for educational programmes such as those provided by POEMS.

#### 3.1.1.2 Selection Processes

Some projects, such as VIP Plus (as long as quality services can be maintained for all clients) and Leichhardt Youth, accept all comers into the project because with members of their target client group having experienced so much rejection, they do not wish to enforce strict entry criteria.

*All young people are accepted and told they can come any time or back anytime. They have enough rejection elsewhere. (Leichhardt Quarterly Report)*

Other projects report that they assess the appropriateness and readiness of young people in terms of their willingness to commit to the programme for a set number of days per week (four days at Wyong Workways); others on the basis of their literacy and numeracy levels. One project requires that a 'functioning' adult must accompany the young person to the initial interview. It was also reported during group discussions at the forum that some pilots were concerned to demonstrate the early success of the project and their selection processes reflected this - ie they were taking on more motivated, more successful, more functioning clients in the first place.

### 3.1.2 Keeping Young people Engaged

Despite the variety of approaches described above, all projects operate from a common set of principles in order to gain and to maintain the ongoing engagement of young people.

#### 3.1.2.1 The Importance of Relationships

All projects would agree that the establishment of honest, attentive and respectful relationships with participants is a critical element in gaining the trust of young people. Project staff stress the importance of appreciating the experiences, language, culture and opinions of young people, and of involving them in the creation of learning environments that respect and reflect their preferences and in which they are made to feel welcome and comfortable.

While all dedicated educators would agree with these principles, when confronted with a group of 30 or even 40 students, it is not so easy to achieve. So, in part, the capacity to build such relationships in the POEM pilots is due to the intensity and focus that is possible when working with smaller numbers of students. Many providers consider that the greater degree of attention, focus and support offered to participants is an important factor in both attracting and retaining them. The provision of intensive support for young people through working in small groups and providing one-on-one support is considered to be an important success element.

Many forum participants spoke of the importance of recognising and respecting the fact that many young people have had to assume adult roles at early stages in their lives.

*It's about embracing their life experience and allowing for their life experience and saying "Okay, well look. For the next 6 weeks you've got something that's really pressing, well go away and do it, and then when you come back..." (Provider comment)*

Having high expectations of students is also reported as important in maintaining young people's engagement. At Wyong Workways, young people are aware that lack of regular attendance jeopardizes their place in the programme and that at the six-week review, their ongoing suitability for the programme is assessed.

An important focus of the relationship between POEM workers and students is to offer hope and direction by helping participants to envisage hopeful futures; to set realistic goals; and to develop the social, personal, and vocational skills needed to achieve them. This requires persistence and genuine effort to 'be there' for young people.

Clearly, the skills and attitudes of the facilitators/teachers/other workers were considered critical to the establishment of such relationships.

*They've got to be people who can deal with these kids; people who've got a passion for learning but also that have a passion for kids that are not of the regular mould, and are slipping through the gaps (Feedback from the forum).*

### 3.1.2.2 Negotiation and Choice

While acknowledging the realities of the requirement for young people to be engaged in approved activities in order to access financial payments, project staff point to the importance of voluntary involvement in the pilots. Young people are encouraged to be involved in their projects and their learning programmes in ways that engender genuine ownership and responsibility for their own learning.

Projects, in most cases, have attempted to the extent that is possible, to find out what their students are passionate about and have then created a learning programme that reflects their interests. Even though Alice Outcomes deals with large numbers of students, they report that with healthy student: staff ratios they are able to individualise students' learning plans.

Many projects have regular team meetings in which young people play a vital role in determining the direction of their activities and the operating principles of the group. At the Beenleigh SMART project, young people have negotiated and formulated a group agreement on how the programme will operate on a daily basis. It covers issues such as respect, responsibility for self and others, safety, fun etc. At Rivskills, four young people planned and implemented the POEM project site at the Riverland Field Days, which included them in planning, the preparation of information bags, kiosk sales and customer service on the day. Onkaparinga Pathways reviewed their programme during week six when it became apparent that participants were dissatisfied. Staff worked with young people to rewrite the approach, and it was reported that young people then participated with enthusiasm.

### 3.1.2.3 Engaging Activities

Some projects consider that the Learning Pathways Plan is a critical tool for engaging young people in their own learning programme. However, because the lives of many POEM participants are characterized as disorganized and even chaotic, the establishment of short term rather than long term goals is the approach taken by many projects. At Beenleigh, for example, SMART participants are encouraged to think about how big plans can be achieved through smaller steps and achievements.

Plans have been variously conceptualized as lifelong learning plans with a multi-disciplinary; multi-agency approach or less formal, flexible learning pathways plans that guide participants through a range of learning activities during their time in the pilot to various exit points. Regardless of its form, many projects report that the plan acts as a strong motivational tool. Mildura reports that POEM participants responded extremely positively to their attractive kit bag containing a diary, notebook, pens, and the pro-forma of the learning pathways plan that they received on the first day.

At the same time, projects such as Murgon report that while three quarters of their young people have developed an LPP – the others are not ready to think about it yet. At Victoria University, the university's Pathways/Transition Adviser works with students to develop individual learning plans, and while this is considered valuable, the co-ordinator warns that some young people are tired of others 'going on' about their futures. Just being enrolled – being on a positive path – is enough for some.

POEM participants have been taken on camps, which provide opportunities for the development of social skills in new informal learning environments and experiences and provide opportunities for young people to have fun. (Several projects report, however, that camps were not without difficulties, particularly regarding substance use/abuse.)

Healthy and legitimate recreational and sporting activities, including visits to museums and art galleries, bush walking and rock climbing, were important tools for positive community engagement and at Alice Outcomes students have participated in the Athletes as Role Models tour and the Reconnect Respite from Violence camp.

At the Hallett Cove Youth Pathways CHOICES pilot, young people were actively involved in developing group norms/guidelines prior to their participation in a camp, which enabled them to develop their team building skills. They have also been actively engaged in developing workshop outlines, and co-deliver sessions on some occasions. They also participate in fund-raising activities that engage them in community-based programmes and fund their involvement in specialist activities.

Prevention strategies such as after-hours-activities that provide a viable alternative to boredom and its attendant problems were being offered by some projects.

At Murgon, parents are an integral part of the meeting procedure to engage young people, and extra curricular activities have included visits to beaches, to the museum to study family and cultural history, and to other schools. Many projects recognised the value of creative pursuits, such as art, drama and music to encourage young people to express themselves.

In summary:

*We're using similar strategies, I suppose, in that we're trying to make more experiences available to the young people, and the forms that they take are dynamic and diverse. (forum participant)*

#### 3.1.2.4 Recognition, Rewards, and the Experience of Success

All projects speak of the importance of seizing every opportunity to make learning achievements highly visible. Young people's commitment is maintained by the experience and celebration of success.

A few use rewards such as lunchtime vouchers, shopping vouchers, outings, for attendance, punctuality, and engagement in activities. Adventure days are an informal way of recognizing and rewarding young people's positive efforts in the Hallett Cove Youth Pathways CHOICES programme. Several projects reported how important it was to their clients to have their skills recognised as equivalent to those gained in more mainstream settings. Clients valued certification and graduation ceremonies and graduation dinners etc.

For others the motivation is more intrinsic. The Dale Young Mothers project reports, for example, that the motivation comes from the participants' desire to learn so that they can better provide for their babies or children. Alice Outcomes have held celebratory barbecues when students complete units.

#### 3.1.2.5 Impediments to Engaging Clients

Social and personal issues continue to make it difficult for POEM providers to maintain the engagement of clients. Support for managing issues such as drug/alcohol use; homelessness; the mobility of participants' lifestyles; legal and financial issues; volatile substance abuse; mental health and medical conditions; transport difficulties; the perceptions of young people about their own capacity and the impact of this on their motivation and attendance patterns, is being offered by all projects. Such problems do not disappear overnight. However, as one forum participant reported:

*Whatever time they are engaged – whatever space is created – the more that can happen, the better because many of us reported that young people are not with their usual networks; they are not offending, are not into drugs and alcohol when they're with us.*

## 3.2 Delivery of Accredited Education and Training

Projects are offering a range of accredited education and training options to POEM participants. The learning programmes that are being made available reflect the aspirations of the participants; their age; their areas of personal interest; their skill levels; their eligibility/ineligibility for enrolment in education or VET courses of study; the knowledge and understanding of flexible learning options of the POEM partners; and the availability of education, training and employment options in particular locations.

The development of underpinning literacy and numeracy skills is a strong focus of the learning programmes of most POEM participants. Responses to improving literacy levels include using appropriate and individualised teaching curricula, and utilising appropriate teaching and assessment methods and resources. It is also recognised by project staff that enrolment procedures need to be flexible enough to accommodate low literacy levels and, in some cases to engage specialist literacy and numeracy education service providers.

As well as offering a range of Year 10, 11, 12 board of studies accredited school subjects that articulate into academic pathways, a number of providers are working in formal partnerships with VET (including TAFE) providers, whereby POEM staff - with the qualifications specified in the AQTF standards - are auspiced to deliver and assess accredited modules.

Knowledge of the requirements of the AQTF and the flexibility that the VET sector offers in terms of recognition of competencies has clearly made it easier for some projects to offer young people opportunities to engage in a range of accredited preparatory/foundation programmes available in the VET sector. The absence of this knowledge has also created initial difficulties or slower starts for some projects, which did not fully understand the requirement to have their delivery and assessment auspiced.

The value of such knowledge is demonstrated in the YEC's virtual school, which has undertaken an enormous mapping exercise to enable the competencies that young people were developing through a range of informal learning experiences to be recognised. YEC has also provided training opportunities for potential trainers so that they meet AQTF standards.

Several projects are using the flexible delivery options available through distance education and training and combining this with intensive support provided by POEM project staff, who act as on-site facilitators. For example OTEN plans to develop a relationship with an Indigenous community at Toomelah to engage young people in distance learning with community support situated and provided in the community. At Joondalup, young people are enrolled externally through TAFE and at Beenleigh, through the Brisbane School of Distance Education.

POEM providers such as VIP Plus, Leichhardt Community Youth, Wyong Workwise, and Rivskills, which have RTO status, are able to train, assess and issue qualifications and Statements of Attainment in their own right.

Many of those working in partnership and who have RTO status are using the foundation Certificate of General Education for Adults (CGEA). At VIP Plus, CGEA modules are made interesting by anchoring the content in youth issues. Hence, *Reading for Public Debate* may be achieved on crime, teenage pregnancy, ecstasy use or abortion, whilst *Writing and Oracy for Practical Purposes* may be achieved by writing up and demonstrating the use of *Photoshop* or *Powerpoint* on the computer, or giving another client a shampoo and blow wave, or doing tricks on a skate board.

Similarly, Wyong Workwise has integrated an Aboriginal perspectives/issues theme into reading and writing outcomes to achieve a holistic approach. The Oasis and WAYS (Go with the FLOW) pilot has formed a partnership with the Sydney Institute of TAFE Adult Basic Education and are writing their own youth-friendly curriculum and learning materials, which will have special relevance for disconnected young people.

Other students are enrolled in local schools or through distance education programmes and are undertaking Board of Studies subjects. In some cases, both Board of Studies subjects and VET modules/units of competence are being made available. This is seen to provide young with a choice of pathways on which to 'travel' towards their learning and work goals.

Alice Outcomes reports that along with completing various educational modules, students are also becoming more interested in the world of work and are actively discussing educational requirements for a range of occupations with programme staff, and the Career and Transition (CAT) Adviser in Alice Springs.

At Centacare in Narromine, students who are not coping with mainstream education are provided assistance with the assessment tasks that have been set by the local school, while attending the POEM pilot. They also undertake additional learning in the areas of literacy numeracy, art, drama and cooking.

### 3.2.1 Learning Areas

In the first quarter, 68% of all learning activities provided young people with the opportunity to have their knowledge and skills recognised through accredited subjects/modules/units.

Literacy and numeracy skills development was a strong focus in most projects, with around 17% of accredited and non-accredited learning activity occurring in the areas of literacy/numeracy skills development in the first quarter. Many participants were undertaking modules of the Certificate of General Education for Adults (variously named in different

States/Territories). Another 9% of activity was reported in English and 8.2% in maths subjects.

The creative pursuits of art, media, music and design, which encourage self expression, comprised some 17% of student learning activities in the first quarter.

Career and transition support activities totalled 10.4% of student activity. Around 8% of learning activities in the first quarter were in computing science units. Other learning areas included health (7%); sport and recreation (5.6%); business studies (3.5%); and science (1.4%). Outcomes were also reported in the areas of interpersonal skills development, with students developing skills in relationship and team building.

At the end of the first quarter, a total of 270 of the 360 enrolled students had developed a Learning Pathways Plan.

Most of the 211 additional students who were classified as being engaged intermittently or on a part-time basis (Strand 2) were involved in a variety of short courses and a range of activities to help develop life skills and self esteem.

### 3.2.2 Indirect Approaches to Learning

Because most students have had such poor prior experiences of learning, some projects are using indirect education approaches – ie they were engaging young people in activities that participants did not 'classify' as learning. For example, in Mildura a proposed recycling furniture project for 15–19 years foregrounds how to decorate your room on a budget, but alcohol and drug education underpins the programme.

After observing that their initial learning programme wasn't engaging all students, the BACE pilot moved to project-based activities, with students working on a large 2mx2m jigsaw panel made from wood. Through this activity, participants are indirectly developing design skills; negotiation skills; team skills; and computer calculations etc. Despite the flexible nature of the original learning programme, young people had still seen the activities as formal learning and were not strongly motivated.

At VIP Plus, the co-ordinator uses incidents as teachable/golden learning moments. For example if a dispute arises in class, using a case study that has been previously developed, participants will be engaged in a group activity on dispute resolution skills and strategies.

At Leichhardt, an important shift is reported, with participants becoming self-directed as they realise that the seemingly informal activities that they undertake have validity and that they are in fact acquiring skills and knowledge.

FLOW reports that young people have been involved in bush regeneration; have assisted in the renovation of a Retirement Village and in removing graffiti from children's playground equipment.



While many projects were providing practical, hands on learning experiences for POEM participants, not surprisingly, at this early stage in the life of the projects, only a small percentage of students were accessing work experience opportunities. At YEC, several students had been engaged in work experience at local primary schools through their participation in a project designed to raise awareness of the Indigenous Education worker role. Two students gained paid work as a result of the programme. At Rivskills, participants have the chance to develop on-the-job skills by work trailing at one of the two Enterprise Learning Centres. 10 students from Alice Outcomes had work experience opportunities in diverse industry settings.

### 3.2.3 Difficulties

There have been national system-level efforts in recent years to improve the articulation between sectors. Yet, at a local level, the issues of equivalence of qualification levels across education and training systems, still present as difficulties/impediments to tailoring learning options/pathways for individuals.

Another difficulty, identified at the forum, was the paucity of appropriate learning materials. Appropriate learning materials for the development of literacy skills in young adults, in particular, were difficult to obtain.

Those who contracted the services of other providers to deliver and assess their education and training programme had experienced some difficulties with the suitability of staff that had been appointed by education providers to work with disconnected youth.

A number of complex system-wide issues that have impacted on the projects will be explored fully as the evaluation progresses. These include:

- Age restrictions that can act as a barrier to participation;
- Eligibility requirements for Youth Allowance and Abstudy; and
- Student enrolment requirements and subsequent funding flows/impacts.

### 3.2.4 Summary

In some ways, the projects' role can be conceptualized as an important **intermediary** service for mainstream education and training providers that are all striving to expand the flexible learning options available to their clients.

There is considerable evidence to suggest that many learners that are enrolled in distance education and training require support and interaction with teachers/tutors and their peers in order to complete their studies successfully. POEM providers are providing that service for a distinctive group of students in flexible, supportive environments. They are:

- Engaging and maintaining young people in learning activities.
- Providing intensive literacy and numeracy support.
- Providing ongoing learning support as well as addressing other personal and social needs that get in the way.
- Enabling connections to be made and peer group support to develop between young people who are now engaged in positive learning activities that serve their life/work goals.

With governments promoting the critical importance of lifelong learning in order for people to maintain their employability, and evidence that suggests that current enrollees in continuing formal education are largely tertiary educated, the chances of POEM participants embarking on a lifelong learning pathway, without such intensive support is highly unlikely.

### 3.3 Provision of Youth Support

All POEM providers are required to identify the areas where young people need support and to find appropriate ways of helping people address any issues that are likely to interfere with their learning.

Many participants need assistance with health issues, which include drug and alcohol or other substance abuse; sexual health; mental health and personal hygiene. Providers report that clients need support with culturally specific issues; behavioural issues, including anger management. Young people are also being supported to deal with peer relationship issues, including isolation and bullying; family breakdown and domestic violence; homelessness; poverty/financial distress; and low self esteem often associated with low literacy and numeracy skills and a history of failure at school. Others need support with pregnancy and parenting.

It is obvious that there are few overnight solutions for many of the circumstances or problems which participants face. Importantly, however, through POEM projects, young people are being granted time and intensive support to deal with issues that cannot be 'put off' or dealt with in isolation from their educational programmes.

Providers all report strategies that are designed to strengthen the resilience of young people and to strengthen protective factors for them.

For example, young people are supported to establish personal goals, including learning goals through their LPPs. They are offered a range of activities to develop their social/life skills. Keynote speakers are invited to address participants and consistently, providers report that they hold workshops on a broad range of issues – drug and alcohol education probably being the most prevalent. As mentioned previously, some providers have developed learning materials that provide opportunities for the exploration of these issues as young people are developing other skills. Informal activities such as cooking, not only develop healthy

eating habits, but also ensure that young transient people enjoy a healthy, substantial meal.

In those cases where educators and other professionals, which include youth support workers, a midwife, drug education workers, social workers and counsellors, work alongside one another in the classroom/learning environment, a case management approach is adopted. For example, Oasis Youth Support and WAYS (FLOW) have developed a co case management model using other staff or other relevant agencies to assist in addressing a range of serious personal support issues, including chronic homelessness; substance abuse; mental health and legal issues. The Onkaparinga arm of Southern Vocational College are involved in case-management on a weekly basis addressing issues that participants identify as barriers to gaining success. The on-site youth development officer also participates in group activities and connects young people with support services and networks.

Wyong Workways has adopted a slightly different approach. They provide appropriate support, including a youth support worker, who is available three days a week, but ensure that personal issues are dealt with outside the learning environment. Their philosophy aims to prevent young people from using their issues and avoidance habits and behaviours as an excuse for non-achievement.

At Beenleigh's SMART programme the co-ordinator and youth support worker focus on relationship building and team building support activities and the provision of individual assistance as issues are revealed. Young people are encouraged to utilise the external educational support services of the Brisbane School of distance Education to access the support of teachers.

Rivskills comment that many of the life skills and personal development issues can be dealt with through learning programmes and have accessed specialist trainers and support workers in the areas of anger management; dealing with depression; fitness, bullying and nutrition. Both Joondalup and VIP Plus, engage students in ethical discussions on the development of social skills and justice issues.

At Mildura, the orientation process, the integration of life skills into the curriculum content, individual needs assessments and linkages into local support services are the means by which support is provided.

In addition to ongoing practical support in the form of transport, some projects report providing emergency assistance for clients with accommodation, legal support and food. For example, YEC reports the importance of assuming an advocacy role for some POEM participants who do not have the patience or communication skills to deal unassisted with housing agencies. Joondalup also reports that participants whose enrolment is 'on hold' continue to be supported by project staff with accommodation support, visits to the home, and support with legal obligations.

In Mildura, young people have designed a POEM card that lists all the resources available to them including contact for the designated police

officer and other out of hours contacts. The idea grew out of a police initiative, which aimed to divert young people from the justice system. As well as a support mechanism for young people, it involved community mapping and the development of literacy skills.

A number of projects including the East Gippsland ACDEP, Alice Outcomes and Papunya employ (or in the case of Boggabilla and Toomelah plan to employ) Indigenous staff who, in addition to their professional role, also serve as role models for young people. At Murgon, the POEM project brings instructors from Cherbourg community into the project for cultural learning to assist participants to improve their life skills through realisation of their own identity.

TAFE and tertiary students from a wide range of disciplines (IT, Social Work, Social Sciences, Youth Work) have undertaken professional practice placements with many POEM projects in order to provide additional support for participants.

Volunteers are also engaged to increase the opportunities for one on one adult support. The Hallett Cove Youth Pathways CHOICES estimates that around 900 volunteer hours had been contributed to the support of young people at the end of its first quarter.

Both casual tutors and mentors from a wide range of cultural backgrounds including Indigenous people have undertaken workshop training and are supporting the POEM project at Leichhardt.

Projects vary in the extent to which they access assistance through outside support agencies. Projects such as Rivskills, Joondalup, Wellington Shire group, and Cooktown lean more towards providing day to day support themselves and where necessary calling in/referring students to specialist support services, such as Department of Justice, Centrelink, Drug Education and Support Services, and JPET as required.

For example, at VIP Plus, the project manager engages on a daily basis with young people who are struggling, and through informal counselling and conversation motivates them to work through any difficulties. Where necessary, and where clients are willing, they are referred to appropriate outside agencies.

At the POEM pilot in Narromine, where services are more limited, support is provided by the sole POEM staff member – who offers support by way of a yarn – and less frequently refers students to the Aboriginal Health Educator or the Outreach Youth Counsellor.

On the other hand, in the youth focused area of Hallett Cove, CHOICES supports young people to engage with other youth specific services such as Second Story Health, Family and Youth Services, and Centrelink using a case management process.

At Murgon all 20 students were introduced to external services such as the Cherbourg Medical Service and the Community Health Agency. Alice Outcomes reports that extensive use is made of community health, accommodation, Career and Transition (CAT), and Reconnect Services, as

well as Deadly Mob mentors to minimize the impact of personal and family issues on young people's educational progress.

At Papunya, where young people are dealing with solvent abuse issues, community workshops have been offered by the POEM pilot to foster a whole-of-community approach to dealing with these issues.

The Dale Young Mothers Program provides child care facilities for clients wishing to complete their education and offers them the opportunity to develop their parenting skills with assistance from the qualified staff at the on-site crèche and visiting mothercraft nurses.

In their first quarterly report, POEM providers were required to provide an estimate of the time that had been devoted to various activities. When averaged, around 30% of time had been allocated to personal development; life skills; and attending to individual issues as compared to education and training activities which consumed 42% of project time, on average. It should be noted that there is, however, enormous variation between projects and these proportions give a broad indication only.

### 3.4 Local Support Networks

An overarching objective of the pilots is to drive the development of sustainable local support networks that focus on providing joined up support for young people. The beginnings of such community networks can be seen in the sharing of responsibility for resourcing the projects. On average, DEST's financial contribution comprises around 60% of the overall contribution, with the remaining 40% coming from community partners (including lead agencies, who on average contribute half of the community's contribution).

Many projects suggest that their POEM pilot is bringing agencies together and that more open relationships are developing between agencies. At Leichhardt, it is reported that the Police Youth Liaison officer and the School Liaison Officer have become an invaluable net to catch the young people currently leaving school. Others suggest that agencies are coming on board as they see the demonstrable benefits for participants.

Victoria University reports that the benefits of support networks are being recognised in Western Melbourne after a period where competitive tensions closed communication channels. The POEM project Steering Committee had resolved to create a directory of support services in the Western suburbs of Melbourne, which it planned to have completed and online by the end of 2002.

Centacare in Narromine suggests that the POEM steering committee brings together agencies such as the school, the shire, and the police in new and important ways. At Murgon, the support network is growing from a long-held idea, as the 'machinery' of regular meetings and interagency links are developing through POEMs.

Community partnerships provide strong support for the Onkaparinga Pathways pilot. A local church collects food for the breakfast programme and volunteers provide support for staff and young people. Local government provides the venue and significant resources. In addition, the pilot is supported in its attempts to develop a network by the City of Onkaparinga Youth Roundtable, which employs a project officer to develop an integrated support network for young people at risk.

Anglicare, in the ACT attributes many of the shifts in their thinking are happening in response to the fresh input and contacts that are being made. Initially their focus was on students gaining a year 10 certificate in order to return to mainstream schooling. They are now expanding their thinking to encompass a wider range of learning pathways.

Rivskills reports that the POEM pilot has been an important vehicle for strengthening partnerships with a number of schools, the Department of Education and Training and community and adolescent health services.

As a new project, jss.comet at Joondalup is bringing together the neighbouring cities of Wanneroo, Joondalup, the local high school, juvenile justice and community development staff and the local TAFE college in support of the district's disconnected youth.

Alice Outcomes reports that the existing well-established local support network for young people continues to work in a cohesive way. Additionally, an Alternative Education Programmes group has formed to keep track of the small group of students who drift from one programme to another.

The POEM pilot has brought together staff at Victoria University who were all preparing young people at risk in a variety of ways but were previously unaware of each other's activities.

Dale Young Mothers has negotiated MOUs with Family and Community Services; OTEN; Samaritans; Centacare; Family Care Cottage; Newcastle Family Support Services; and St Philip's Christian College and reports that new contacts and relationships are being made through participation in Inter-agency meetings.

The Hallett Cove Pathways CHOICES programme attributes its success to its active engagement of community partners. It suggests that it is critical to acknowledge the expertise that each partnering organisation brings. In so doing a ripple effect is created that increases motivation and involvement. The development of a local support network, however, has not been without its difficulties, with a number of 'bureaucratic' boundary issues having to be overcome.

Other projects suggest that the relationships being built between young people themselves are an important first step in the development of a youth support network. Young people are forming their own networks that support their engagement with learning and with their communities.

Forum discussions suggest that networks have tremendous potential for disseminating information, for planning, and for enabling participants to

easily tap into services. But on the negative side establishing and maintaining such networks were considered to be time-consuming activities and there are many problems around the sharing of information between agencies. Not surprisingly, there is a view that it is harder to get partnerships working in urban areas than in rural areas.

Some frustrations were also expressed at the forum about central agencies that have devolved responsibility for the provision of joined up services to communities when their own policies and practices do not reflect such an approach. Providers at the local level therefore have to step around barriers (eg regarding education enrolment requirements or POEM participant eligibility for payments) by relying on the goodwill of individuals and personal networks and contacts to effect joined up service provision. Their activities are not facilitated by formal protocols that are in place between central agencies.

Similarly, some pilots reported that competitive tendering processes made partnerships quite difficult. In a number of instances where two agencies had competed for POEM funding and one had been successful, it was difficult to develop collaborative working relations.

There was mixed support for the concept of the steering committee. It was clear that it was beneficial to some projects, but in other programmes, which already had an extensive partnership network, and fruitful and productive links to other local organisations, the requirement for a steering committee was perceived of as the imposition of an additional layer of 'bureaucracy' over an already-efficient and effective system of community collaboration. This was seen as counter-productive and negative in its impact. There was some support for the notion that using an MOU allowed for a degree of co-operation at the management level. Others were skeptical of its worth and its practical impact.

Some forum participants spoke of the precarious nature of networks between agencies that were themselves subject to the vagaries of short term funding arrangements, and competitive tendering. Some providers felt that this produced a level of vulnerability and risk that interfered with effective and coherent service provision for young people.

Where providers already have strong youth networks, there has been less motivation/need to broaden their networks. This insularity may be shortsighted in terms of maintaining their activities beyond the pilot phase. The development of a strong youth support network that includes education and training authorities and local business associations is perhaps the most direct route to ongoing funding. The Programme Development Worker at BAYS, for example, is actively building relationships and developing a business plan to sustain a community-owned, partnership outreach education programme with government and corporate support. Other projects are engaged in targeted promotional activities to spread the word about their projects and to enlist wide-based community support.

The virtual school model in SA is dependent on the strength of its network. The virtual school is expanding its reach across Adelaide and beyond and forming a youth support network for young people who are

'connected' to the juvenile justice system. This has brought together a supportive group of service providers who share resources, and problem-solve any difficulties. It has not been without its difficulties, and the project's current action research focus is to improve the sharing of information between agencies, without breaching young people's rights to privacy.

### 3.5 Reengagement of Participants with Mainstream Education

At the end of the first quarter, the issue of re-engagement of young people was not the primary focus for many pilots, especially those pilots that were establishing, and in a few cases struggling to establish, completely new services. A total of 92 participants exited from POEM projects during the 1st quarter. Those exits that are documented in the first quarterly report show the following destinations:

- Employment, including traineeships and apprenticeships
- Returning to school
- Placement into CDEP
- Referral to alcohol and rehabilitation programmes
- Planned time out
- Referral to an anger management programme
- Referral to JPET service providers
- Referral to a Young Mother's Program
- Enrolment in TAFE including enrolments in courses for Indigenous students
- Taken into care
- Juvenile detention
- Relocation to another area

Many providers report that they maintain contact with students who have exited either through their community networks or through follow up phone calls and in some cases visits. Many rural projects spoke of the limited range of exit points and options in small rural communities.

#### 3.5.1 Establishing protocols with local schools

Forum participants spoke of the importance of having protocols established with mainstream schools so that they are committed to supporting young people who elect to return. Alice Outcomes suggests the delicacy of the situation, when they report that it only takes one 'knock' at school for returning students to lose their developing trust in adults, so it is critical to minimize or manage this risk for returning students. The VIP Plus Project, for example, will only refer Indigenous students to those TAFE Colleges that offer effective Aboriginal support services.

In terms of re-engagement, it is interesting to note that most young POEM participants are actually engaged in recognized mainstream learning activities through their involvement in POEM projects. They are simply not located within the mainstream institutions.



## 4 Project Snapshots

The following snapshots do not attempt to capture the complexity of the activities of each pilot project at this early stage of the evaluation process. Detailed case studies will be developed and presented in the final evaluation report, following visits to the projects and consultation with all relevant stakeholders including participants and community partners. These snapshots simply summarise quantitative information provided by the pilots on their progress towards meeting their primary objective of engaging young people in learning activities.

### 4.1 Alice Springs High School (Alice Outcomes)

With an overall target of 90 participants in both 2002 and 2003, at the end of the first quarter Alice Outcomes had assisted 108 disconnected clients, and an additional 10 part-time or intermittently engaged participants. Males predominated and 51% of participants were Indigenous students. At the end of the first quarter, 15 students had completed a LPP with an estimated 80% to have done so by end 2002. A high 55% of project time had been allocated to education and training activities. Thirty one certificates of completion or NTOEC statements of attainment had been recorded in the areas of mathematics; career education; design and construction; arts in the community and first aid. Of the 31 participants who had exited, 11 had gone on to full time employment, four to school, and three to other training programmes. Two had left to have a baby and several had left town. A further two students had been asked to leave the project.

### 4.2 Anglicare: St Saviours Neighbourhood Centre (Youth Education Programme)

At quarter's end, 15 students had been engaged and enrolled, against the stated target of 60 participants over the life of the project. The project anticipated catering for Indigenous young people and those from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, and at the end of the first quarter 20% of the total number enrolled were Indigenous students and 27% were from CALD backgrounds.

Nine of the 17 initial enrolments had completed an LPP. Units in maths, science, computing, English, art, and sport and recreation attracted 16 participants who completed the units of study. Education activities comprised 55% of the group's total activity. Personal development and life skills work comprised 10% of activities, with sport and recreation taking 12%, and responding to individual issues 15% of available time. Two participants had exited the programme during the first quarter - one due to relocation, and one was asked to leave due to violence and drug issues.

#### 4.3 Beenleigh Area Youth Service (the Smart programme)

The project targets 100 students over its life, and of the 18 participants who were referred during the first quarter, eight were enrolled in the project. The number of young people enrolled in this project will increase when a new purpose built youth space is completed at Eagleby as access to this space will increase the project capacity. With the project's strong focus on building relationships and team/group skills, seven participants were involved in the planning of a group art project to decorate the walls; four in garden building and maintenance and six in the formulation of a group working contract. Access to accredited education is arranged through the Brisbane School of Distance Education. At the end of the first quarter, one student had completed accredited numeracy and literacy subjects; two had completed maths subjects; and one a science subject. No students had exited.

#### 4.4 Cooktown State High School (P-POEMs - Peninsula Partnership Outreach Education Model)

The geographically dispersed pilot at Cooktown reported that 44 Indigenous students were being assisted at the end of the first quarter. While precise numbers are not available, students were undertaking accredited maths and English modules; and groups of up to 12 students were engaged in informal sewing, cooking and health activities.

#### 4.5 Centacare Narromine (the Alternate School)

At the end of the first quarter, the Centacare pilot had assisted 39 young people who were tenuously connected or at risk of early school leaving. Of these, 97% were Indigenous young people. Initial enrolments had increased fivefold by the end of the quarter. The main focus of this project is on Education (50%), with personal development (20%) and life skills (19%) having a strong focus.

#### 4.6 Joondalup Youth Support Services (jyss.comet)

From an initial enrolment of six students, the project assisted 13 people during the first quarter. A total of nine students were undertaking accredited CGEA modules; four students had completed a basic resuscitation certificate; and all participants were developing LPPs. Up to 13 students had been involved in informal shopping and cooking learning activities and word processing skills, eight were developing job search skills, resume preparation and goal settings. Weekly drug education sessions were attended by most students, as were recreational activities. Four participants had exited, with one returning to school and three withdrawing.

#### 4.7 Leichhardt Community Youth - Inner Skill (POEMs)

With an overall project target of 38 participants, at the end of the first quarter, 38 students had been assisted. 83% of participants were Indigenous youth, and a high proportion (90%) of all participants were homeless. At the end of the first quarter there were nine reported exits from the pilot. A total of 16 enrolments in Maths, nine in Media/Communication modules, 15 in Career modules and 12 in computing modules all resulted in recognised outcomes. Large numbers of students were engaged in business studies and music production studies that would continue in the second quarter.

#### 4.8 Mildura Rural City Council (reality.com)

With an overall target of assisting 180 students during the pilot, at the end of the first quarter, 10 students had been assisted, with only one student exiting because they had left the community. Participants were engaged for an average of 28 hours per week. All nine students had completed modules from the Cert II in Business; the Cert II in Retail Operations, Hospitality Operations; as well as a language and literacy module; a career planning module and first aid. The pilot was considering moving to a continuous intake model, in order to accommodate growing waiting lists.

#### 4.9 Murgon State High School (the Annexe)

Twenty Indigenous young people had been assisted by the Murgon POEM pilot at the end of the first quarter. (The overall target for the project was 21 students). Five students had exited and 5 students were on a wait list. Fourteen year olds predominated. While exact numbers need to be clarified, the project reports that exits have been few, and destinations have included returning to school, to detention and leaving the area. Attendance rates of 75% daily in a five day a week programme were reported and 20 students were engaged in computer skills; literacy skills, numeracy skills, sport and recreation and art activities due to be completed and certified at the end of 2002.

#### 4.10 Open Training and Education Network - Boggabilla/Toomelah

The OTEN POEM pilot experienced some difficulties in its establishment. It has been agreed that a fundamental barrier has been that the pilot was not driven directly by the Boggabilla and Toomelah Indigenous communities and nor was it promoted by the educational community at Boggabilla. The initial orientation workshop was poorly attended and served to create confusion rather than engagement. As a consequence of OTEN's reflections on the process to date, they are currently renegotiating the scope of the pilot with DEST.

#### 4.11 Papunya School (reconnecting WestMacs youth)

Staffing changes (between the development of the original project plan and the commencement of the project) contributed to a slow start for the project. However, at the end of the first quarter six young people were engaged in art activities and five in music activities. This represents a major achievement given the prevalence of documented substance abuse and the extreme and long term disconnection of potential participants.

#### 4.12 Rivskills Inc (Rivskills Inc POEMs project)

With an overall target of providing assistance to 40 participants, at the end of the first quarter Rivskills had assisted 10 young people, seven of whom had completed a Learning Pathways Plan. Students were involved in a range of informal and recognised learning activities. Six students had successfully completed a module in workplace safety procedures and the following enrolment numbers were recorded in areas where students were working towards having their skills formally recognised: eight enrolments in general maintenance and another eight in grounds maintenance. There were 16 enrolments in word processing and computer operation modules, alongside a range of non-accredited learning activities including career planning. Two participants had withdrawn – one was referred to JPET, and the other had issues related to criminal activity to deal with.

#### 4.13 Safer WA Committees (the VIP Plus project)

From an initial enrolment of 13 students, and an estimated target of 20 students over the life of the project, at the end of the quarter, VIP Plus had reached 75% of its target. Over half of the participants were Aboriginal students and a third were homeless. All participants completed an LPP. Eleven statements of attainment in Levels 1-3 CGEA Maths; 11 in Reading and Writing; 15 in oral communication and 12 statements of attainment in general curriculum options had been awarded to participants at the end of the first quarter. Of the 26 students assisted, 11 had exited by the end of the first quarter. Of these, two had returned to school; three had gone on to TAFE courses; another to a private RTO and one to full time employment. Five students had withdrawn and one student who had been asked to leave was placed immediately into another full time alternative programme.

#### 4.14 Oasis Youth Support Network and Waverley Action for Youth Services (Go with the FLOW)

With an overall target of 120, the two arms of the FLOW (Flexible Learning at Oasis and Ways) project had assisted 22 participants by the end of the first quarter. The enrolments went from 0 to 22 participants, and with three exits, at the end of the quarter 19 students remained. Another intermittently engaged student was provided with literacy and numeracy support. All 22 students had been involved in developing their own learning pathway plan and milestone certificates had been awarded

to students undertaking accredited modules in literacy (22); numeracy (22); personal effectiveness (12); computers (22); drama (10); drawing (10) and child care (4). Of the three students who exited, one had returned to school, another to other education and one to a community activity.

#### 4.15 Southern Vocational College

This project consists of 2 sub-projects: Hallett Cove Youth Pathways CHOICES and Onkaparinga Pathways.

##### 4.15.1 Hallett Cove Youth Pathways CHOICES

With an overall target of 80 students, CHOICES had assisted 22 students; 20 students had completed a learning pathways plan; and 19 students were enrolled at the end of the first quarter. Accredited activities in the areas of maths, art, design, work education, and English had attracted large enrolments and 100% completion rates. The project allocated considerable time in the first quarter to developing life skills (22%), addressing students' individual issues (21%), and personal development (18%). One student had withdrawn; one student had gone on to a TAFE course and another to full time employment.

##### 4.15.2 Onkaparinga Pathways

As a result of POEMS funding, Onkaparinga Pathways has grown from offering a part-time programme for 12 participants to a full time programme for 20 participants. 25% of the project's target rate of 80 was achieved at the end of the first quarter with 20 students having been assisted and with 17 enrolments at the end of the quarter. All students had completed an LPP. Up to 12 students were engaged in accredited modules in the areas of career preparation; numeracy and literacy; health; and interpersonal skills development. At the end of the first quarter, three students had exited - one because they obtained a job; another due to personal problems, and the third has re-entered.

#### 4.16 St Philips Christian Education Foundation: (Dale Young Mothers Program)

With an initial enrolment of 15 students, at the end of the first quarter 16 students were enrolled. Eighteen students had been assisted and two enrolled students had exited the programme. One young mother withdrew and the second continued in a full time TAFE Course. All students had completed an LPP and three students had successfully completed Preliminary HSC Maths and one student Preliminary HSC Drama. The project's main focus was on education (35%), with another 15% of project time devoted to each of the areas of life skills, personal development and employability skills. With an overall target of 47 students, the project had achieved almost a third of its target by the end of the first quarter. Another 12 students had participated in POEM excursions.

#### 4.17 Victoria University (TOTEM – the one and the many)

This project assisted 15 students during the first quarter. With an overall target of 50, the end of the quarter saw 13 students enrolled with two students having exited. The participants had not yet prepared LPPs but they all have been urged to consider their options for next year. In the first quarter, the project had a strong focus on orientation (allocated 50% of project time); 20% had been allocated to the development of life skills and 10% to personal development.

#### 4.18 Wyong Workwise (POEMs)

15 of the 21 young people referred were assisted this quarter, and 11 participants were enrolled at the end of the quarter. Eight students had completed a learning pathways plan. Sixteen students who were undertaking a range of accredited writing modules had successfully completed them; 11 had completed reading units; six completions in numeracy modules were recorded, with the remainder close to completion. Of the four exiting students, one had gone on to other education; one to a community activity and two students had been asked to leave, with no post POEM activity evident.

#### 4.19 Youth Education Centre YEC Outreach Education Model)

At the end of the first quarter, 14 full time students were enrolled at the Flexi-centre, with a waiting list of four students. Nineteen participants were assisted during the quarter, with 18 participants having completed an LPP – 15 with the involvement of a parent/significant other. Six students had completed maths modules, three had completed accredited first aid modules, and one student had attained competence in a literacy unit. Five students had prepared resumes. Education and training components comprised 46% of activities, life skills and personal development accounted for 26% of activities, employability skills comprised 10%, and sport and recreation comprised 12%. Four participants had left with a pre-arranged destination; three students had withdrawn and two students had been asked to leave.

Additionally, at any one time during the first quarter, up to 60 young people were involved part-time or intermittently through the virtual school – with their contact ranging from 1–30 days depending on their circumstances and goals. At the end of the first quarter, a total of 126 young people had been engaged in a range of short courses (including obtaining a motor vehicle, skid steer or forklift license); and a range of other activities.

#### 4.20 Wellington Shire Council

The project consists of four sub projects, each of which is trialing a different approach. Around 90 participants are targeted for assistance during the life of the pilot.

#### 4.20.1 Adult Community Education Sale (ACES)

At ACES, groups of 10-12 young female students, who are at risk of disengaging from secondary schooling are being re-engaged off-campus. At the end of the first quarter, it was reported that the project was running smoothly. Partnerships with a variety of agencies had been successfully developed. There are good attendance rates and enthusiastic participation in a mind, body and spirit programme. No one has been withdrawn or exited.

#### 4.20.2 East Gippsland Aboriginal Community

The aim of the project is to develop enthusiasm and motivation in Indigenous youth to enable them to effectively access and manage their own learning through exploration of the Information Technology. At the end of the first quarter, significant difficulties in engaging young people were reported. Six students had been intermittently engaged in introductory activities. Subsequently, with the appointment of an Indigenous Project Manager, 15 young people have been attracted to the project, and it is reported that they are growing in confidence daily.

#### 4.20.3 Lakes Entrance Community Health Outreach

At the end of the first quarter 11 young people had been engaged in learning through undertaking modules of the Furniture Making Certificate. Only one student had exited with an unreported pre-arranged destination.

#### 4.20.4 Bairnsdale Adult Community Education (BACE)

At BACE, a practical hands-on programme attracted 11 young people, seven of whom were enrolled at the end of the first quarter. Five had completed an LPP. Between 5-6 students achieved statements of attainment on completion of career preparation and literacy and numeracy modules. At the end of the first quarter, four young people had exited from the programme – two of whom had left the community, one had returned to school and another had moved on to full-time employment. Transport difficulties were cited as a major difficulty in maintaining engagement.

### 4.21 Achievements

At the end of the first quarter the projects are reporting early outcomes, which are in line with those envisaged by the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce.

- A large number of students are working to achieve learning goals that they have articulated in their learning pathways plans. Once engaged in the pilots, most students are turning up on time and attending regularly and enthusiastically. Some pilots report

that a spin off effect is that young siblings of POEM participants are attending mainstream school more regularly.

- A significant number of young people are developing their literacy and numeracy skills and having their competence recognised through CGEA certification or other foundation certificates.
- Most young people are undertaking accredited education and training programmes while enrolled in the projects; some have already exited POEM projects and successfully re-entered school, or enrolled in TAFE courses offered in mainstream Institutes. Some students have accessed full or part-time work opportunities after participating in the programme.
- Project staff and young people themselves report that participants are developing life skills; and developing links with other young people engaged in learning activities.
- All students are being assisted to address personal issues and are being made aware of the range of youth support services in their communities.
- There are reports that some clients are beginning to develop strong group bonds, and were requesting logos, signs, and symbols of group identification be developed, including, in one programme, a request from clients for a uniform to be developed.
- Respect is developing for staff, and visitors to the projects.
- The number of referrals including self-referrals is growing as agencies and potential participants are receiving positive feedback about young people's experiences and achievements.
- Services are working together and starting to develop protocols that will 'embed' their new working arrangements into ongoing practice.

As mentioned previously, we have not consulted young people at this stage of the project. However, feedback from young people and their families that have been reported in quarterly reports and phone calls with providers suggests that:

- Young people are expressing their appreciation for the support, respect and attention they are receiving in the adult learning environments of POEM pilots. New friendships are forming between POEM participants.
- Young people experience relatively quick turn around in their lives through participating in POEM projects are being accepted back into schools from which they had previously been expelled and where it had been made clear that they would not be welcomed back under any circumstances.



- Parents are reporting that police visits have become less in some homes. Though one pilot reports that students are continuing to have problems with the justice system on weekends and school holidays.
- Young people are proud of their involvement in the pilots; are establishing realizable learning goals and are proud of their achievements. Extremely introverted students are participating enthusiastically.
- Parents are reporting dramatic changes in their children that are resulting in happier home environments.
- Project partners are noticing new aspirations in participants that were previously classified as 'difficult to serve clients'.

In the words of one provider,

*Alongside early difficulties, including episodes of violence and abuse, as the pilot has gained momentum there have also been inspiring episodes of courage, pride, success and joy.'*

## 4.22 Ongoing Challenges

The following reported challenges will be explored more fully and reported on in the final evaluation.

### 4.22.1 Centrelink Payments

Under the old Austudy rules, students need to be enrolled in a recognized institution. In the planning stage of the pilots, it was discovered that any change to this requirement needed a ministerial instrument. Because this was a long and involved process, discussions with FaCS and Centrelink resulted in agreement that involvement in a POEM pilot should be deemed an approved activity for jobseekers. While this resolved issues for Youth Allowance payments, it did not resolve issues for those seeking Abstudy. As a consequence, the eligibility of students for payments had to be negotiated locally with Centrelink. This resulted in some difficulties and a more universally applicable solution will need to be found should the projects proceed beyond the pilot phase.

### 4.22.2 Duty of Care Issues

Concerns about legal duty of care were raised at the forum. While this concept is frequently used in discussion, all staff were in consensus that it was not possible to find out exactly what this duty of care was, or what was and was not acceptable under duty of care rules.

There was a strong opinion in some participants that it was counterproductive and foolish to attempt to ban smoking, for example. The client group does already smoke, by and large. They are not likely to

quit smoking in order to participate. Smoking would take place in the grounds regardless of the rule structure imposed, and yet they were breaching duty of care requirements if they allowed participants to smoke.

Participants felt that there was some hypocrisy on this issue when no breach of care was involved when young people's detachment from the educational system had them largely spending their time on the streets, smoking, drinking, and taking drugs as they pleased.

#### 4.22.3 Age Requirements for Enrolment in TAFE and other VET Courses

Working with students under 15 years of age presented some challenges, both in terms of duty of care responsibilities and in terms of their ineligibility to enrol in preparatory VET programmes.

#### 4.22.4 Evaluation Questions

A number of questions that have not been considered at this early stage will also be explored as the evaluation proceeds. These include:

What constitutes a realistic outcome for participants? Is returning to school a realistic option for all participants?

Can we draw any conclusions about how long it takes in a POEM project before young people are ready for the next step on their pathway – be it work, mainstream education or training?

What is known about the young people who do not fully engage and withdraw from the projects?

These and a number of questions contained in the evaluation plan will also be explored

## 5 The CAT Pilots

In response to *Footprints to the Future* the Commonwealth government initiated Career and Transition (CAT) pilots to assist in achieving an important taskforce goal of providing all young people with access to professional career advice, ongoing assistance with transition planning, and effective, relevant and appropriate career and transition support in school and/or in local community settings.

### 5.1 CAT Guidelines

CAT pilots work across a number of schools and regions in all States and the Northern Territory. Their services are targeted at all young people between the ages of 13 and 19 years with some initiatives focusing on young people at risk of not making a successful transition. All projects are required to:

- employ qualified and experienced CAT Advisers to provide a dedicated service to support young people (in the pilot cohort) with career and transition information, planning, guidance and advice;
- design and implement Learning Pathways Plans that are flexible to meet the individual needs of each young person;
- assist young people to prepare their Learning Pathways Plans and include parents, teachers and significant others in the process;
- network with existing organisations and individuals providing transition support for young people to develop a more cohesive transition support system for young people; and
- explore methodologies for tracking the transitions of young people for 18 months post-school.

## 6 Key Programme Elements/Deliverables

The CAT projects are testing the difference that can be made to young people's transitions through school and beyond school to further education, training and work through the provision of dedicated career and transition services at various stages of their lives.

Each pilot is required to report on the strategies that they have developed to test/trial some of the essential elements of career and transition support system proposed by the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce.

In total, the CAT projects had made progress towards achievement of their measurable targets, with 12 983 or 30% of the projected 43 726

participants receiving CAT advice or information by the end of the second quarter of operation; 5 630 LPPs had been completed by young people; and intensive assistance had been provided to 3 912 clients.

The comments in this following section, on the range of approaches that are being adopted to develop locally responsive enhanced career and transition support services for young people, are preliminary observations that are based on the reported activities of the pilots. As mentioned earlier in the report, the views of young people or other significant community stakeholders will be captured as the evaluation proceeds and the evaluators are able to visit all projects.

## 6.1 The CAT Adviser

### 6.1.1 Overview

The role of the CAT Adviser varies from project to project. However there are core career and transition support activities that all CAT Advisers are piloting. These are:

- the development of individual Learning Pathway Plans, which establish the young person's goals and outlines strategies to achieve them;
- the provision of enhanced career information and advice;
- professional development for teachers in schools to gain their support and engagement;
- methodologies for tracking and providing support to exiting students.

CAT Advisers also play a vital role in developing and maintaining linkages with and between schools, young people, parents, ECEF Work Placement Co-ordinators, JPET and JPP providers, Group Training Companies, Job Network Members, NACS and youth related services. To develop and enhance these links, advisers are encouraged to consult with and report back to young people and their families, schools and communities to develop transition support arrangements appropriate to local circumstances. They are encouraged to work with CPCs, and in partnership with other career and transition advisers and providers of youth related support services, and to work co-operatively with local ECEF Work Placement Coordinators to support effective partnerships between schools and industry.

Additional responsibilities are based on individual project responses to local needs and conditions. These include the provision of information on local labour markets and the facilitation of job search training; opportunities to work in partnership with ECEF to provide Structured Workplace Learning (SWL) and work experience; and additional support and referral for youth at risk.

CAT Advisers have worked energetically to establish the CAT Adviser role in their communities. In their establishment phase, they were primarily concerned to raise awareness of the important service that they offered, and its emergence as an issue of current national concern. There was a priority placed on establishing linkages with other service providers that could also contribute to a community-owned approach to the provision of career and transition support. It seems, however, that in some cases CAT Advisers located in schools have adopted a more insular approach. For most providers, the next priority was to undertake research and develop a workable Learning Pathways Plan, which in most cases has become the centerpiece of their activities. The provision of professional development for teachers, and the investigation of tracking methodologies was not an early priority for many projects.

At this early stage of the evaluation, it is not possible to make any assessment of the degree of measurable success that CAT Advisers are having. Quantitative data (number of young people using the service, number of LPPs signed off, number of self-referrals, etc) are available. However, the evaluation team needs to consult with other stakeholders and examine documented evidence collected by the projects, in order to assess the impact they are having. It will also be important, for example, to interview other career advisers operating within the schools (eg MIPS' personnel, career advisers, guidance officers and counsellors) to gain their perspective on how the CAT Advisers are value adding to the career and transition services in the region.

Many of the CAT Advisers' duties – trialing the LPPs and incorporating CAT activities into school curricula - were affected. In addition, some projects, particularly those that experienced teachers' hostility or lack of enthusiasm for the project in the initial stages, were not able to undertake a systematic professional development programme with teachers – and describe their efforts in this regard as largely being ad hoc as a result.

### 6.1.2 Young People's Access to a Dedicated CAT Adviser

On the basis of projected client numbers made by CAT projects, there is a ratio of approximately one CAT Adviser to every 1 440 clients, and an average of 1.3 CAT Advisers per project. There is, however, enormous variation in the caseload of advisers, and young people's access to a CAT Adviser varies from project to project. Some CAT Advisers are located onsite at schools with set visiting times for students; other CAT Advisers have larger districts to cover and students' access is restricted.

It is interesting to note that the 1999 Koder Report, which made a series of recommendations on careers advisory services in tertiary institutions in Australia, recommended that a minimum level of resourcing was one professional and one support staff for every 3 500 equivalent full time student units. Few tertiary institutions have achieved these recommended levels and a range of alternative strategies such as integrating programs into the curricula and increasing use of online delivery of services are being applied.

The nature of career and transition support for young people varies not only from State to State or from region to region, but from school to school in any one region. In order to understand the full impact of the role of a CAT Adviser, there would need to have been a full assessment of what existed prior to the pilot.

Some CAT Advisers had a thorough understanding of what already existed and had mapped this formally. Others believed they had informal insights based on their previous involvement with schools in the area.

Although many of the participating schools already had career counsellors, stand-alone career education units or career education integrated into curriculum outcomes, it seems that these activities were primarily targeted at the Year 10 cohort. Many schools did not have any career and transition strategies in place for students in Years 7- 9. And in the worse case scenarios, some schools had very little in the way of career guidance and transition support except for work experience and subject selection assistance for Year 10 students, and VET in School programmes for Years 11 and 12.

Regardless of what services existed prior to the CAT pilot, data on the number of students accessing their services suggests that there is a high demand for their services in all settings. However, given the variation in existing career service provision (without considering a range of other important local variables) it would be extremely difficult to write a duty statement that adequately encompasses the duties and the emphasis of CAT activities that have evolved.

### 6.1.3 Skills for the Role

Differences in approach have also emerged as a result of the differing backgrounds of the CAT Advisers recruited by the individual projects. Some have come to the CAT project with a strong background in career education while others have a background in transition support. These different perspectives are also reflected in the range of job titles adopted in individual projects eg Pathway Facilitator, CAT Adviser, Transition Adviser.

The development of an appropriate skill set for CAT Advisers is something requiring further consideration should Career and Transition Advisers (in some form) become part of a new national transition system. Identifying core competencies and qualities will ensure some consistency and assurance in a national system where different models of career and transition support will be needed to meet different regional and educational system requirements. Interestingly, at the Melbourne forum, when asked to nominate the essential skills of a CAT Adviser, many of the participants focused on the personal qualities of the CAT Adviser rather than the requisite skills and knowledge.

### 6.1.4 Engaging Young People

CAT Advisers have employed different strategies to engage with young people. An important first step has been to become visible in the school

community, especially if Advisers are not located at the school premises. Awareness raising strategies have included sending out letters outlining the purpose of the pilot, being introduced to students at school assemblies, at official launches (including BBQ lunch), handing out other CAT promotional materials such as brochures and fridge magnets, promoting the project in the local newspapers, via school newsletters, ringing parents, writing to or ringing school leavers or attending targeted parent groups and attending school and community events, meetings and activities. The Bridging the Gap, ASK and Lower Hunter mobile Careers caravans/units, with clearly marked signage are raising awareness of the pilot, and accessing students in multiple locations. The novelty and attraction of an environment that is not classroom based also has great appeal.

Other strategies include:

- Establishing rapport with young people through humour and demonstrating the relevance of the service.
- Orana has a Freecall CAT number, which may serve as the initial port of call for young people and parents.
- For those young people who have already left school CAT Advisers have been networking with JPP, JPET, TAFE and other community youth organisations/agencies to gain access to those clients.

For some of the projects that operate outside the school environment there have been real barriers to gaining access to students within schools. With the delay in getting the pilots up and running (half way through the school year in some cases), there have been difficulties presented in timetabling the CAT sessions.

Another significant barrier has been changing/shifting the culture of schools where career and transition activities are not valued. Without the commitment of teachers, career and transition activity will not be effectively followed up, thereby undermining sustainability. Feedback from projects (at the forum and in phone consultations) suggests that the change in school culture needs to be driven by the school upper management. Many projects have noted the importance of engaging first with the school principal, and there are several stories of projects coming 'unstuck' initially when that protocol was ignored or was difficult to achieve.

Involving young people from the outset in the development of LPPs and the CAT project has been vital in engaging the students. Many pilots set up a student committee at the outset. For example at Mercy College regular meetings are held with a student consultation group and the students receive minutes from these meetings. These students are also able to attend the CPC meeting (an approach that only a small number of projects have taken up).

Some projects see their LPP design and format as vital to engaging young people. There is a strong focus on using language targeted for young people, bright colours, photos and graphics in an attempt to make them

'user friendly'. For example, one school involved in North West Pathways pilot gives each student a folio to keep their ongoing CAT work (brochures, resumes etc) thereby instilling a sense of achievement and pride in their work.

Engagement strategies naturally will vary according to the client group, so systems have been developed to identify the different target groups. For example, at risk students are identified by the teachers or deputy principals, or may come to the project by 'self-referral'. For 'at risk students' there is a stronger need to establish trust and an ongoing relationship with the CAT Adviser. Ideally this occurs in smaller group sessions or on a one-on-one basis. Various approaches have been trialed. For example, at Orana there is an Indigenous Adviser employed with a background in helping students with literacy and numeracy issues. The environment is also set up to be non-threatening, and distinctive from the normal classroom.

At Swan Alliance the 'at risk' students meet weekly with the CAT Adviser at a designated classroom for coffee. The success of this strategy is reflected in the attendance figures going from 2 to 17 self-referrals. A number of projects have mentioned that having someone outside the education system instills greater trust and respect as young people see CAT Advisers as being professionals with more knowledge of the outside world (and South Burnett CTC, for example, had documented teacher feedback to this effect).

### 6.1.5 The Nature of Career and Transition Support

Career information, guidance and advice services are delivered in different ways. CAT Advisers, in assisting young people to explore options or set goals, either work with whole year cohorts, smaller groups organised and selected by teachers, or they provide one on one counselling or interviewing.

Information is delivered but provided using many resources – Internet career websites such as *myfuture*, using books such as *Job Guide*, computer software (career builder, OZJAC, Jigcaal, *career mate*), via Powerpoint, overheads or videos or presentations. Topics covered include apprenticeships, traineeships, further education (including help with applications), Defence Force careers, goal setting, planning, job seeking skills (including resume writing and interview skills), subject selection and useful contact addresses and online services. Some Advisers organize guest speakers from educational institutions or industry representatives, or accompany groups to work environments, or universities and TAFE Institutes, and refer students to other relevant services. Some projects also incorporate vocational testing into their interviews.

Delivery can be either onsite at the schools, at an outside agency, a caravan, or at another location, for example work experience excursions, and interstate trips (as was organized by NTCSA). CAT Advisers have also been involved in local projects such as career expos etc. informal interactions, such as chatting to students at lunch times, are also commonplace.



CAT activities are either delivered through stand alone classes or workshops, through interviews, as programmed delivery through other subjects such as school subjects (eg English, SOSE) or pastoral care/home groups. Some of the information is provided in a structured manner via the CAT workbook/LPP and some is delivered according to a set programme or workshop timetable. Other Advisers assess the needs of students and provide information accordingly.

There have been some barriers experienced in the mode of delivery, especially in the area of IT. Some projects have raised the frustration associated with gaining online connections and the priority afforded to upper school students for gaining access to computers. Others have suggested that some of the software in use in schools has limitations.

As noted above, the evaluators will attempt to find out how the projects are value adding to what already exists, and avoiding duplication of career and guidance services in some cases. Some projects see their role as purely value adding to existing services whereas others work in environments where there is little or no career and transition support. With many schools already having career advisers on staff, there was considered to be a danger that the CAT Adviser's role was perceived to be supplementary, and even a possible risk that in some cases the CAT Adviser would take on core work that had been covered by existing personnel eg VET coordinators. This is a key issue to be followed up by the evaluation team.

#### 6.1.6 Supporting Young People to Make a Smooth and Successful Transition to the Next Stage of Their Life

Most of the projects aim to equip young people with timely, current and relevant information regarding their career and transition options. As well as assisting young people to explore options and set goals, they support students in subject selections and interviews for university admission processes. Assistance is given to those applying for job vacancies and apprenticeships, or seeking assistance through employment and training programmes, and organising guest speakers from industry, university, TAFE and recruitment agencies. Some saw the need to provide exiting students with materials such as information guides of relevant 'help' numbers, CAT contact numbers (eg Lower Hunter distribute a fridge magnet). At Swan Alliance they are working on providing two sorts of material for exiting students: one is a substantial booklet and the other (aimed at young people at risk) is a wallet-sized card that contains essential youth services numbers.

Some projects have incorporated transition programmes into the school curriculum. For example, Mercy College is trialing a transition programme for Year 9 students prior to their transition to senior school. A culture that is supportive of student transitions is also growing at the school with a transition programme (outside the CAT pilot) being developed for Year 6 students. LPPs are another way that students' transitions are supported. At Marsden, the third stage of the LPP lists barriers that the students see to achieving their goals, and encourages them to list strategies for overcoming them.

Other projects had a stronger focus on providing more intensive transition support. For example, at Orana the CAT Adviser may also assist by contacting other organisations or arranging for further education, training and employment assistance. Some projects liaise closely with teaching staff and welfare groups regarding students needing additional assistance. At Lower Hunter, youth service agencies are working with the CAT Adviser to develop a school referral process for school leavers and at risk youth. Such strategies are only effective in the projects where there are successful partnerships in place.

### 6.1.7 Professional Development of Teachers

There has been wide ranging variation in how projects have approached this part of their role. The approach taken is largely determined by whether teachers are expected to deliver any component of the CAT programme.

Yorke Peninsula Employment has engaged a professional career counsellor to provide PD workshops to all career and student counsellors in the school cluster that the CAT project serves. ASK Employment and Training has put effort into building a community of support between career counsellors and other involved staff in the schools involved in the project. Practitioners are encouraged to share resources, important dates, new information and experiences with others in their community to enhance the knowledge base in an area where most schools are relatively isolated from one another. Additional support for the counsellor hub has been accessed from Adelaide-based professional counsellors and the Australian Careers Counsellors Association. The increased communication now ensures that everyone knows what opportunities and activities are available.

Some pilots have organised career awareness trips and seminars. For example, at Kangan Batman TAFE a series of four PD sessions were held at the TAFE restaurant. Other projects saw professional development as primarily an 'awareness raising' exercise where teachers watch classroom delivery, attend a careers caravan or receive informal advice regarding available resources. For example at Bridging the Gap, teachers were provided with a computer disc containing a list of Internet resources and a Work Studies teacher was helped to develop the school internet site to include more career education. Some projects used staff meetings as a way to disseminate information about the CAT project. Some projects brought external PD practitioners into the school and some noted the importance of having a combination of formal delivery and informal exchange.

One significant barrier to the professional development of teaching staff is the cost prohibitive exercise of paying teachers to attend PD sessions, something which had not been costed into many CAT budgets.

The evaluation team notes that in many cases, a PD programme may have alleviated some of the earlier barriers faced with teachers. Many teachers failed to understand the relevance or need to run a CAT pilot in their school. Some teachers were not comfortable with the perceived

extra workload that they may have to undertake. In cases where teachers did not value the philosophy of the CAT pilot, it is reported that there was often no follow up of the work of students.

Interviews with school staff as the evaluation proceeds will gain teachers' perceptions of the PD programmes made available to them.

#### 6.1.8 Development of Resources and Materials

In most cases, projects have developed support materials to be used in their CAT pilot. These have taken many forms, including power point presentations; lesson plans; websites; personality profile questionnaire; Pathway Information Guide or transition support directories; a range of 'How to' brochures for accessing various courses, learning strategies, skills identification; mock interview questions and advice; goal setting and planning exercises; 'exiting' students information kits; web addresses for online careers support and job search; fridge magnets, websites, posters; LPP folders; career displays; tracking form and an exit newsletter. Mercy College is developing a database to on which to record the tracking of students from Year 10 for 5 years through their post school choices.

While it is inevitable that some resources will need to be modified to suit particular situations, it is important that the limited resources that are being applied to Career and Transition support are not 'eaten' up in the production of career information resources. Given the massive development of resource materials at the federal and state levels (and with *myfuture* with links through to local level industry and occupational information), there is a real risk of duplication of career resources, with significant resource implications. It would seem wise, in future, to de-emphasise the '**production/creation**' aspect of the CAT Adviser's information role and to focus on the identification, location and management of available resources.

In addition, although many projects are looking to develop web based resources and deliver much of their CAT programme online, this was not supported by their comments that IT access in schools is cumbersome and not all students have easy access to computers.

The evaluation team is keen to explore these issues fully during site visits.

#### 6.1.9 Incorporation of CAT Activities into the School Teaching Framework

As discussed previously, with the CAT pilots beginning mid-year it was difficult to incorporate CAT activities into school curricula. As a result of these delays, many of the projects undertaking this deliverable will implement this in early 2003.

Some CAT Advisers consider that embedding the elements of the CAT programme into the curriculum is the only viable option for delivery (particularly if it is to be sustainable). Others consider that given staffing limitations and the lack of expertise (in relation to transition) of some

teachers, that CAT support must be delivered by an external agency. In the Marsden project, one school in the pilot favours embedding and the other school can only see stand alone workshops as a sustainable option. In Lower Hunter, schools can have radically different approaches to implementing the School to Work programme, thereby creating different delivery gaps from school to school.

Those projects that have already begun integration of CAT activities into school curricula are experiencing varying degrees of success. Southern Inland Queensland Area Consultative Committee, Woodridge State High School, Mable Park State High School and Brooks High School report success with incorporation. At NTCSA, some integration has occurred in the Year 8 and 9 core studies programme and a Year 10 career education subject. They have experienced difficulties when attempting to integrate CAT activities into the Year 11 and 12 programme as this is a more structured year with the focus being on the Northern Territory Certificate of Education. One of their suggested solutions is to integrate CAT activities into the upper school annual study camp or work experience. Mercy College is building in a special transition programme for 9 students, and the school is also trying to incorporate a set of employability skills into the curriculum.

Some projects have had success in incorporating LPPs into school subjects. For example, at Swan Alliance LPPs have been incorporated into Society and Environment and English curricula, and at Anzac Hill the LPPs are incorporated into the career framework and pastoral care programme at two different schools. Similarly, at Orana LPPs have been included in a study skills workshop.

Many CAT Advisers have commented that although the implementation of CAT information into curricula ensures the sustainability of CAT activities, it creates extra work for teaching staff and the need for a coordinating role remains. Without a CAT Adviser driving the project, the schools would not adopt a lot of these strategies. As NTCSA suggests, the CAT Adviser needs to work across the whole school and get all the behind the scenes work accomplished.

While it is acknowledged by many CAT Advisers that young people could complete their LPPs with the assistance of school personnel, there is also a fairly widespread belief that there is an advantage in having someone outside the school environment assisting young people with LPPs (in terms of securing the engagement of students). The Campbell Page Adviser believes that the LPP planning booklets and the website will be sustainable beyond the CAT pilot, although there needs to be more class time allocated to goal setting, skill identification and action planning.

It is likely that the significant variations in the caseloads of Advisers also contribute to these differing perceptions of what is and what is not achievable.

### 6.1.10 Summary

The role of the CAT Adviser is evolving in quite different ways. It is being shaped by the nature of other available career and transition services; the nature of student populations; the size of the region covered; and the previous career development activities of the CAT clients. In all aspects of the development and operation of the CAT pilots, the skills, knowledge and personal qualities of the Adviser must be at play in garnering support from an incredibly diverse set of interests.

CAT Advisers appear to have been drawn from two distinct fields, those with a background in career education and those with a transition support background. These choices clearly have a bearing on the nature of the CAT service offered. The impact of these differential approaches will be examined in more detail during the remainder of the evaluation.

## 6.2 Learning Pathways Plans

### 6.2.1 Overview

Across the 23 pilot projects the style, size, content and delivery medium of Learning Pathways Plans varies enormously. Some pilots have explored the use of IT in delivery (websites, power point presentation, e-copies of the LPP to ensure that student-owned hard copies had back-up and the information could not be lost), and some fostered student ownership by improving the attractiveness of the workbooks with personalized photos and entertaining graphics and captions. South Burnett for example, has developed a user friendly LPP incorporating some 'Real Game-like' considerations of career choices, including the financial implications of career and education decisions.

A total of 5 630 LPPs had been developed to the date of the second quarterly report, with 4 497 or 80% implemented with the direct assistance of a CAT Adviser.

Target audiences for the LPP covered different Year cohorts and included scope for parental participation, although Workways noted that students didn't always want parents to see their LPPs. In some cases the LPP proforma was developed with input from CPCs and student and parent representatives. Some LPPs were incorporated in a structured workbook of exploratory activities to be delivered to a whole year cohort in the classroom; others comprised a couple of pages that were designed to facilitate goal setting and pathways planning in a one-on-one interview with a client. These activities may or may not be supplemented or prefaced by other career guidance activities.

It is clear that the introduction of a nationally agreed framework, which specifies what and when career building competences (including personal management and skills for making transitions) would result in a reduction in the variation in the way that LPPs have been conceptualized. Given this variation, it is important that CAT activities in their responsiveness to local need are not adding to ad hoc provision.

## 6.2.2 Fitting the LPPs into a Career Development Framework

Only in a few cases where the CAT Adviser had a strong background in career education or counselling has there been a conscious attempt to develop the LPPs within an acknowledged career guidance framework. In the absence of a current nationally implemented career framework, projects like Marsden, Campbell Page and Anzac Hill developed their plans within an employability skills framework and an enterprise framework.

In order to identify and assess the career competencies that were being developed through the LPPs, we have considered them in light of the (soon to be updated) 1992 ACE framework that proposed four key areas where career outcomes/competencies should be developed. These areas are:

- knowledge and understanding of self;
- knowledge and understanding of the world of work;
- developing the capacity to analyse and plan career decisions; and
- developing the capacity to implement career decisions and manage work transitions.

Most projects tended to address the first objective, 'understanding self' in their plan. They approached this issue by providing opportunities for students to work through issues like personal strengths/weaknesses, goals, favourite subjects, personal achievements etc at the start of their plan. Approaches however differed substantially, with some projects asking students to list general interests, while others developed this area by including detailed questionnaires, and linking the preferences, aptitudes and abilities with occupation/industry options. Different formats were used to encourage students to identify their strengths - questionnaires, tick boxes etc.

There was greater divergence in terms of activities in the LPP that served to develop understanding of the world of work. Some LPPs made no mention of the world of work; others addressed it briefly by linking school-based activities like sport-to work based skills like organisational and teamwork skills. Others (eg Orana's plan for ex-students and Swan Alliance) had a well developed coverage of this issue in their plans. Not only were school activities linked to work skills, but their plan also mentioned career references (like *Job Guide*), and made reference to courses and work experience that may act as a bridge between school and paid employment.

The plans contained little information on the nature of work or the workforce in Australia. While some plans differentiated between work at different skill levels (traineeships versus degrees), not many defined issues related to demand or working conditions or the qualities and skills that were likely to predominate in certain occupations or industry sectors. Such exploration may be part of career programmes or students may have been referred to existing career information resources.

In the third key area, 'making career decisions', most projects linked favourite subjects or interests to specific career pathways to address this area. Many made some mention of specific sources of career information like websites, friends and family, careers advisers, etc. Some plans used open-ended questions such as, list your dream job, whereas others had graphs, timelines, and charts which covered stages in career decision making, as well as multiple entry paths into different careers at different levels of education.

For example, Workways Association Inc and Brooks High School provided a framework for addressing this issue, and Bridging the Gap mentioned the SMART approach where career goals had to be specific, measurable, achievable, realistic, and within a timeframe.

Finally, the fourth key area, 'implementing your career goals' was covered by strategies such as using work experience, or using mentors, friends or family etc as sources of support. Some organisations like Mable Park State High School mentioned barriers to achieving goals, and ways to overcoming them. Some organisations also provided a greater level of prompting and guidance in this area than others, by providing timelines and steps for implementing career goals and by giving students practical advice on interview strategies, and grooming skills.

In situations where the LPPs/workbooks are the sole or core career and transition activity for students there are many reasons to recommend the development of comprehensive workbooks that cover briefly the key career areas. This is not so where the LPP is but one part of a comprehensive career guidance strategy.

And, it should be noted that for students with literacy problems, an overwhelming expanse of information could be formidable. Some of the projects acknowledged this and as a result have simplified their workbooks and removed many of the activities for students (Marsden State High School, Swan Alliance). For other projects, students with low literacy had access to the same LPP format but with more intensive one-on-one counselling time with the CAT Adviser(s). For example at Orana, small groups of Indigenous students had intensive sessions with the Indigenous Adviser who has a background in working with students with literacy and numeracy problems.

### 6.2.3 Linking the LPP with Existing Career and Guidance Activities

If time had permitted, further exploration and identification of the nature of existing career and guidance services in local schools would have been useful for all CAT Advisers. Some projects (MTC Work Solutions) attested to an 'informal' prior knowledge based on their former interactions with the schools and North West Pathways through their involvement in a LLEN. Only a handful of projects undertook formal surveys/analyses of the availability of local career guidance activities (including education). One project (Bridging the Gap) sent out a survey to all participating schools to determine existing gaps and perceived areas of need in career guidance activities. Where there already existed a School to Work programme or MIPs, some of the projects devised an LPP to dovetail into

the existing programme, especially targeting the younger cohort. At Lower Hunter Vocational Education Partnership, the CAT Adviser had feedback from the schools to suggest that the CAT Adviser's work in Years 8 and 9 was great preparation for the School to Work programme in Year 10. Orana uses the existing DET workbook for Year 9s and adds an amended page to cover barriers. However, not all schools have been involved in these initiatives (eg Independent and Catholic schools) and the schools not participating in these programmes had to receive a different version of the LPP.

Sustainability of the LPP after the pilot seems to be largely dependent on the mode of delivery. Some (for example Springwood State High School and Campbell Page) focused much of their attention on achieving sustainability within the life of the project. In such cases the aim was to develop and embed the LPPs within the school programme (and within the curriculum), so that when the pilot finished, a sustainable approach to career and transition support was in place.

However, some projects expressed concerns that embedding the LPPs into the curriculum could further dilute the quality of career and transition support (particularly when considered in conjunction with the concerns raised above about the widely differential quality of the experimental LPPs).

For some (eg South Burnett), the core activity of career and transition service was centered on the delivery of the LPP to students in group settings. However, there are always a number of students requiring more intensive counselling and the simple embedding into curriculum of the LPPs can only be part of career and transition support.

A fairly widespread view was that those LPPs driven outside of the school culture by an independent agency had less chance of being sustained post the pilot stage. Only those LPPs that were incorporated into a school curriculum (for example, being built into the English curriculum at Southern Inland Queensland) and driven by supportive school personnel could realistically continue. Even then, some believed that although school staff could be trained to deliver and implement the LPP, there still needed to be an agency operating outside the school management structure to oversee overall delivery. At South Burnett, the implementation of a Teacher's Comment Book garnered very positive feedback on the value of non-school staff delivering, with a recognition of the 'real world' knowledge that this can bring. Although it was also noted by many that 'breaking' into the school culture and getting themselves and the LPP accepted was the first difficult task that they faced (Workways and Springwood).

At Campbell Page it has always been envisaged that LPPs would, in future, be delivered by school staff (with an additional coordinator's handbook developed to support this). Only students requiring intensive help would have additional support by the external agency. Others believed intensive professional development of teachers was needed (Mercy College, Anzac Hill). One project (Anzac Hill) initially thought that incorporating careers work into the curriculum was the ideal approach but now through their learning believe that teachers with little or no



understanding of careers education should not have responsibility for delivering the programme. Swan Alliance has noted a strong teacher reluctance to support the embedding of CAT competencies into the curriculum.

In States/Territories where there is a strong careers and guidance programme already in place (School to Work and MIPs) there is a view that the school culture will support the continuation of the LPPs. However other projects see existing programmes as a 'hindrance' to the sustainability of LPPs and indeed CAT programmes beyond the pilot year. Both Bridging The Gap and Mercy College suggested that with the plethora of career assistance and initiatives on offer in their region many schools were very skeptical about the CAT pilot continuing.

Notwithstanding these widely differing views and experiences, for the quality of the career and transition service to be maintained, an agreed LPP format and consistent high quality PD would appear to be required.

#### 6.2.4 LPPs as a Process Rather than a Product

Although many of the projects saw their LPPs as a 'living document' to be reviewed and revised by the students on a continuous basis, only some projects formally 'timetabled' the review procedure into the school CAT programme. Others attested that it was an assumed process and was incorporated into the classes at an informal level. For example at the Northern Territory Christian Schools Association pilot, the LPPs are a powerpoint presentation produced, delivered and revised by the students as often as needed (up to weekly, if required). In schools where delivery is dependent on an outside agency there are real problems in achieving a dynamic LPP. This was supported by Campbell Page and Bridging the Gap projects, where there is no provision in place to service the same group of individuals again. For these students, revision of their LPP is left up to themselves.

#### 6.2.5 Involving all Young People and their Families in Developing LPPs

It is difficult to measure the extent to which young people have taken ownership of their LPPs without consulting them directly. At this stage success can be determined by anecdotal evidence or examining feedback from post LPP surveys (some projects undertake this). However it is clear that ownership could be established by including young people in a real and meaningful way in the development of the LPP. Some projects, including Brooks High School and Mercy College, involved young people in the initial development of the LPPs. Others such as Southern Inland Queensland have trialed aspects of the LPP with some students, and made alterations based on either direct feedback from students or merely on the CATs Advisers/teachers observations.

It is interesting to note that many projects interpreted this deliverable as meaning that young people will be involved in the development of their own learning plan that is, they fill out the forms themselves under supervision of a CAT Adviser, rather than have any influence on the design and content of the plan.

Some parents were involved in a consultative process from the very beginning, and were encouraged to give feedback on the LPP prototype. In most cases there was no parental involvement except in the form of parental signature (where at least the parent had read the LPP and endorsed it) or general advertising of the project by way of letters sent home. ASK Employment invited parents to offer feedback on the LPPs and on the impact upon their children, however only a small number of parents offered feedback. All feedback received was positive and ASK Employment are exploring the possibility of surveying parents further. A small number of projects said that parents had had no involvement whatsoever in the development of the LPP (Swan Alliance, Orana, MTC Work Solutions). Orana noted that if the LPP was sent home for the parent to view and sign, it often didn't get returned.

One project, The Brotherhood of St Laurence, has as its focus the empowerment and informing of parents to assist their children with career and transition exploration. Consequently, there has been no direct delivery of LPPs to students. The Adviser has developed a training program for parents, who will be trained and paid to provide information and advice to groups of parents wishing to assist their children.

For many projects, the development and implementation of LPPs for young people that have already left school, was dependent on the strength of local partnerships with TAFE, JPP and ACE providers. For those schools with direct contact with a JPP, accessibility to young people is ensured. At Marsden State High School and Spencer Institute of TAFE, where the JPP office is co-located with the CAT Adviser, this process is easier. Others obtain a list of past leavers from the school. Whether or not other agencies take on board the concept of an LPP is based on the strength of the existing partnership. Some projects report that with the current interest in providing career and transition support to young people, LPPs sometimes "compete" with similar tools administered by other agencies. The achievement of consistency (at least) or integration (at best) would appear to be an important objective.

#### 6.2.6 Storage and Security of LPPs

There were few concerns raised regarding the storage and security of the LPPs. There were variations in where they were stored - either being stored at the schools or at the outside agency, with students receiving their own copy. Some schools have requested information from the CAT Adviser on the content of the LPP to help them in their curriculum planning. Some LPPs have very clear instructions for students on who could access their information. ASK Employment has been discussing the storage of the LPPs with their partner schools, and some schools are interested in letting the student keep their LPP. However, it is ASK Employment's preference that the LPPs be kept at the school as the basis of each student's transition folder.

#### 6.2.7 Summary

There was considerable variation in the development and implementation of LPPs in their look and content and in the ways in which they are

administered. Some projects were investigating electronic LPPs, partly to ensure that they were not lost. Some had involved students in trialing draft LPPs.

In some pilots, the LPP was developed as a workbook and filled in with the assistance of CAT Advisers or a teacher as a stand-alone exercise, either in the school or at an external venue. In other cases, the LPP was being embedded in curriculum as an element of the English or Society and Environment curricula, for example.

While there were concerns about losing focus in embedded LPPs, there was also a quite widespread view that sustainability could only be achieved if they became recognised as required curriculum outcomes. Exploration of this issue in order to understand and resolve these tensions will be pursued in further consultations with projects and stakeholders.

Consideration will be given throughout the evaluation to the development of more consistent LPPs based on the experience of the pilots.

### 6.3 Partnerships Between Young People, Families, Schools, Government and Business

Organisations participating in the CAT Pilots are required to demonstrate a partnership approach to the delivery of the CAT pilot, and this is reflected in the Community Partnership Committee (CPC) they are required to establish. CPC members across the projects include representatives from the following organisations: schools (Principals, Heads of Departments, Career Counsellors, students and parents), District Education Offices, ECEF, JPP providers, JPET providers, State Training departments, VET in School clusters, TAFEs, universities, local councils, DEST, police force, group training companies, Youth Centres, ACE, Catholic Education Office, Centrelink, employers, and the Chamber of Commerce and Industry.

Contributions from community partners have included workshop rooms, office space, stationary and photocopying, financial and in kind support, email access and phones, school buses, morning teas, school facilities, and referrals, and perhaps most importantly, access to the often extensive networks of the partners.

In almost all cases, the establishment of the CPC was considered critical to bringing key internal and external community stakeholders together to both guide the project and to assist in establishing and maintaining the necessary networks for a 'seamless transition' service. CPC members were important for their expertise and 'clout', and their broader networks.

Some of the projects were slow in forming their CPCs and formulating the terms of reference, hence the number of CPC meetings to date have been scant (guidelines stipulate bimonthly meetings). In communities where the same community organisations are represented on numerous committees there was the risk of 'burn out' for over committed

individuals and difficulty in finding other participating members. This is particularly the case in rural and remote regions, for example, and has been the experience of the Spencer Institute of TAFE project in South Australia. Some projects suggested that incentives be applied to improve attendance at meetings. In some cases, large committees were formed so that there was always a good chance of having a workable quorum. In cases where crucial members could not regularly attend (eg the school principal), CAT Advisers report that they maintain regular alternative contact by phone or email.

Some projects also experienced the difficulty of working with partners who historically were their main competitor for tenders in the region.

Some projects utilised existing established committees to avoid duplication of commitment (eg Swan Alliance, Bridging the Gap, Campbell Page and Lower Hunter). For example, at Swan Alliance, the CAT project is part of the Swan Alliance Strategic Planning Group, where the CAT management group or sub committee is a standing agenda item and at least one board member is part of the CAT Management Group. However there is the danger in arrangements such as these that the identity and autonomy of the CAT project may be lost, and that leadership and drive from the CPC is not so strong.

Many of the projects recognised that for the CPC to be successful there needed to be smaller working parties formed that addressed specific items. NTCSA suggested that this could be one strategy to achieve more focus for their members and make them accountable.

Another concern raised was that in some cases the most effective people from the partnering organisations were not on the committee. For example, some higher level executives may not have grassroots knowledge and experience. Against this, many projects found their 'higher status' committee members incredibly supportive, making an essential contribution in leveraging access to their broader networks.

According to the CAT guidelines, for the pilots to be successful, DEST considers 'CAT providers' will need to form effective relationships with the schools in their area. This would be reflected by the commitment of school principals to the pilot and the strategies employed by the CPC to facilitate these partnerships. The success of the school partnerships in the projects varies greatly, with pilots located within the schools having greater access to students and wider acceptance by principals and teaching staff, on the whole. For many, the key has been for CAT Advisers to attend staff meetings, Head of Department meetings and assemblies and to establish high visibility within the school community. Where partnerships have broken down, school principals have not supported or understood the pilot or school staff have been fearful of extra work commitments.

Students are clearly the primary audience for the career and transition services, and in some cases have been involved as equal partners in developing and trialing services and materials (eg the LPPs). Students are, in some cases, represented on the CPC.

In a smaller number of projects, parents have also been involved in this way, in some cases as members of the CPC. However, in most cases, the role of parents was limited to seeing their child's LPP.

The evaluation team has noted that not all projects have invited CPC members to participate in the action learning research processes. Inviting such regular feedback would ensure that the CPC is aware of all developments within the projects.

### 6.3.1 Summary

CAT Advisers had been active in forming the Community Partnership Committees, and mostly sought a broad coverage of stakeholders from within schools, from service providers, the community and industry. A small number also had representation from students and parents, which they found useful for testing ideas and strategies.

Some of the projects had been slow to form their CPCs, and committee burn-out already existed in some communities, particularly in rural and remote regions where the same community organisations are represented on numerous committees. Some projects fostered quite large committees, to ensure that each meeting had an effective quorum.

## 6.4 Seamless Transition Support Linkages in the Local Community

While the nature of what comprises a seamless transition service differs greatly from community to community, the CAT Adviser is clearly critical to its development. Most CAT Advisers took the view that they needed to become an integral part of the school and broader service community in order to create a seamless system of transition support.

CAT Advisers usually maintain phone, email and other formal and informal communications with partners to maintain linkages, while others focus more on being active members of a range of community organisations and committees.

Keeping other community networks informed about CAT initiatives is also important. North West Pathways for example, provides regular reports on the needs of Catholic school students for the LLENS.

Involvement in school processes has been pursued at Mercy where the CAT Adviser was introduced to the parent community and provided advice to parents during the Years 11 and 12 subject selection interviews. At Marsden, the CAT Adviser has designed and printed a workbook to assist the transition process for Year 9 students providing information on support linkages for young people and parents.

#### 6.4.1 Processes to Implement a Seamless Transition Support System

Some projects took care (working through their committee structures) to ensure that there was no duplication of services, and that common protocols were developed where appropriate (eg a common exit system, common referral forms and consistent LPPs in schools within their ambit).

For example, at Campbell Page, the schools agreed to use common referral and exit forms and to develop a safety net through the Shoalhaven Student Support programme. The success of this process is seen to depend on having a dedicated CAT coordinator operating outside the schools but with strong links to schools, youth organisations and community agencies.

North West Pathways, which is working within the LLENs framework, conducted a survey of the LLENS, MIPS programmes, MIPS Service Providers, TAFE Youth Pathways Programmes, and ACE Youth Pathways Programmes and produced a chart of available transition support services. Marsden identified existing services and best practices and is examining the use of a 'passport system' for young people to access all existing services using one database.

For some projects the operational focus has been on establishing and strengthening links within the educational environment (such as ASK's strategy of networking with guidance officers within the region). Others focused more strongly on the establishment of linkages with agencies outside and beyond school, while the majority has tried for a balance of these. The initial approach was often to slot themselves into a pre-existing set of relationships so that service provision at least appeared seamless to avoid stepping on toes!

The CEO in Parramatta already had a strong tradition of providing transition support and advocating with other agencies on their student's behalf. With the advent of the pilot, parent/student and agency forums have been used to promote further information exchange and increased understanding of the importance of seamless transitions.

K.Y.M. Employment Services focused its attention on identifying all the necessary linkages and on cementing the connections within the community. For example, the LLEN was represented on the CPC and connections with the various community agencies were identified.

A number of projects focused their attention on particular transition points. For example, South Burnett focuses on what they referred to as 'points of stress' for students. Southern Inland looked at stages of transition (Years 8, 10 and post-school). At the end of the second quarter, they had not fully broached the development of a seamless transition support system. However they were in the process of researching in-school and post-school action processes. Springwood was also looking at the three transition points of Years 8, 10 and 12. They found that the transition teams did not work as well with the Year 8 cohort due to their level of maturity and/or their limited exposure to or interest in career exploration activities. Workways Association also had a narrower transition focus of Year 8 and Year 9.

## 6.4.2 Enhancing Transition Support Linkages and/or Networks

At the end of the second quarter, many projects were focusing attention on and contributing to the development of stronger relationships with transition-relevant organisations. For example, Swan Alliance was developing linkages with TAFE, building on strong relationships, which already existed through VET/SWL and JPP.

Brooks High School is building on its strong community and business links to inform organisations in the community of the needs of young people in transition. They have also undertaken professional development in schools to inform support workers of the services available within the community.

Orana has focused on increasing liaison between schools, JPP, Uni, TAFE and Job Network members. They have met with community groups and have volunteered services to school holiday activities and other Youth services in the community, including JPET, Juvenile Justice, the community drug action team, and Barnardos.

At Campbell Page, the CAT Adviser attends a local youth development group to maintain linkages with local agencies and services to young people.

NTCSA were attending career association meetings and attending School to Work unit (DEET) meetings. Linkages have been made with Group Training, NTU, VETIS committee, ATSIC, Darwin skills development scheme, parents in remote Indigenous communities and the Indigenous leaders of four communities.

MTC Work Solutions already had strong links with specialist providers such as youth refuges, health services, crisis and emergency services, education, training and employment providers and the juvenile justice system. They have also developed a booklet of 'need to know' numbers in the local community, to facilitate the building of linkages.

The Lower Hunter project was also planning to develop a local directory of transition support agencies, while Yorke Peninsula Employment was developing an exit/graduation pack in conjunction with JPP that schools in the region can adapt to their individual needs.

The existence of a JPP project was mentioned as important for the provision of a truly seamless transition service (for example at K.Y.M. and Spencer Institute of TAFE), and service gaps were reported in those communities where there was no JPP.

For some there was a strong focus on partnerships within the school eg the Marsden CAT Adviser has maintained continuous liaison with the HOD and teachers and involved teachers in delivery of the CAT workbook. Mercy has also focused attention within the school, primarily addressing better transitions within the school such as the transition from Year 7 to Year 8.

Marsden has also looked at establishing better transition linkages for Year 9 students as they progress through school. This has involved liaison with senior schooling teachers at staff meetings and in-service afternoons, and attendance at interagency meetings. A student needs analysis highlighted students' lack of knowledge of linkages. The LPP proforma was, therefore, developed to provide information about linkages and the use of support services. Students at risk are helped by the co-location of the JPP and CAT Advisers and the development of internal linkages and a reciprocal referral system between JPP, guidance staff and CAT services.

### 6.4.3 Summary

The role of the CAT Adviser is pivotal to the development of seamless transition linkages.

Most Advisers appear to have worked hard to engage key stakeholders within schools and from the broader community in the operation of the pilots, particularly through the CPC structures.

Where existing transition services were in place, the projects appeared to develop complementary processes to avoid duplication and to try to achieve good fit with those services. In other cases where transition services did not exist or were limited, the CAT Adviser was often the catalyst for more concerted activity.

The existing strong linkages that exist between schools and outside agencies is very dependent on having a link position, with linkages appearing to be unsustainable if such a position is not resourced on an ongoing basis.

## 6.5 Tracking and Data Collection

### 6.5.1 Overview

A small number of schools involved in the CAT pilot projects already had in place post-school tracking systems that were either an initiative of the school, the region or a statewide activity (with the Queensland Education White Paper for example recently proposing the establishment of a statewide tracking system in that state; in WA a joint tracking programme undertaken by the Departments of Training and Education is being piloted; and a number of Victorian projects are trying to develop tracking processes within the framework of the LLEN).

Consequently the role and experiences of the CAT projects in post-school tracking has varied significantly. A number of the pilot projects set out to value-add to existing activities, using the opportunity to investigate more meaningful data collection processes to meet local needs. Some projects have not developed methodologies for tracking at all due to already established tracking processes meeting community needs. In the case of the Brotherhood of St Laurence project in Frankston Victoria, a computerised tracking system is being developed by the Frankston and Mornington Peninsula Local Learning and Employment Network



(FMPLLEN). (However, initial research into this by the pilot indicates that the implementation of the system has proved problematic.)

Others that had no prior tracking system in place have been developing appropriate processes to track their student cohort. Some projects were endeavouring to establish common databases across their schools (eg Anzac Hill had set up a working party to do this).

Some admitted that 'they didn't know where to start' and had placed it in the too hard basket, indicating that they would work on it in the new year.

Projects have also encountered privacy issues in attempting to access data from their partners (primarily from schools or government agencies such as Centrelink), which hold crucial information for tracking. Overall, programmes that are located outside of the school system have encountered the greatest difficulties with accessing school databases when exploring methodologies for implementing tracking processes.

### 6.5.2 The Type of Data that should be Collected

The data that CAT projects are investigating on transitions is fairly similar, with the focus being on matching intended destinations (recorded during Term 4) with actual destinations achieved early in the subsequent year and again in the middle of the year.

Brooks High School and Marsden State High School will be collecting data on students' intended destination (further education, training or employment), factors that influenced that decision, what support assisted the transition, what support would have assisted, and what additional or on-going support would the school leaver like. Marsden State High School also intends to collect information on each student's financial support arrangements.

Woodbridge & Mable Park SHSs are collecting data on current employment/study, where students stand in relation to their LPP, the frequency and type of contact between the young person and the Adviser, and how the young person is generally 'travelling' through their transitions.

Brooks High School intends to survey to determine actual destinations and to collect additional information on key influences on destination choice; support services accessed; support services that were needed but not accessed; and additional support that the young person would like.

The follow up surveying undertaken by ASK Employment will seek to determine the success of the school leaver in achieving their intended destination (expressed during the earlier surveying during Term 4 of the previous year). For those who did not achieve their stated goals additional support is to be offered, with the level and type of support determined on an individual basis.

Orana is working with the CPC (and the Orana Development Employment Council, the School to Work Mentor, and the Indigenous School Liaison Officer) to determine what sort of data should be collected. There is a view that building on existing family relationships may encourage a positive response to tracking.

Campbell Page has used the ECEF student destination data to provide a guide for the data to be collected. They have also looked at what needs to be known on a community-wide basis to guide service provision and what is needed by specific schools to guide programme development. Their draft survey, which includes a removable cover page to allow data entry without identifying individuals, has been sent to a lecturer in social survey techniques at Wollongong University for validity testing.

School leaver response rates to existing tracking systems are a problem reported by many CAT pilots. The data is primarily gathered through surveys, which have a very low response rate and follow up is difficult. Many believe that only students with positive outcomes and a good relationship with the school are responding. Orana Education Centre and Campbell Page are intending to offer incentives to school leavers to try to increase response rates. Orana are also exploring the possibility of including parents and significant others in the tracking process. Woodridge and Mable Park State High Schools in Queensland intend to access uncontactable leavers through their friends and by 'asking around'. Other projects plan to implement phone call surveys in place of previously used mail out surveys.

A common area of concern is the usefulness of the information that some of the students will give. In particular, CAT Advisers who have had previous experience with school leavers indicated that a number of students who drop out of the system often state that they are moving to a different school and consequently fall through the system. Follow up phone calls often don't work with this group as they may not provide correct details or move without leaving forwarding information.

On the other hand, the Catholic Education Office, Parramatta has had great success with after hours phone follow up with their special education school leavers.

For many pilots a key question is:

*How can the required data be collected and meaningfully distributed amongst partners without compromising the privacy of the young person?*

Initial attempts at addressing privacy issues when sharing information have focused on simple information access permission forms attached to LPPs, preliminary tracking forms or school records, which the student signs to give permission for the data to be shared amongst relevant bodies and agencies.

In addition, accessing data from partner agencies has proved difficult for projects that are based outside of the school system. They report that it

is often difficult to access school-held data due to record sharing restrictions.

Other projects have identified a number of external agencies, such as JPP Providers or Centrelink, that would hold useful information but their confidentiality of client information agreements prevent any information sharing.

### 6.5.3 Who has been Involved and What has been Discovered so Far?

As noted above, the most common method being considered is, in essence, the following three-stage process:

- Surveying of Year 10-12 students in Term 4 – asking students to identify their intended destination and to provide appropriate contact details for the following year. For students who indicate that they intend to leave school, support strategies will be put in place for those who have no clear plans or for those whose intended destinations are not realized.
- Contact school leavers (February/March) – access school records to see who has not returned to school. Follow-up all school leavers with a phone call to see whether they achieved their indicated goal and determine their outcome. Identified leavers, without a positive outcome, will be offered appropriate support and provided with information on other options.
- Follow-up (June/July) – Mid year contact to determine whether the school leaver is still in further education, training, employment or another positive outcome. Offer support to those who have dropped out of their initial activity or to those who are still experiencing difficulty.

Many projects believe that the first contact should be from a person who is able to give appropriate support over the phone and ensure that the young person is put in contact with appropriate support services.

A number of pilot projects are accessing existing tracking systems or supporting the development of new systems. The decision was made at a project level not to develop duplicate processes.

A number of pilot projects appear to have had difficulty in tackling tracking systems. With the focus of their efforts on other deliverables, some are leaving tracking until early in the next school year.

All projects have involved their CPCs and partner schools in the development of tracking systems to some extent. Orana have involved disconnected youth through their PALM centre in Dubbo and learnt that disconnected youth weren't interested in answering personal questions and were hard to track down when they left the area.

Several projects are exploring opportunities to involve external agencies in the tracking of school leavers. Bridging the Gap is interested in

involving Job Network, once they are allocated responsibility for an individual's lifetime employment support.

ASK Employment has focused on the tracking system already in place at Gladstone High School, which is based on one phone call early in the year. This will serve as the starting model for the other partner schools in the pilot. The model is a basic one and needs to be developed further in order to make it an effective system.

The Yorke Peninsula Employment CAT pilot and Swan Alliance are also adding to an existing system. The tracking system at Brooks High School is already well established by the school and will be implemented in the other schools involved in the pilot project. As part of their 'No Dole' program Brooks High School has been tracking school leavers for six months post-school. Through their CAT pilot, Brooks High School is expanding their tracking system model to their partner schools and has extended it to track for 18 months. In partnership with the University of Tasmania, Brooks High School is also exploring ways in which to best interpret the data that will be gathered from the new tracking trial being implemented by the Tasmanian government. Discussions have been held with local colleges, group training providers, TAFE and other services over their ongoing support of the transition process for next year.

Swan Alliance has access to a data base which makes tracking through Years 8-12 easy, and for Year 12s there is a post school intentions and destination survey which can be followed up longitudinally. As this doesn't cover at risk youth, they are looking at perhaps tracking them through linking with JPP.

Woodbridge & Mable Park SHSs have explored ideas such as the development of an alumni association with planned activities and an on-line newsletter that would enable tracking, after hours phoning, and regular email contact. The CPC has also explored strategies to address the difficulties that tracking may encounter such as the culture of school leavers (where only successful students may maintain contact, and the independence and autonomy of school leavers). Like most projects, they have decided on the phoning method.

The Campbell Page pilot has involved the Shoalhaven City Council, which sees the benefits of tracking for their own youth service provision. To overcome privacy obstacles, the schools will undertake the survey component. Three schools will conduct a survey of full cohort leavers from Year 8 to Year 12 in 2000 and 2001. The survey will be posted and non-returns followed up with a phone call. A person will be employed in each school to administer this. The posting of the survey will be accompanied by local advertising and incentives will be offered.

The Marsden pilot will undertake a post destination survey in March (conducted by phone by trained personnel), with a follow up survey in May, involving more personal questions such as how they are coping with study or work. Schools are very supportive but worry about the sustainability after the pilot.

#### 6.5.4 School Involvement/Leadership in the Implementation of Post-school Tracking

The extent to which school partners are taking a leadership role or having significant involvement in the development and implementation of a tracking process/system is difficult to gauge from quarterly reports and will be explored further when local stakeholders are interviewed.

#### 6.5.5 Summary

The development of processes and methodologies to track students through and beyond school appears to be one of the greatest challenges for many of the CAT pilots. Projects located within schools appear to be having greater success in accessing school databases, although overcoming privacy issues remains a concern for many projects.

Reflecting these difficulties, a number of projects have delayed addressing the development of tracking processes until 2003, and some are relying on the involvement of more overarching regional structures (such as the LLENs in Victoria) to assist in sorting out these difficulties.

Where tracking processes have been developed to capture young people who had left school, they relied on phoning. There is a strong view amongst projects that have implemented tracking processes that the first contact should be from a person who is able to give appropriate support over the phone and ensure that the young person is put in contact with appropriate support services. It is felt that the gathering of information should be a secondary consideration.

### 6.6 CAT Stats

Overall, the CAT projects estimated that they would provide career and transition support services to approximately 40 000 young people during the life of the pilots.

At the end of the first quarter, some 3 000 young people (8% of overall projected numbers) had received career advice and information. Around 98% of those receiving career and transition services were enrolled in schools and the largest group of students (39% of the total number of students) were Year 10 students. Two per cent of all those receiving support were school leavers, with 41% of these classified as disconnected youth.

The data contained in the second quarterly reports showed a significant increase in students receiving career and transition services as the pilots moved into full operational mode. The numbers of young people assisted tripled (from 3019 assisted in the first quarter, to 9964 in the second quarter). Again, the majority of students receiving advice were enrolled school students, and a large proportion of these were Year 10 students.

## 7 Project Snapshots

The following snapshots do not attempt to capture the complexity of the activities of each pilot project at this early stage of the evaluation process. Detailed case studies will be developed and presented in the final evaluation report, following visits to the projects and consultation with all relevant stakeholders including participants and community partners. These snapshots simply summarise quantitative information provided by the pilots on their progress towards meeting their measurable objectives.

### 7.1 ANZAC Hill High School/Centralian College/Alice Springs High School

This project involves three Government secondary education providers in the Northern Territory (Centralian College, ANZAC Hill High School and Alice Springs High School) working together to create co-ordinated career and transition services for students and for young people outside the school system who have not made successful transitions to education or work. The project is staffed by a full-time CAT Coordinator/Transition Adviser with support from three part-time counsellors who help young people to address any personal /social issues.

The project aims to provide transition services to a projected 1390 participants covering Years 8 – 12 and school leavers.

By the end of the second quarter, a total of 86 clients had been provided with advice and information; 24 had been provided with intensive assistance; and 62 had started their LPP. Of the 86 clients who had received information and advice, 97% were in school, with 64% in Year 10.

Of the 62 developing an LPP, all were in school, with 90% being in Year 10. Six or 10% had developed their LPPs with direct assistance from the CAT Adviser, with the remainder developing it in a class situation with a teacher.

### 7.2 ASK Employment and Training

The project was initiated in response to community concern over high unemployment, a declining population and an uncertain economic future for the region. A career reference centre has been established in Port Pirie, South Australia, and a mobile unit services the outlying participating schools. The project focuses on providing advice and assisting young people to develop the skills and confidence to make informed career decisions.

The pilot involves a full-time CAT Adviser/Coordinator, and 2 full-time volunteer Advisers with administrative and management support from a manager, site manager and administrative assistant.

The project aims to provide transition services to 3 200 participants ranging in age from 13 to 19 from seven schools as well as young people who have disconnected from learning.

In the second quarter, 1215 clients (the majority ie 63% being school leavers) received advice and information. A total of 414 clients had started an LPP and were also provided with intensive assistance.

Of the 414 clients who had started LPPs, all had done so with assistance from a CAT Adviser. Most of these clients (91%) were enrolled school students.

### 7.3 Bridging the Gap

Bridging The Gap is a community-based organisation that delivers a number of programs and initiatives to disconnected and at-risk youth in the Kwinana and Rockingham regions of Western Australia. Their partnership with the award winning KIC Excellence in Education Compact already affords them strong links with schools, TAFE, university and local industries and councils. Their CAT pilot aims to enhance and co-ordinate existing career programmes by focusing on a partnership approach and the provision of mobile services together with school and office-based Advisers. The pilot is staffed by a full-time coordinator, 1 full-time Transition Adviser and administrative and management support from the Chief Executive Officer and administrative assistant.

The project set a target of delivering services to 1 060 clients, including 920 students in Years 8, and 9 attending a Government, Catholic or Independent school, and 80 school leavers.

By the end of the second quarter, 825 clients had been provided with advice and information, 493 had started an LPP, and 546 had received intensive assistance.

Of the 825 clients given advice and information, 793 (96%) were school students. Of the 493 students starting LPPs, 98% (484) were in school, and 92% of clients (454) had received direct assistance from a CAT Adviser.

### 7.4 Brooks High School

Brooks High School is nationally recognised for the range of programs it offers to young people at risk such as the No-dole Program aimed at increasing student retention to Year 11. An existing partnership with National Job Link through the East Tamar Community partnership Committee has strengthened the outcomes for year 10s involved with the Jobs Pathway Provider at the school.

The CAT project works with and across four schools in Northern Tasmania and aims to provide consistent career and transition information and support across the region. It is both building on the existing model of career and transition provision in Brooks High School, and implementing

new initiatives in the other schools whose students have little access to career preparation or services other than JPP and VET for older school leavers.

The projected number of participants is 888, with the focus on years 7 to 10. The pilot has a staff commitment of a part-time manager, 2 full-time Advisers and support from two teachers, principals and an administrative assistant.

In the second quarter, 669 participants received advice and information; 284 started a LPP; and 300 were provided with intensive assistance. A total of 63 clients were Indigenous Australians, 11 had a disability and 2 were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Of the 669 clients given advice and information, most (94%) were from years 8, 9 and 10. Of the 284 participants who had started a LPP, 163 (57%) were from Year 10. All of the LPPs had been implemented with direct assistance from a CAT Adviser.

Of the 300 clients who received intensive assistance, 187 (62%) were from Year 10.

## 7.5 Brotherhood of St. Laurence

This project aims to provide parents with career and transition information so that they can provide informed advice to, and discuss opportunities with, their children. Staffed by a full-time CAT Adviser, and part-time support from a Manager/Coordinator and an administrative assistant, the project covers eight secondary colleges, with the projected number of participants being 250.

Reflecting the atypical nature of this project, comparative statistics of service provision were unavailable at the time of reporting.

## 7.6 Campbell Page

This project services the Upper Shoalhaven area of New South Wales. The CAT pilot aims to incorporate Learning Pathway Plans into the school curriculum, and for these plans to be adapted and implemented with different targeted year groups in each of the associated schools.

The pilot, which aims to provide assistance to 2 800 students including 300 early school leavers, is staffed by one CAT Adviser supported part-time by the manager, a transitions team manager and an administrative assistant.

By the end of the second quarter, 167 clients (22 of them Indigenous Australians) had received advice and information, 412 LPPs had been started and 7 clients had received intensive assistance.

Of the 167 participants who received advice and information, 153 (92%) were in school. The majority (71%) of these students were in Year 10.



Of the 412 clients who started a LPP, all were in school. Approximately 37% of these clients received assistance from a CAT Adviser.

Of the 7 clients who received intensive assistance, 5 were enrolled school students.

## 7.7 Catholic Education Office – Diocese of Parramatta

This CAT pilot works with over 20 schools and its focus is on providing individualized support to special education school leavers through the establishment of tracking mechanisms. The project aims to provide transition services to 150 participants from Years 10 to 12. The project's staffing allocation is a part-time CAT Adviser, who also coordinates the pilot, and a part-time administrative assistant.

By the end of the second quarter, 75 clients had received advice and information. Ten students had started a LPP. Four LPPs had been started with assistance from a CAT Adviser. A total of 39 participants had received intensive assistance.

All clients were ex-students with a disability and 22 were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. Three participants were indigenous Australians.

## 7.8 K.Y.M. Employment Services

This project delivers information and support to seven schools in the Yarra Ranges ECEF Cluster in Victoria – an area that has a history of high unemployment and low school retention rates. The project is forming Transition Teams in each school to focus on support for Year 8 and 9 students. A total of 2000 students will participate in the project.

With a staff commitment of one full-time CAT Adviser with administrative and management support from a Manager/Coordinator, the Chief Executive Officer and an administrative assistant, the project aims to provide accurate and locally relevant career information to schools and to incorporate Learning Pathways Plans into the curriculum.

By the end of the second quarter, 241 clients received advice and information; 219 LPPs were started; and 235 participants received intensive assistance. Of the 241 clients who received advice and information, 216 (90%) were in school with 210 of these students in Years 8 and 9.

Of the 219 clients who started their LPP, 208 (95%) were in school, with 202 of these students in Years 8 and 9. All of the LPPs were developed with assistance from a CAT Adviser. Of the 235 clients who received intensive assistance, 210 (89%) were in school, with 204 (97%) of these students being in Years 8 and 9.

## 7.9 Lower Hunter Vocational Education

This project is focused on improving information and advice particularly to disconnected young people through strong partnerships between schools and a range of service agencies that facilitate a whole-of-region approach. Following an evaluation of existing activities, the project's focus has been on implementing best practice career and transition support in the region and developing LPPs with all participants.

The project is staffed by two full-time CAT Advisers and supported by a Manager/Coordinator and administrative assistant. The projected number of participants is 11 300, with the focus on Years 8, 10 and 12 and 300 disconnected young people.

In the second quarter, 1 155 participants received advice and information, 43 clients started LPPs and 13 received intensive assistance. Of the 1 155 clients who received advice and information, 1 143 (99%) were in school, with 1071 (94%) of these clients being in Year 10.

Of the 43 participants who started LPPs, all were in school and 26 (60%) were in Year 9. Of the 13 who received intensive assistance, 11 were school students.

## 7.10 Marsden State High School

The focus of this CAT project is the development of Learning Pathway Plans for Year 9 students and students at risk at two government schools, Marsden State High School and Loganlea High School in Queensland.

The projected number of students completing a Learning Pathways Plan is 530 students in Years 8 and 9 and a number of school leavers. Students who have social, emotional and behavioural problems that may put them at risk of early school leaving receive more intensive career and transition counselling.

One full-time CAT Adviser and one full-time targeted assistance officer, supported by a part time manager, a part time coordinator and an administrative assistant, staff the pilot.

By the end of the second quarter, a total of 810 students had received transition advice and information, including 240 students who had started a LPP, and 38 students who had received intensive assistance. Seven of these students were from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds, 66 were Indigenous and 24 had a disability.

Of the 240 LPPs started, all were developed with assistance from the CAT Adviser.

## 7.11 Mercy College and Catholic Education College Office of WA

Mercy College services the lowest SES cohort in the Catholic Education system, with a large percentage of students (32%) requiring ESL

support. The College currently manages a programme in the area of career, vocational and enterprise education and there are already integrated career counselling initiatives in place in middle school through to year 12. Partnerships with local TAFE and industry pre-exist through the successful VET in Schools program, undertaken by about 40% of the post-compulsory cohort.

The pilot seeks to develop a number of initiatives that add value to these existing practices, including development of a comprehensive parent information process targeted at migrant families, development of a detailed curriculum mapping exercise, construction of skills and enterprise passports and development of resume models.

The main targets of this project are students in years 7-12, and some school leavers. This project is being piloted at one school and the findings will be shared with 42 other Catholic Schools. The project is staffed by a CAT Adviser (0.6 FTE), a Career Adviser (0.6 FTE), a Structured Workplace Coordinator (0.5 FTE), a Literacy/Transition Officer (0.2 FTE), and administrative assistant (0.2 FTE).

The project aimed to provide 1378 participants from Mercy College and Aranmore Catholic College with transition services. However, due to difficulties with establishing the partnership with Aranmore College, these figures have been renegotiated with DEST and the partnering school will be Sacred Heart College.

At the end of the second quarter, 1 129 participants had received advice and information, and 407 participants had received intensive assistance. All were enrolled students.

## 7.12 MTC Work Solutions

MTC work Solutions is a not-for-profit, community based employment and training organisation, delivering a wide range of employment and training programs targeted at those least advantaged in the labour market. Programs that especially target at-risk youth include the Job Pathways Programme, Links to Learning, Work for the Dole and LEAP. Since 1996 they have been delivering case management/intensive assistance to people with severe barriers to employment, education and training.

Their CAT project covers schools in Bankstown and Canterbury in New South Wales. It concentrates on schools, which have a large number of students from non-English speaking backgrounds. The project also provides parents with an opportunity to attend career sessions relating to their children. The CAT Adviser works in a school setting for four days per week and provides outreach to several youth organisations one day per week to assist any early school leavers who may require career and transition guidance.

The projected number of participants for this project is 200 to 300, ranging from Years 8 to 12 and 50-75 school leavers. A full-time CAT

Adviser, with part-time management and administrative support, staffs the project.

By the end of the second quarter, 220 participants were provided with advice and information, 233 had started a LPP, and 211 had received intensive assistance.

Of the 240 students who received advice and information, 167 (70%) were in Years 9 and 10. Of the 233 clients who started an LPP, 160 (69%) were in Years 9 and 10. All of the LPPs were developed with assistance from the CAT Adviser.

### 7.13 North West Pathways

This project aims to support young people making career pathway decisions in each of seven Catholic schools in the North West of Melbourne. It was based on the model developed by North West Pathways (auspiced by Kangan Batman TAFE) in working with state schools through their Managed Individual Pathways programs (MIPs). The pilot also invites parents and students to evenings that provide information on career pathways to a range of local industries.

The pilot is staffed by two CAT Advisers (one full time and one 0.8% FTE), with management and administrative support from a program coordinator, manager and administrative assistant.

This project aims to provide transition services to 660 participants within the 13 – 17 year age group.

By the end of the second quarter, 279 clients received advice and information and intensive assistance, and 125 LPPs were started. Forty-six clients with a disability and 193 participants from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were assisted. Of the 279 clients assisted, 263 (94%) were enrolled school students.

Of the 125 participants who had started a LPP, 116 (93%) were in school. All of the LPPs were developed with assistance from a CAT Adviser.

### 7.14 Northern Territory Christian Schools Association

Northern Territory Christian Schools is owned and managed by both Indigenous and non-Indigenous parents at six schools in the Northern Territory. The NTCSA has developed strong links with remote Indigenous communities and with a number of homeless indigenous young people in Darwin.

This CAT project delivers career and transition advice to participants in urban, as well as remote and isolated regions. The objective is to incorporate this advice into school curricula and school structures. The targeted clients are 210 mainstream students living in Palmerston and Darwin, and 100 Indigenous students from remote communities, some of whom live on campus or in supported accommodation.

Advisers work across four schools and 14 remote centres. The project employs 7 staff comprising 2 full-time CAT Advisers, a full-time coordinator, a full-time administrative assistant, and a part-time Indigenous Education Manager.

By the end of the second quarter, a total of 259 participants had received advice and information, 106 had started an LPP, and 102 had received intensive assistance. A total of 52 Indigenous clients, five clients with a disability and four from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds had been provided with transition services.

Of the 259 who had received advice and information, 258 were in school, with 119 (46%) of these in Year 10.

Of the 106 clients who started an LPP, all were in school and all plans were developed with the assistance of a CAT Adviser. Of the 102 participants who received intensive assistance, all were in school.

### 7.15 Orana Education and Training Cooperative

The project is based in Dubbo, NSW, and services an area that has a large number of transient Indigenous youth. Initial surveying and consultation with the community identified local barriers to successful transitions and informed the development of the LPPs and delivery of career and transition support. The project is centrally based at the Cooperative and delivered through workshops with young people. The workshops provide opportunities to explore career and study options; include presentations from various organisations; and provide an introduction to other Cooperative services, particularly the availability of accredited training at their Skills Centre.

The project is staffed by 8 people, comprising a Manager (0.3 FTE), a full time Coordinator, a full time Adviser, and 0.5 of a CEO, Computer Centre Coordinator, a Trainer/Assessor, and an administrative assistant. The project aims to service 3 200 young people from Years 8–12 as well as disconnected youth.

By the second quarter 578 people had received advice, 201 had developed LPPs and 24 young people had received intensive one-on-one counselling. Forty-one clients, of whom 37 were in school, were Indigenous Australians. Of the 578 people given advice, 97% were in school, and 57% of these were in Year 10.

All LPPs were facilitated with a CAT Adviser. 94% of the 201 LPPs were delivered in schools and 99% of these were with Year 9 and 10 students.

Of the 24 young people who had received intensive assistance, 17 were disconnected youth.

## 7.16 South Burnett Community Training Centre

South Burnett Community Training Centre (CTC) is a community based, not for profit organisation that operates an employment agency, manages an enterprise centre and sponsors Commonwealth and State funded community programs such as Work for the Dole, Community Jobs Plan, JPET, RYIS, Youth Development and South Burnett Area Youth Service.

Their CAT project operates in an area of 45 000 sq kms that has no JPP program and minimal career guidance support. The project is assisting with LPPs and delivers career and transition support to students in the nine schools, at TAFE or in alternative education programmes in the South Burnett Education District of regional Queensland. It set a target of servicing 2 391 clients, 2 141 of whom were enrolled school students.

The project is staffed with a full time CAT Adviser, a part time CAT Adviser, with administrative and management support from the Chief Executive Officer, coordinator and administrative assistant. The CAT Adviser is located at a central office in Kingaroy but also travels extensively to schools in the region.

By the end of the second quarter, the project had provided career and transition advice to 907 young people, completed 904 LPPs with clients and offered intensive assistance to 30 young people. Of the 904 clients who had completed LPPs, 95% were in school, with 56% of these in Years 9 and 10. All of the LPPs were delivered with the assistance of a CAT Adviser.

Twenty of the 30 clients who had intensive assistance were disconnected school leavers.

## 7.17 Southern Inland Qld Area Consultative Committee

The Southern Inland Qld Area Consultative Committee, established in 1995, focuses on improving the employment prospects of rural, remote and disadvantaged communities. It has initiated a number of projects in relation to youth and disconnected young people and has also worked with over 35 schools in the Southern Inland Queensland region on projects with a career assistance focus.

A School to Employment Project Committee, formed in 2001 and auspiced by the SIQACC, will manage the CAT project. This committee was formed in 2001 in response to concerns for the lack of correct career information in schools and due to initial outcomes of the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce.

The CAT project, with advice from a School to Employment Project Committee formed in 2001 is trialing a number of career and transition support strategies within three very different schools. The pilot is assisting all Year 8-12 students with LPPs, developing a curriculum programme and delivering Professional Development to teaching staff to support the sustainability of the LPPs.

The projected client base is 2 830 students and the project is staffed by one full-time CAT Adviser with support from the Executive Officer, pilot manager, finance officer and administrative assistant.

To date, the project has delivered CAT advice to 945 clients, all of whom are in school with the largest grouping being Year 12 students (32%).

155 LPPs had been completed, all with Year 8 students who were directly assisted by the CAT Adviser.

The project had also offered intensive one-on-one assistance to 59 clients, of whom 47 were still in school and mostly, (30) in Year 10. Twelve clients receiving intensive assistance were ex-students.

### 7.18 Spencer Institute of TAFE

Spencer Institute of TAFE offers accredited training across 85% of South Australia, including rural and remote areas where they deliver training programs for Aboriginal communities and students. Spencer Institute is also a Jobs Pathways Provider.

The project is implementing LPPs and providing career and transition support across 12 regional and remote schools in the far north region of South Australia. Characteristics of this region include isolation, high unemployment rates, and a significant percentage of Indigenous Australians.

The project has a target client base of 1 657 school students. It has a distinctive structure - with four part-time regional or area- based CAT officers and a full-time centrally based coordinator.

During the second quarter, 424 clients received career and transition advice, 352 LPPs were prepared and one Year 9 student received intensive assistance. The project is working solely with school students and of those assisted in this period, 13 were Indigenous students.

Of the students who had received advice, 85% were in Years 8, 9 and 10 and 65% of the students who had completed LPPs were in Years 8 and 9.

### 7.19 Springwood State High School

This CAT project involves a partnership between Springwood State High School, Shailer Park State High School and community organisations in Brisbane who have come together to improve career awareness and transition support for students. The schools are implementing the *Career Education Quality Framework* to improve the quality of career and transition guidance provided in the schools. One full-time CAT Adviser with additional managerial and administrative support staffs the project, which is trialling the formation of school-based transition teams.

The project has a target client base of 1 250 (mainly students in Years 8–12 and 80 early school leavers). By the end of the second quarter, CAT

advice had been provided to 893 clients and the CAT Adviser had worked with 28 clients intensively.

Of the 893 students who received CAT advice, 90% were in Year 10. Of the students who received intensive assistance, 43% were Year 11 students.

## 7.20 Swan Alliance

The Swan Alliance organisation was formed in 2001. It is a collaborative partnership between educators, training providers, employers, and local and state government service providers who work together to improve the 'life chances' of young people in the region. Characteristics of the Swan region include a high proportion of low socio-economic status residents, and a high number of migrant and Indigenous Australians. In many of the schools, the retention rate is less than 50%.

The Swan Alliance project's focus is to develop a transition team model involving the CAT Adviser, school-based careers teachers and Jobs Pathway Providers. Enhanced career support is provided to all year 8s in the four pilot schools through the LPPs, which are delivered as part of the school curriculum. Years 9s and 10s at risk of leaving school also receive career and transition support from the Adviser.

One full-time CAT Adviser, who is provided with managerial and administrative support, staffs the project. The project targeted 3 080 Year 8, 9 and 10 students from four pilot schools. It also planned to provide services to 15 teachers and 200 parents.

By the end of the second quarter 503 clients had received advice, 456 LPPs had been completed and 30 clients had received intensive one-on-one assistance.

All young people who had accessed CAT services were school students. 80% of students who had been provided with CAT advice were in Year 8 and 98% of LPPs were completed with Year 8 students. Of the 30 clients who had received intensive assistance, 20 were in Year 9.

## 7.21 Woodridge State High School/Mable Park State High School

The project aims to build upon and enhance existing career programmes at the two schools in the Logan Shire of Brisbane. The Logan community has high levels of unemployment, particularly amongst young people, and is classed as a low socio-economic area. Both schools have cultural and linguistically diverse student populations with sizeable Indigenous student numbers. Key strategies include a mentoring programme, bringing community and industry members in to work with students, and a case management approach to working with at-risk young people. The project is staffed by two full-time CAT Advisers, one in each school supported by two full-time administrative assistants and two part-time



coordinators and had targeted providing services to 1 831 clients across Years 8 – 12.

By the end of the second quarter, 1 458 clients had been given advice, 1 176 clients had started LPPs and 1 041 had received intensive one-on-one assistance.

Of the young people who had received advice, 96% were school students. A total of 992 LPPs were developed with the direct assistance of the CAT Adviser, with 97% of all LPPs being developed by enrolled students. Of the 1 041 clients who received intensive assistance, 97% were enrolled students.

Of all the participants receiving transition services, 96 were Indigenous, 518 were disabled and 531 came from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

## 7.22 Workways Association Inc

Workways is a community-based organisation delivering the Jobs Pathway Programme to seven East Gippsland schools as well as other special youth-oriented programmes, including training courses for disconnected young people. Workways is also contracted by the Commonwealth government to offer employment services.

The focus of the Workways Association project is 13-14 year olds enrolled in the seven East Gippsland schools, which form the pilot. The project is implementing LPPs with all Year 8 and 9 students and is offering an intensive case management approach to working with at-risk young people. One full-time CAT Adviser staffs the project supported by a part-time administrative assistant and manager.

The pilot has targeted 1 072 Years 8 and 9 students.

By the end of the second quarter the project had provided 125 clients with CAT advice, started LPPs with 123 clients and given intensive assistance to 109 clients. All of the participants were enrolled students in Years 8 and 9.

## 7.23 Yorke Peninsula Employment

This project is facilitating the delivery of career and transition advice and the implementation of LPPs through nine schools on the Yorke Peninsula. The project has established dedicated career and transition areas in schools and in appropriate community settings for disconnected young people. The advice given and the delivery of the LPPs is undertaken by the one full-time CAT Adviser. Part time support is also provided by an administrative assistant and manager. The project has also contracted a career counsellor to provide additional program support and training.

The pilot had targeted delivering career and transition services to 1 040 young people including 50 school leavers.

By the end of the second quarter 15 LPPs had been delivered, although by the end of 2002, approximately 300-400 students were working through their LPPs. Of the 15 LPPs, 10 were developed with the assistance of a CAT Adviser.

## 7.24 Achievements

At the end of the second quarter, some of the significant achievements reported by the CAT projects include:

- Students and parents are pleased with the chance to participate in developing a Learning Pathways Plan.
- By developing their Learning Pathways Plan some young disconnected people are identifying major issues in their lives and have been referred to other services for assistance and counselling.
- Schools and communities are generally supportive of the CAT programme.
- The successful production of an LPP profoma that is accepted by the students and the schools.
- The LPP is being incorporated successfully into school curricula in some cases. CAT Advisers have developed a system of pathways planning that is acceptable to schools and community groups, and supports the existing State careers programmes.
- Career and transition advice is being provided for younger cohorts of students who normally fall outside the school's existing careers programme.
- Cat Advisers have built strong relationships with young people and community organisations, and are making the referral process smoother and simpler to negotiate, with some projects developing transition protocols.
- CAT Advisers are establishing and maintaining strong links with youth and educational organisations
- The CPC allows for more networking and continued links between agencies wishing to support young people's successful transitions.

## 7.25 Challenges

The following reported challenges have been highlighted by the projects' learning to date and will be explored more fully as the evaluation proceeds:

- LPPs need to be flexible to accommodate the different needs of young people and yet there is a need for some consistency in

terms of the quality of the process that the LPP represents and perhaps the form that it takes. Some projects have noted that the delivery of the LPP can even vary across the schools in the one district.

- Transition tracking issues – many projects raise concerns about privacy factors, the sustainability of long-term tracking (who takes ownership of tracking and funds it), linking tracking to existing State/Federal tracking exercises (ie not reinventing the wheel) and the need to provide reliable transition advice for former students rather than just engaging in a data collection exercise. Some projects are concerned about not being able to contact former students once they leave a region, and note that those at greatest risk are the clients less likely to want to be tracked.
- Some CPCs have been slow to progress and have met infrequently. There has been failure of some members to contribute to the meetings and concern that for others, an over commitment to other projects in their region could lead to burn out.
- Implementation of CAT activities in schools and communication within schools has not been smooth in some projects. Some have experienced negativity from teaching staff and cynicism about the plethora of similar initiatives and the sustainability of the pilot beyond the year.
- Some projects have had problems in engaging parents in the development of LPPs, attending workshops, reading CAT mailouts and signing their child’s LPPs. The findings and experiences of the Brotherhood of St Laurence project will be very useful.
- For some projects the vast geographical distances and large numbers of young people to be serviced in the pilot inhibit follow-up of LPPs and the development of close personal relationships with CAT clients. An estimate of a workable CAT Adviser:client ratio may be possible at the end of the pilot phase.

## 8 Areas of Common Interest to CAT and POEM Projects

### 8.1 The Action Research/Learning Environment

All pilots have been established within an action learning framework. The projects have been encouraged (and contracted) by DEST to continuously review their activities and ask what does and doesn’t work, for whom and with what outcomes. Both CAT and POEM projects are required to record this information in their action learning diaries and regular monitoring reports to DEST.

Most project staff, particularly those with case work backgrounds and those whose practices are built on adult learning principles, report a level of familiarity and ease with the plan-act-observe-reflect cycle of action research. The greatest difficulty for many projects has been to record these processes in ways that they consider useful.

An examination of available action learning diaries suggests that they are, in many cases, a place where the individual reflections of project workers are recorded rather than a place where full action research cycles are recorded. It is fair to say that because they were called diaries, in some cases they were seen as a record of individual observations, rather than a publicly funded research tool. Consequently, the reflections contained in some diaries are often recorded in isolation from preceding planning; action; and observation phases.

Other project staff have found it hard to achieve the necessary balance between actual service provision (the needs of young people are immediate; insistent; and unpredictable) and the research activities, which require the management of information coming from a number of sources, such as weekly team meetings; CPC and Steering Committee Meetings; and importantly feedback from young people themselves.

Some pilots report that the completion of their action learning diaries is an onerous requirement and a distraction from the 'real work'. Others see it as an important process that has involved all stakeholders. They were keen to make it work, both in terms of its continuous service improvement capacity and its potential to provide evidence that would support the continuation of their project post-the pilot.

Some projects have prioritized the areas where they want to learn more and these areas have become the focus of their action research activities. At Rivskills, for example, the priority action research issues are determined at regular meetings where those with a stake in the project including young people share their observations and reflections. They use a four stage process: *What did we intend to do? What did we do? What happened and how do we know what happened? What does this mean for changed practice?*

While the views of steering committees and young people guide the activities of most projects, their views are not often included in the action learning diaries. In cases, where project staff (particularly CAT Advisers) work alone, it is clearly more difficult for sole workers to engage in inclusive action research processes.

There are, of course, noticeable exceptions. For example, it is a standing agenda item at some steering committee meetings to deal with a section of the action learning diary. It does not appear, however, that many projects have fully engaged their community partners in working on particular action research priorities. Mildura reports, for example that they are becoming more focused about collecting feedback. Many steering committee members, for example, are in management roles and are therefore not always in a position to provide feedback.

There was some resentment expressed at the POEM Forum that the research requirements of the project were dominating the agenda of the forum. This was driven by a concern that action research questions may not be capturing the big picture/social policy issues that might influence policy/funding decisions. Some forum participants reported that they were tired of having to 'prove' the need for their services and to secure funding through participation in short term pilot projects.

Greater prescription was requested by one or two projects, however others considered that the processes that they had in place suited their unique situations.

A group of POEM forum participants discussed what it would take to make action learning diaries an effective service improvement/evaluation tool. They reported that action learning diaries:

- were a reflection of the unique processes of local pilots looking to find local solutions;
- should address issues related to project deliverables;
- need to be sufficiently flexible (in format) to allow reporting on a range of difficulties. It was felt that if a new template was imposed then it would restrict the gathering of information by individual projects whose processes and objectives differed; and
- should be a place where the colour and flavour of each individual project can be recorded

They concluded that there are no real distinctions between 'small' picture and 'big' picture issues. It is the small picture experiences of each project that feed into the big picture of the evaluation.

In discussions with project staff, post the forums, we are encouraging them to prioritise their action research and to focus on recording information on those areas where they feel they really need to learn more, rather than simply recording all their activities for the week.

## 8.2 Using the Sharespaces

It was envisaged that the separate sharespaces established for both the CAT and the POEM pilots by the DEST management team would be a tool for providing linkages and support between pilots that are widely spread throughout Australia.

While most forum participants acknowledge the potential of the sharespace, its use has been limited to date. Contributing factors include problems of access due to local bandwidth issues, or in some cases actual access to computers; the fact that it requires a deliberate act and a dedicated time period for some providers to use the net at all.

It was suggested that improving the information architecture of both sharespaces might encourage greater use.

Participants at both forums urged each other to make better use of the space and left the forum with commitments to do so having enjoyed working with each other and with increased confidence to share information.

Despite the CAT sharespace being restructured, and attempts by the NCEP team to post resources in areas of interest identified at the forums, there has been no noticeable increase in usage of either space. This possibly simply reflects the busyness of end-of-year activities. It could also be a reflection of the strong emphasis on the 'action' rather than the 'learning/research' component of many of the projects.

### 8.3 Planned Teleconferences

A number of special interest groups formed at each forum so that people could discuss issues of particular concern. Once projects are fully operational after the summer holidays, the NCEP will organize a series of teleconferences that will be open to any interested providers.

Potential areas of ongoing interest to CAT Advisers include:

- Ensuring the Sustainability of Learning Pathways Plans
- School Exit Procedures and Tracking
- Commonwealth/State service provision of career and transition support services
- Effective approaches for the professional development for teachers
- Embedding career and transition into the curriculum
- Career and transition support for Indigenous students
- Parental involvement in career and transition support
- Web based career and information services
- Mobile Career Services.

Potential areas of ongoing interest to POEM providers include:

- Promoting the successes of the POEM pilots to ensure future sustainability - including the development of a newsletter
- Meeting the needs of Indigenous participants
- LPPs, tracking and other means of sharing information between youth support networks without breaching confidentiality
- Measurement of attitudinal change in participants.

## 8.4 Selection of the Pilot Projects

Calls for submissions to undertake a Career and Transition (CAT) or Partnership Outreach Education Model (POEM) pilot were made in 2001, with applications closing on 31 October 2001.

Within the context of the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce's vision of partnerships between governments and the community to assist all young people, including those at risk of not making successful transitions through school and from school to further education, training, work or community participation, the CAT pilots were to be designed to:

- Test methodologies for providing enhanced career and transition support to every young person (students and school leavers) aged 13 – 19;
- Investigate, test and evaluate innovative ways of improving the quality of career information; and identify existing good practice examples and test transferability and sustainability in different settings/environments;
- Investigate and develop ways of tracking students for 18 months post school;
- Trial a range of approaches in schools, off-site or a combination of both; and
- Provide a series of case studies of identified best practice and innovative strategies

The POEM pilots were intended to focus on providing:

- The delivery of accredited education and training services to 'disconnected young people' in settings where they feel comfortable;
- Education and training approaches that are developed and delivered in consultation with young people and their families/significant people;
- Flexible delivery arrangements for the target group which take into account their preferred learning styles and cultural, social, physical or current needs;
- Local partnerships involving youth and community agencies, schools, training providers, local governments and local employers; and
- A range of pathways for 'disconnected young people' to re-engage with mainstream education as a first priority or with training, employment or community participation where mainstream education remains an unrealistic option.

The submission guidelines were flexible enough to enable applications for funds to establish new projects or applications for funds to establish projects which added value to existing community initiatives.

Criteria for selection included consideration of the **apparent value** of the project in making a difference (evident in the written submission and through discussion with project proponents); achieving an adequate and representational **coverage** (of the States/Territories, of metropolitan, rural, regional and remote areas); the **diversity** of projects to ensure that a range of approaches could be tested; and **innovation**.

The Transition Partnerships Section, Enterprise and Career Education Branch, Schools Group are the national managers of the pilots. They report that in an effort to model the 'Open for Business' charter of the Department, the submission process was as flexible and consultative as was possible given the necessary business assurance and legal requirements that must underpin the process.

DEST officials expressed a strong sense that the processes used to engage CAT and POEM providers had been based on a more collaborative developmental model that promoted a sense of 'working together' between DEST, the lead agencies and their local level project partners. The approach has also been a feature of the ongoing management of the projects and it has resulted in extremely positive and appreciative feedback from participants at the national action forum and in their quarterly reports.

#### 8.4.1 Commonwealth and State/Territory Provision of Services

There is considerable variation in the alternative education and career and transition support services that are available to young people in different States and Territories, in different regions, and in different schools. States and Territories are themselves developing initiatives in response to both *Footprints* and the New framework for vocational education in schools, which now encompasses career services. The importance of integrating Commonwealth and State/Territory has been a long standing concern of communities.

The States and Territories had been active partners in developing *Footprints*, through their involvement in the Taskforce. Ongoing State and Territory considerations were handled, in part, through the involvement of DEST state officers who performed a quality assurance role through the local knowledge they could bring to the selection process.

While it is acknowledged that the Commonwealth plays a leadership role in the provision of transition services, as States/Territories increasingly move to support young people's transitions and the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition considers options for a new national career and transition system, discussions/decisions on the relationship between Commonwealth and State/Territory services are critical. It is also important when communities themselves are being asked to integrate



and improve services through formalized local-level interagency protocols.

DEST reports that there was an attempt in the selection process to consider the proposals against existing delivery of services, to ensure that there was minimal duplication and that the CAT and POEM projects could clearly add value and trial the effectiveness of certain elements of transition support services identified by the Youth Pathways Action Plan Taskforce.

There was some consideration of initiatives already in place – especially the Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs) and Managed Individual Pathways (MIPS) initiatives in Victoria and the School Leaver Programme (early intervention and post-school tracking) in WA. While this appears to have fallen short of a comprehensive mapping (and certainly a comprehensive consultation/negotiation process with the States/Territories) that may have been useful in guiding the overall balance of selected projects, it did point to gaps in coverage that the selection of CAT and POEM pilots endeavoured to fill. For example, Managed Individual Pathways (MIPs) initiatives were not introduced into non-government schools and the targeted cohort differed from the cohort targeted for CAT activities. At the time that the CAT pilots were conceived, MIPs were only starting to be implemented in many locations. In retrospect, the environmental scan undertaken as a preliminary task by the LLENs is seen as offering benefit – but would have been difficult to achieve to the level of local specificity required.

*It is suggested that all future development of transition services involve extensive liaison and where possible partnership arrangements with the States and Territories (possibly through the working groups of the MCEETYA Taskforce on Transition from School or the establishment of special purpose Reference Groups for new initiatives). Such an approach is likely to better support innovative and appropriately matched service, to minimize gaps and overlaps in service provision and to enable governments to meet their commitments to all young people.*

*A stronger focus on need, in the context of existing available services and facilitated by updating the original OECD career services map in the case of the CAT pilots, would appear worthy of closer attention.*

#### 8.4.2 Community Partnership Requirements

In cases, like this, where bidders are required to demonstrate the existence of strong community partnerships that underpin their application, there needs to be a mechanism to ensure that competing proposals do not emerge from communities. Stakeholders within a community could be required to work together on a single shared project. Competing bids have the potential to destroy the goodwill within a community that is crucial to building the capacity of communities to support their members. In those cases where an unsuccessful applicant was subsequently required to form part of the partnership some difficulties were experienced.

The integrity of the partnerships must also be demonstrated. It has been reported that in some cases, nominated partners knew nothing of their claimed involvement or support for the proposed pilot.

*It is suggested that stronger requirements for the development of community-endorsed proposals be built into any subsequent tender processes where a partnership approach to the provision of services is a prerequisite for successful applicants.*

The future work of the NCEP will include examination of methodologies for approaches that have been trialed elsewhere for inclusion in the final evaluation report. Our initial thoughts lean towards a process that has:

- Commonwealth resources distributed on a State/Territory basis according to agreed Grants Commission formulas
- the Commonwealth and each State and Territory jointly determining priority areas for services in each State and Territory
- Local government authorities (or Local Learning and Employment Networks where they exist) in each nominated priority areas being advised of the availability of funding for their community
- One community-owned submission invited from each nominated priority area with sufficient preparation and development time allowed for those communities that do not have well-developed community infrastructure
- Strict Criteria established to assess, for example, the extent and inclusiveness of community consultation; the capacity and strength of the partnerships that they encompass; and the cultural appropriateness of the planned service provision model.

## 8.5 Ongoing Reporting Requirements

The following reports will be submitted during the evaluation period.

Date	Report
March 31, 2003	Report of Activities (January-March) (internal working document)
June 31, 2003	Interim/Progress Report on POEM pilots Final evaluation of the CAT programme
September 29	Interim Report
January 2004	Final Evaluation of the POEM programme
February 2004	Final Report – for policy makers Final report – a community partnership resource