School to work transition for young people with disability in Australia: The Ticket to Work approach

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Acknowledgement of Country

We respectfully acknowledge the Wurundjeri People of the Kulin Nation, who are the Traditional Owners of the land on which Centre for Social Impact Swinburne is located in Melbourne's east and outer-east, and pay our respect to their Elders past, present and emerging. We are honoured to recognise our connection to Wurundjeri Country, history, culture, and spirituality through these locations, and strive to ensure that we operate in a manner that respects and honours the Elders and Ancestors of these lands. We also respectfully acknowledge Swinburne's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff, students, alumni, partners, and visitors.

We also acknowledge and respect the Traditional Owners of lands across Australia, their Elders, Ancestors, cultures, and heritage, and recognise the continuing sovereignties of all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Nations.

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Contents

Glossary

ADE	Australian Disability Enterprise
ADS	Australia's Disability Strategy
ASBA	Australian School Based Apprenticeship
ASbAT	Australian School based Apprenticeship and Traineeship
ASD	Autism Spectrum Disorder
DES	Disability Employment Service
DSS	Department of Social Services
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
RTO	Registered Training Organisation
SbAT	School-based Apprenticeship or Traineeship
SLES	School Leaver Employment Supports (NDIS)
TAFE	Technical and Further Education
VDSS	Vocational Education and Training delivered to school students (Victoria)
VET	Vocational Education and Training
VETiS	VET in schools

Note about Ticket to Work

Funding for the Ticket to Work approach ceased in 2022 and the enabling body moved to the Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL). While Ticket to Work networks continue to exist in local areas, BSL are not actively involved in those networks, nor are they providing any enabling function. Those networks are well established and are operating without support.

BSL are evolving the Ticket to Work approach and are testing elements of the approach within four pilot sites across Australia as a component of the Inclusive Pathways to Employment (IPE) pilot. The National Collaborative on Employment Disability (NCED) has been set up by BSL as an enabling and capability hub that informs collaborative policy making, undertakes research and evaluation, facilitates collaboration and capability building across disability and mainstream education, training, and employment services and builds visibility of what works so

that young people with disability can successfully transition from education into decent, secure, and meaningful work.

Executive Summary

This report brings together the international research evidence about elements that result in successful transition from school to work for young people with disability, an analysis of the ecosystem in which young people with disability experience transition from school in Australia, and a description of the Australian transition initiative, Ticket to Work and its impact on transition for this cohort. The report highlights that transition outcomes can be improved for young people with disability when mechanisms are put in place to enhance what is usually available within schools, post school education and in the disability employment ecosystem. In addition, supporting young people and their families to engage in thinking about post school employment early, results in a greater number of work-related opportunities being available to young people during their late schooling and early adult period.

Research evidence broadly identifies six intervention components that function to underpin employment outcomes for young people with disability. These are:

1. Family involvement and high expectations
2. Transition planning
3. Skills development (in-school and post-school) including vocational skill development
4. Work experience / paid employment
5. Employment supports
6. Inter-agency collaboration.

The Australian initiative known as Ticket to Work was developed to improve school to work transition outcomes for young people with disability. The approach was intentionally designed to include evidence-based components of school to work transition for this cohort focusing on three key areas: building capacity of system actors, creating collaborative networked approach, and providing opportunities for students with disability to engage with the world of work. These opportunities focused on four elements of 'good transition': career development and workplace preparation, work experience, vocational training (including Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships), and part time work. As the initiative developed over time, resources were created for families, schools, and employers to enable them to have higher expectations about post school employment for young people with disability and to deliver evidence informed practice to promote early engagement with work activities.

Ticket to Work strongly emphasised collaborative delivery of employment related supports through place-based Networks that create a local collaboration between students with disability, their family members, schools, employment services, training providers and employers. Young people with disability who engaged in a Ticket to Work Network had access

to a broader range of opportunities than their peers, particularly work experience, career planning and School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships. Local employers were engaged in supporting early work activities and employment and training providers were able to include young people with disability in their services. Overall young people engaged in a Ticket to Work Network had nearly double the employment rate of their peers with disability who did not engage with a Network.

This study used an ecosystem lens to explore the barriers and enablers to the implementation of each of the six evidence-based components identified in the literature in the Australian context. Focusing on the macro and meso levels of the employment ecosystem, the analysis highlighted that while there is some policy discourse about school to work transition for people with disability, there is little real action to operationalise this policy into programs, funding, and quality services. Instead, substantial barriers remain in these areas that function to actively prevent school to work transition for this cohort.

This report highlights that the evidence about the key elements necessary to underpin effective transition from school to work for young people with disability is now well established, and provides a clear framework around which to redesign the Australian ecosystem. At the service delivery level, Ticket to Work is one approach that has utilised these elements as principles for its design. By using a place-based focus, and leveraging from philanthropic funding, Ticket to Work was able to circumvent many of the barriers to successful transition posed by the wider employment ecosystem through localised collaborative processes, which transformed the local ecosystem for the better.

Both the research evidence and the evidence from the scaled implementation of Ticket to Work in Australia, are sufficient to warrant this type of approach being made universally available across all areas of Australia, to enable young people with disability to benefit from improved employment outcomes. To achieve this, there is a role for Federal and State governments in redesigning the existing ecosystem to enable this approach to be a permanent and present feature of Australia's strategy to support employment of people with disability. It is likely that employment outcomes for students with disability would improve quickly and dramatically under such a scenario.

Table 1: Evidence-based Intervention Components, Ecosystem Factors and the Ticket to Work Approach

Family involvement and high expectations		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
• Support to families provided early • High expectations continually reinforced • Provision of structured training to develop advocacy and system navigation skills, as well as employment knowledge • Access to mentors with shared experience • Timely information provision • Equipped with employment and transition knowledge • Genuine collaboration between families and schools	• Little structural support for family involvement in the current system (Macro) • Families are the main source of transition support for young people with disability (Meso) • Lack of support for families to understand and navigate the complexity of systems (Meso) • The ad hoc transition support in school results in families being ill-prepared (Meso)	• The collaborative approach effectively 'joined up' the ecosystem for families • Raised expectations about employment, as families saw and heard about students with disability in paid work. • Resources and workshops enabled family members to learn about employment options, to be career allies and provided peer support • Parents had access to a network of complementary supports/services that were coordinated in a sequenced manner • Families were an active member in transition planning

Student focused transition planning		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
• Individualised based on young person's strengths and needs • Student-focused • Self-determined goal setting • Start early before the last stages of a student's education • Collaborative engagement with all stakeholders • Focus on employment and work experience • Long term focus over multiple years	• Despite identification of the need at the policy level, transition planning for young people with disability is not supported by the current elements of the system (Macro) • Highly fragmented and siloed transition process (Macro) • Lack of commonwealth focus school-to-work transition policy/programs, and ad hoc Targeted Action Plans (Macro) • Insufficient attention on employment goals for NDIS participants, and funding has not 'complemented' other commonwealth or state services (Meso) • Students with disability receive support to choose	• Supported career planning that started early and was highly individualised • Provided young people with disability access to the same early career planning activities as other young people participate in. • Emphasis on building the capacity of career planners to support young people with disability as business as usual including created resources suite. • Use of interagency planning process ensured young people had exposure to far greater range of opportunities including paid employment while at school • Opportunities were coordinated and sequenced to student's need

Student focused transition planning		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
	post-school disability service whereas their non-disabled peers are offered transition activities to support choosing careers (Meso) • Transition planning with students with disability is not a systematised feature of the education system, nor of any other service (Meso)	• Reduced the need to navigate highly complex and confusing systems as the planning approach brought the right people and providers to the table at the right time, creating seamless pathways to opportunities

Skills development (in-school and post-school)		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
• Vocational and other skills development • Life skills instruction (for young people with intellectual disability) • Provision of social support during vocational training • Work-based training • College/university opportunities and support	• Complex environment for individuals and services to navigate which creates barriers to accessing skills development activities (Macro) • Interface issues with the NDIS and systems such as higher education and VET reduce opportunities to "blend and braid' funding and supports across the system (Macro) • People with disability are overrepresented in low level general certificates that do not have vocational pathways to employment (Meso) • School based Apprenticeship and Traineeship provide clearer pathways to employment for students with disability, however, they are less likely to undertake compared to their non disabled peers (Meso)	• Strong focus on skills development, including work-based learning, for example through school-based traineeships and vocational education • Traineeship/apprenticeship success was underpinned by the relationships built between VET providers, employers, and schools, supported by the Network lead • Onsite support and training tapped into the way in which many young people with disability prefer to learn, in situ, resulting in high rates of apprenticeship and traineeship completion, opening up pathways into further study and paid employment. • Young people experienced a broader range of skills development, e.g. teamwork, use of public transport due to the range of opportunities available to them

Work experience / paid employment		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
• Early work experience • Structured and well-supported • Utilise social networks to unearth opportunities • Build relationships with employers • Utilise a range of funding sources	• Although it is a key predictor of employment outcomes post school, work experience is not emphasised • Students with disability are often denied opportunities for meaningful work experience while at school (Meso) • Lack of support for students with disability to assist with accessing and supporting work experience at school (Macro)	• Strong focus on supporting young people to engage in early work experience activities while at school • Work experienced included a range of short-term experiences, VET work placement and paid employment such as after school work, and School based Traineeships • Work experience was facilitated through the Network, and supported student's career development, and helped to identify the workplace supports required • Employers engage with work experience of young people with disability which enabled them to build their confidence and skills, but also changed their perception about the types of roles and activities young people with disabilities can undertake

Employment Supports		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
• Customised Employment • Employer support • Supported employment approaches (from US) • Individual Placement and Support approach	• Complexity of access to employment support systems with lack of coordinated design (Macro) • Systems are designed separately around people with disability without disability. Disability Employment Services are unsuitable for young people transitioning from school to work (Macro) • Access to employment support and early career development from	• Customised employment utilised as an approach to support placement into work experience, School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, and after school jobs • Networks worked with large numbers of employers to support them to offer suitable employment and work experience tailored to the needs of young people with disability • Young people, their families and employers had access

Employment Supports		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
	secondary students are limited including support to obtain an after-school job (Macro) • DES Funding systems remunerate employment service providers at the lowest payment level without recognition of the effort of supporting young people with significant disability (Macro) • The capacity of the service system to innovate or implement tailored services has decreased since the marketisation of services/supports and workforce is insufficiently skilled (Meso) • Absence of evidence informed employment supports prior to completing school or after leaving school (Meso)	to range of employment supports depending on their need (i.e. apprenticeship supports, on the jobs supports) and these supports were coordinated reducing duplication of supports • Capacity building and training in evidence-informed employment support practices such as customised employment.

Inter-agency collaboration		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
• Dedicated roles • Use of multiple integrated strategies • A system-wide focus • Capacity building of stakeholders (e.g. employers) • Engagement of employers • Flexible funding strategies • Place-based networks and coordination • Key role of the enabler/intermediary	• Fragmented, disconnected systems characterised by policy silos that limit coordination and collaboration (Macro) • Need for improved integration between employment services and school systems (Macro) • Absence of collaboration or coordination funding for transition (Macro) • Plethora of services and programs that is impossible to navigate, that is further polarised through competitive tendering that disrupts local networks (Meso) • Lack of coordination and collaboration between school, employment	• Collaborative structures were created that worked together so that the Network became more than the sum of its parts • A highly collaborative approach was a visible and effective mechanism that replaced the siloed ecosystem; 'joining up' the ecosystem for the individual young person/family and also organisations within that region • Use of an intermediary (network lead) who was 'neutral' results in support providers coming to the table with a mindset of cooperation rather than competition • Network organisations began to view the challenges young people

Inter-agency collaboration		
Evidence	**Ecosystem Barriers**	**Ticket to Work Approach Ingredients**
	service and NDIS supports (Meso) • Emphasis on navigation rather than activities to achieve inter-agency collaboration or coordination (Meso) • Lack of formalised partnership 'brokers' (Meso)	with disability face through an ecosystem lens, rather than the perceived deficits of the young person, or being stymied by the policy and programmatic limitations of their own service context • Intermediary brokering collaboration between services and blending/braiding of funding, and the sequencing of supports, enabled new opportunities to become available

Introduction

Despite a policy context in Australia that professes to policy goals of increased employment for people with disability and successful school to work transition, people with disability remain less likely to complete year 12, attend university, or gain work experience and employment than their peers (Royal Commission, 2023; Whetton et.al., 2021). In this context, in 2012, Ticket to Work commenced as an initiative to change these outcomes and bring evidence-based transition practice to Australia.

> *Ticket to Work is an initiative that was borne out of an awareness that Australian young people were not successfully transitioning to employment from school and the need to provide targeted support to avoid long term disadvantage. Ticket to Work is underpinned by a philosophy that 'every young person with disability is entitled to participate in the community, source appropriate employment and be socially included' and, that to achieve this, a localised partnership network-driven approach increases the likelihood of achieving the philosophical goal (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p.5).*

Transition From School

The word 'transition' is used to describe the period of time when a young person is preparing to complete their secondary schooling and move to post school study, training, or employment. As well, the broader notion of 'transition to adulthood' encompasses a range of developments as the young person takes up adult roles and identity. As early as 1994, transition was defined as:

> *a change in status from behaving primarily as a student to assuming emergent adult roles in the community. These roles include employment, participating in postsecondary education, maintaining a home, becoming appropriately involved in the community, and experiencing satisfactory personal and social relationships. The process of enhancing transition involves the participation and coordination of school programs, adult agency services, and natural supports within the community. The foundations for transition should be laid during the elementary and middle school years, guided by the broad concept of career development. Transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and students should be encouraged, to the full extent of their capabilities, to assume a maximum amount of responsibility for such planning* (Halpern, 1994, p. 117).

In the context of transition from school, transition has traditionally been considered successful if the young person moves from school to study, training, or employment in a lineal way and within a short, defined period of time (Cebulla & Whetton, 2018). However, research has established that, in contemporary Western society, 'transition' can occur over an extended period (of around 7-10 years), is not always linear, and can consist of multiple transitions (Arnett, 2000; Cebulla & Whetton, 2018; Walsh et al., 2019; Kelly et al., 2019).

For young people with disability, particularly significant disability, transition has more commonly involved operational 'transfer' from the school system to the adult disability system (particularly health and social care), with success defined by how smoothly the transfer occurred and how suitable the disability service was for the young person and their family (Pearson et. al., 2021). The operational nature of transition supports, and a lack of shared understanding, can also result in young people with disability, family members and the service system being uncoordinated, all working within different transition timeframes (Jacobs et al., 2018; Redgrove et al., 2016). Increasingly however, there is growing interest in supporting young people with disability to transition from school to study, training, and work just as their non-disabled peers do.

Transition to paid work post-school for young people with disability has become a focus in Australia and internationally, given paid work's normative role in young people's lives and the benefits it provides (Hennessey, Wiliams-Diehm and Martin, 2023). In the US, there has also been an emphasis on transition to post-school education, especially for under-represented groups such as young people with intellectual disability, and evidence has highlighted its role in later paid employment outcomes (Grigal & Dwyre, 2010; Moore & Schelling, 2015). There has also been an emphasis in the US on a broader concept of 'post school success', which encompasses a broader range of outcomes such as independent living and community involvement (Mazzotti et. al., 2021). Overall…

> *Contemporary transition policies and practices are grounded in the belief that students with disabilities are far more likely to achieve their aspirations for life after high school if provided the right combination of opportunities, instruction, services, and supports (Trainor et al, 2020: 5).*

Overview of Report Structure

This report brings together the international research evidence about elements that result in successful transition from school to work for young people with disability, an analysis of the ecosystem in which young people with disability experience transition from school in Australia, and a description of the Australian transition initiative, Ticket to Work and its impact on transition for this cohort. It aims to highlight how transition outcomes can be improved for young people with disability in the context of the existing disability employment ecosystem, where barriers to a normative transition remain.

This report is divided into four sections. Section 1 summarises the evidence about 'what works' in supporting the transition from school to employment or further education for young people with a disability, particularly those with an intellectual disability. Section 2 analyses the design of the Australian disability employment ecosystem and its potential to enable the evidence-based elements of transition, including those that underpin the success of the Ticket to Work approach. Section 3 describes the Australian transition approach 'Ticket to Work', along with its outcomes. Section 4 highlights how Ticket to Work Networks drew on the evidence-based elements to transform or circumvent local ecosystems, reducing barriers to successful transition for young people with disability.

This report provides evidence-based and practical guidance about how successful transition from school to employment for people with disability can occur.

Section 1: Reviewing the Evidence on Transition Practice

There is increasing interest in creating pathways to post school employment for people with significant disabilities in Australia, to replace the existing transition structures that are primarily focused on transferring young people from school to disability services.

In Australia, the introduction of the NDIS, new priority areas in Australia's Disability Strategy (2021) and the findings of the Disability Royal Commission (2023) have sharpened the focus on improved transition and employment outcomes for young people with disability. However, there are few studies in the Australian context which demonstrate 'what works' and how the ingredients of success can be embedded into systems so that all young people with disability have access to them.

Therefore, it is necessary to review the Australian and international literature related to transition from school to employment so that evidence-based practice can be incorporated into transition from school for young people with disabilities, particularly those with significant disability who are at high risk of transitioning from school to non-work activities.

A note on the state of the evidence

The existing literature on school transition largely focuses on young people with disability generally, rather than by cohort, though a subset of research provides this focus for some cohorts. In the main, this review focuses on the literature set that is pan-disability, with additional inclusion of studies specifically about young people with intellectual disability, given that they are a cohort at high risk of transitioning to non-work activities post school (Australian Bureau of Statistics, 2012; Cheng et al., 2018; Leonard et. al. 2016).

Spanning several decades, there is now a strong and compelling research base suggesting the benefits of effective transition planning practices in shaping in-school and post-school outcomes for students with disabilities (Agran et al., 2000; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Newman et al., 2016; Scott and Shogren, 2023; Shogren et al., 2017; Wei et al., 2016). The substantial literature related to transition of young people from school into post school activities and into employment focuses on both:

1. evidence about *in-school* ingredients of success (including the substantial focus on transition programming in-school). Reviews of the literature (Baer et al., 2011; Cobb et al., 2013; Haber et al., 2016; Kohler et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2021; Test et al., 2009) have identified a set of *in-school practices* that predict post-school outcomes for young people with disability.

2. evidence about effective *post-school* programs and employment supports.

Six Intervention Components to Achieve Employment Outcomes for Young People with Disability

These two broad evidence sets (in-school and post-school) have areas of commonality, including where similar approaches have efficacy in both contexts. Across them, evidence clusters around six intervention components that function to underpin employment outcome for young people with disability. These are:

1. Family involvement and high expectations
2. Transition planning
3. Skills development (in-school and post-school) including vocational skill development
4. Work experience / paid employment
5. Employment supports
6. Inter-agency collaboration.

Each of these components will be explored below, using the evidence to identify characteristics affecting their efficacy.

However, it should also be noted that transition and employment outcomes for young people with disability are affected by other 'non controllable' factors. These include:

- personal and family characteristics (such as functional academic skills, high school completion, family income, ethnicity) (Papay & Bambara, 2014),
- location of residence and schooling (e.g. whether the school setting was urban or rural) (Papay & Bambara, 2014), and
- the broader policy and program environment (including policies, drivers for systemic change, and availability and type of post-school services and supports) (Certo et al., 2003; Rusch et al., 2009).

These factors are addressed further in Section 3.

Table 1: Summary of six evidence-based intervention components

Component	Evidenced ingredients
Family involvement and high expectations	• Support to families provided early • High expectations continually reinforced • Provision of structured training to develop advocacy and system navigation skills, as well as employment knowledge • Access to mentors with shared experience • Timely information provision • Equipped with employment and transition knowledge • Genuine collaboration between families and schools
Student focused transition planning	• Individualised based on young person's strengths and needs • Student-focused • Self-determined goal setting • Start early before the last stages of a student's education • Collaborative engagement with all stakeholders • Focus on employment and work experience • Long term focus over multiple years
Skills development (in-school and post-school)	• Vocational and other skills development • Life skills instruction (for young people with intellectual disability) • Provision of social support during vocational training • Work-based training • College/university opportunities and support
Work experience / paid employment	• Early work experience • Structured and well-supported • Utilise social networks to unearth opportunities • Build relationships with employers • Utilise a range of funding sources
Employment supports	• Customised Employment • Employer support • Supported employment approaches (from US) • Individual Placement and Support approach
Inter-agency collaboration	• Dedicated roles • Use of multiple integrated strategies • A system-wide focus • Capacity building of stakeholders (e.g. employers) • Engagement of employers • Flexible funding strategies • Place-based networks and coordination • Key role of the enabler/intermediary

The evidence related to each component is summarised below.

Family Involvement and High Expectations

What is it?

The important role families play in supporting young people with disabilities through transition is well established in the literature (Kohler et al., 2016; Landmark et al., 2010; Leonard et al., 2016; Smith & Routel, 2010). A positive correlation between family engagement in transition planning and improved post-school outcomes for students with disabilities has been identified (Kohler et al., 2017).

In the transition context, family involvement generally refers to family members' involvement in transition planning, such as through developing individual education plans (IEPs) and post-school goal setting (Papay & Bambara, 2014), although there is increasing recognition of the role families play in supporting employment post-school (Hirano & Rowe, 2015; Crosbie, 2023). Parents play a key role in shaping the employment aspirations for young people with disability, for example by the modelling of work roles (Hall et al. 2018). Families are also often the main support systems for young people (Dyke et al., 2013; Giri et al., 2022; Jacobs et al., 2018; McMahon et al., 2020), providing practical and emotional support, helping to build a vision of their adult lives, and advocating for the services and supports to enact the vision (Davies & Beamish, 2009; Jacobs et al., 2018). Particularly for people with intellectual disability, the family is the key player in transition planning (Jacobs et al., 2018) and organising or providing employment support (Crosbie, 2023).

Parents, family members and others in the young person's life have expectations about what is realistic for their child's future (Martinez, Conroy, & Cerreto, 2012). These expectations have a significant impact on the employment outcomes of youth with disability, particularly intellectual disability (Carter et al., 2017). Low expectations, coupled with poor transition planning, lead to decision making that is focused on reducing risk, often resulting in choices that have a non-vocational focus (Hetherington et al., 2010; Redgrove et al., 2016; Gilson et al., 2018; Noel et al., 2017). Lack of work experience/exploration also reinforces low expectations (Bellman et al., 2014; Blustein et al., 2016; Carter et al., 2017; Chambers et al., 2004; Luecking & Luecking, 2015; Lysaght et al., 2017).

What are the key ingredients?

Supporting families in developing high expectations about work for young people with disability, particularly intellectual and developmental disability, is most effective when the **support is provided early**, and the **high expectations are continually reinforced** (Blustein et al., 2016;

Francis et al., 2018). For example, providing families with **structured training and support to develop advocacy skills, build understanding of employment opportunities,** and **learn how to navigate systems** has been effective in raising expectations (Francis et al., 2013; Roy, 2021). A key element is ensuring families are equipped with employment and transition knowledge, such as how to utilize formal and informal supports including drawing on other family, friends, and networks to support the transition from school to work (Francis et al., 2013).

Family expectations are influenced by providing **access to mentors** and others with shared experiences (Carter et al., 2017; Francis et al., 2013). Expectations are also impacted by **timely access to information** (Martinez et al., 2012; Carter et al., 2017; Chambers et al., 2004), which families report is not readily available, particularly about post school options (Carter et al., 2017; Davies & Beamish, 2009; Gauthier-Boudrealt et al., 2017; Jacobs et al., 2018; Leonard et al., 2016). Information frequently fails to reach families of young people at the crucial time they need it (Dyke et al., 2013). In the Australian context, families have described a short timeframe for the provision of transition information (Dyke et al., 2013; Leonard et al., 2016; McMahon et al., 2020), with information provision too narrowly focused on disability services for post-school life, rather than on preparation for work and for later adult life (Beamish et al., 2012; Dyke et al., 2013).

Family members have reported low involvement in transition planning (Davies & Beamish, 2009; Leonard et al., 2016). Even when they are involved in meetings and planning activities, these were often led by the school rather than families leading the process in **genuine collaboration between schools and family members** (Crosbie, 2023). Parent engagement should include:

- engagement in training opportunities and information sessions at school about post-school and community-based services
- introductions to employment services
- family visits to post school service agencies
- exploring role models who can provide a vision to the young person and their family of what adult life might be like
- being part of family support groups focused on transition to adulthood issues, including seeking and finding employment
- actively building networks in the community
- actively supporting the young person's growing independence over time

- engagement in supporting students in domains of life beyond work such as recreation and leisure, continued education, and community participation (Sheppard, Harrington, & Howard, 2017).

Family-centred transition planning also involves listening to families' concerns, such as concern for safety in the workplace or the impact of wages on income support payments (Southward & Kyzar, 2017).

What is the evidence of outcomes?

Parental expectation is the greatest predictor of paid work for people with intellectual disability (Carter et al., 2017; Hall et al., 2018; Papay & Bambara, 2014; Kirby et al., 2019; Southward & Kyzar, 2017). For example, one US study (Carter et al., 2012) found that parental expectations of post-school employment resulted in employment rates 58 times higher for young people with intellectual disability whose parents expected them to be employed than for those who didn't. High expectations lead to access to more opportunities, such as undertaking paid and unpaid work experience (Carter et al., 2011a). High expectations of parents about young people's self-sufficiency result in increased parental action to support the acquisition of this goal - for example, by ensuring that they develop independent living skills (Francis et al., 2018).

Family-centred transition planning positively impacts on expectations for the future, improving outcomes related to self-determination and employment-related decision-making (Kohler et al., 2016; Meadows, 2009). Family involvement in transition planning is a significant predictor of post-school outcomes (Gilson et al., 2018; Kohler et al., 2016; Pleet-Odle et al., 2016; Kohler & Field, 2003; Kraemer et al., 2003), particularly in relation to post-school education (Papay & Bambara, 2014).

Family members developing advocacy skills was identified as helpful in navigating complex adult systems (Hirano and Rowe, 2015), creating high expectations (Hagner et al., 2012) and improving outcomes (Pleet-Odle et al., 2016).

Student Focused Transition Planning

What is it?

There has been a strong focus in the literature on the importance of transition planning for young people with disability (i.e. Kohler et al, 2017; Mazzotti et al, 2021; Shogren and Wehmeyer, 2020;)

According to Mazzotti et al. (2009),

> *The primary purpose of transition planning is to clearly define the student's postsecondary goals by addressing and defining student strengths, needs, and desires to develop an appropriate curricular plan, including academic and functional coursework and community-based instruction necessary to meet postsecondary goals (p. 45).*

The responsibility for transition planning rests largely with schools. However, unlike the USA, there are no Commonwealth or state laws in Australia that require educational authorities to provide individualised transition plans to secondary students with disabilities (O'Neill et. al., 2016) – discussed further in Section 3.

What are the key ingredients?

Transition planning must be a **systematic and structured process** in which stakeholders and agencies collaborate to provide a continuum of services individualized to the person (Kohler & Field, 2003).

> *Transition-oriented schools focus also on systematic community involvement in the development of educational options, community-based learning opportunities, systematic inclusion of students in the social life of the school, and increased expectations related to skills, values, and outcomes for all students (Kohler & Field, 2003, p.179).*

Transition planning needs to **start early** and be a **collaborative process** with the young person, their family and other stakeholders. A range of research reinforces that it should commence at the age of 14 before the students are in the last stages of their education (Cimera et. al. 2014; Kohler et al., 2017). Transition supports that start too late and are not collaborative lead to poor-quality provision of the information required to support effective decision-making. Families have reported that commencing a transition focus in the last year of school is too late given the complexity of barriers young people with disability face when leaving school (Foley et al., 2013).

Parents describe the time of finishing school as a 'cliff' (Davies & Beamish, 2009, p.255), with little information provided about the options available to the young person which leads to short term decision making. Transition planning needs to be highly **collaborative** between the school, the person with disability, family members and key services (Kirby et al., 2019; Papay & Bambara, 2014).

Evidence-based transition planning is a **longer term**, coordinated process embedded within 'transition-focused education' (Kohler & Field, 2003). Best practice views transition planning not as an 'add-on activity' (p. 176) but as a core part of education programs and extra curricula activities across multiple years.

Individualized transition planning is considered best practice (Papay & Bambra, 2014) and can be linked to Individual Education or Learning Plans (IEP/ILP) within schools. Individualised transition plans should be based on the young person's strengths, preferences, needs and interests (Kohler & Field, 2003).

Youth involvement and the **fostering of self-determination** are key ingredients of effective transition planning. This is also important for young people with intellectual disability so that they are supported to decide what they want, rather than having external providers plan for them (Foley et al., 2012). A focus on self-determination, 'i.e. engaging in goal-directed, self-regulated, autonomous behaviour or the involvement of students in transition goal-setting activities' (Davies & Beamish, 2009, p.255) is critical (Papay & Bambra, 2014). However, research has consistently found that students with disabilities are less likely to take leadership roles in their transition planning (Shogren & Plotner, 2012), or to be involved in any meaningful way at all (Jacobs et al., 2018). In one Australian study, less than two thirds of young people with intellectual disability were involved in planning their transition process (Leonard et al., 2016). Instead, school-based personnel planned their transitions, often with little involvement of external agencies.

Within a transition context, a focus on self-determination might include teaching self-determination skills and behaviours as part of transition (Davies & Beamish, 2009). Self-determination strategies, particularly in regard to career planning and employment, are evolving for young people in general and more specifically for those with intellectual disability. For example, the Self-Directed Career Design Model (SDCDM), which is a structured process focusing on employment goals, plans and learning, and has an emerging evidence base (e.g. Sowers and Swank, 2017; Dean et al., 2019).

In addition, focused career development planning for students with disability enables normative career exploration activities to be provided and supports choice making and decision

making. Career planning should have a **long-term perspective** that aims to support the person as their needs and aspirations change over time and they mature.

What is the evidence of outcomes?

An early focus on transition planning for young people with disability leads to improved employment outcomes (Baer et al., 2011; Luecking & Luecking, 2015; Test, Fowler, & Kohler, 2013; Cimera, et al., 2011; Andersén et al., 2018; Bouck, 2012; Kohler & Field, 2003; Sheppard, Harrington, & Howard, 2017; Cimera, Burgess, Bedesem, 2014). There is strong evidence from large scale studies of people with intellectual disability in the United States, that commencing transition planning at 14 years, compared to 16 years, results in significantly increased employment outcomes (Cimera, Burgess, Bedesem, 2014). Wei et al. (2016) found that both transition planning participation and having a primary transition goal of college enrolment during secondary school were associated with higher odds of attending a 2- or 4-year college among the sample of youth with ASD. Similarly, research shows that where plans included individualized goals related to gaining paid employment, this increased employment outcomes (Southward & Kyzar, 2017).

Papay and Bambara (2014) found that youth with intellectual disability who were involved in their transition planning were five times more likely to be employed two years post-school. This aligns with previous research findings that effective early transition planning which involves students, particularly in their Individual Education Plan (IEP) meetings, is a key strategy (Kohler et al., 2016; Mazzotti et al., 2012; Test et al., 2009; Winn & Hay, 2009).

Skills Development (in-school and post-school)

What is it?

Skills development encompasses activities both in-school and post-school, including those integrated into work roles and settings (work integrated learning). Skills encompass both vocational and non-vocational skills, including life skills such as learning banking, food preparation and cooking, grocery shopping, home maintenance and laundry skills, as well as independent travel skills and communication skills.

Vocational skills can be developed both in-school and post-school. In the in-school context, School Based Apprenticeships and Traineeships and the integration of vocational skills training in secondary education are key strategies. School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships enable young people to undertake part time paid employment and training in an apprenticeship

or traineeship while they are still in secondary school (usually years 11 and 12). While people with disability have lower representation within apprenticeships and traineeships, there is some evidence to suggest that people with disability complete apprenticeships and traineeships at only slightly lower rates than their peers without disability (Ball & John, 2005; Lewis et al. 2011a) and that these pathways to work can be very positive for people with disability (Thorensen et. al., 2021),

> *Apprenticeships and traineeships have been shown to be beneficial pathways for people with disabilities, particularly for people with intellectual and learning disabilities* (Lewis, Thoresen & Cocks 2011a, 2011b), *for obtaining qualifications and employment as they combine training and education with practical work* (Cocks & Thorensen, 2013, p.7).

Increasingly, post-school education is recognised as a normative pathway to higher employment outcomes for young people post-school (Hart & Grigal, 2010). One strategy to increase young people with intellectual disability's involvement in post-school education in the United States is college-based transition programs, in which transition-aged students are enrolled in school and at college simultaneously (Grigal & Papay, 2018). In the US, 305 colleges provide post-secondary education programs to approximately 6440 students with intellectual disability (Think College National Coordinating Center Accreditation Workgroup, 2021). Students are enrolled in fully inclusive programs alongside students without disability, in hybrid programs that combine inclusive and segregated activities, and in segregated programs that are taught on college campuses (Grigal et al., 2012; Hart et al., 2006). Dual enrolment is a college experience in which students can participate while still in high school, providing students with intellectual and developmental disability the chance to receive community-based transition services on a college campus with same-age peers in lieu of remaining in high school (Grigal & Bass, 2018). In Australia, two Universities offer programs for people with intellectual disability where students engage in classes but are not assessed.

What are the key ingredients?

Vocational skills development

Vocational Education and Training delivered to school students in Victorian schools which includes some form of work placement (Cocks & Thoresen, 2013).

Observation and feedback of/to people with intellectual disability to develop their skills has been identified in studies as the key to vocational training (Gomes-Machado et al., 2016).

Observers play a crucial role in providing insights and feedback for primary participants about the actions undertaken (Rantatalo et al., 2019).

The development of self-determination skills that enhance the ability to make decisions regarding the questions that affect one's life and to act on the basis of these choices, should be a key focus of the vocational training process. Training must **reinforce the activities that develop autonomy** and minimize gradually the need for assistance and support in the work environment (Gomes-Machado et al., 2016). In addition, an Australian study has outlined the value of **social support** in assisting people with disability to successfully complete vocational education (Polidano and Mavromaras, 2011).

College-based post school education

College-based programs need to offer authentic experiences that are a **normative blend of academic activities**; **social and associational activities** (involving friendships and formal social networks and groups); and **employment exploration activities** (such as internships and holiday employment) (Uditsky and Hughson, 2012). These activities are linked to the predictors of post-school success such as career awareness and occupational readiness courses, and have been found to be more prevalent in college-based transition services than in conventional school-based ones (Grigal, et al., 2021).

Ingredients that have been found to be important within the three components of academic, social and employment activities include:

Academic:

- Provision of extra instruction, academic support, and coaching (Grigal, et al., 2012; Moore & Schelling 2015; Thoma et al., 2011; Ryan, et al., 2019).
- Flexibility in the schedules of students and staff (Scheef, 2019).

Employment exploration:

- Career-related preparation including:
    - career discovery practices to identify the unique strengths and interests of individual students (Scheef, 2019)
    - vocational experience through networking and internship/job placement (Gilson & Carter, 2016; Skellern & Astbury, 2012; Ryan, et al., 2019)
    - employment officers and job coaches to support students in accessing employment opportunities (Skellern & Astbury, 2012; Ryan, et al., 2019)

- open days and job shops (Skellern & Astbury, 2012; Scheef, 2019).

Social and associational:

- Access to support to meet daily mental and physical needs, such as via classmates and personal carers (Uditsky & Hughson 2012).

Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

One model shown to facilitate successful post-school employment outcomes including employment for students with disability is participation in internships prior to finishing high school. Internships involve a student working within a host organisation to learn skills that benefit both the business and the intern (Daston et al., 2012; Wehman et al., 2018). One internship model – Project SEARCH, an employment training program for high school students with disability (USA originated but now global) – has documented success in the literature (Christensen & Richardson, 2017; Kaehne, 2016; Project SEARCH, n.d.). Project SEARCH programs are available to young people with significant intellectual and developmental disability – generally high school students who have a recognised disability and are in their last year of high school, though the program can also be adapted for young people who have completed school. The model involves intensive job-site training and minimal time spent in the classroom, with students primarily spending their time in real settings where they learn and practice work and social skills (Schall et al., 2015). The model includes short, daily classroom-based training sessions in employability skills such as workplace safety and self-advocacy. Students then rotate through a number of different 10- to 12-week internships in a supportive workplace, receiving support to acquire job skills from teachers and post-school employment specialists. Towards the end of the program, they focus on individualised job development to enable them to move into open employment (Persch et al., 2015). The focus is on intensive on-the-job training supplemented by classroom learning (Wehman et al., 2018).

What is the evidence of outcomes?

Persons with and without disabilities who have undertaken post-secondary education experience higher rates of employment and income. Education offers a variety of advantages for individuals, with more education resulting in higher rates of employment, regardless of disability (Smith, Grigal, & Sulewsi, 2012; Butler et al., 2016). In studies in the US, employees with intellectual disability who have post-secondary educational experience work more hours and earn higher wages across a wider range of occupations than youth with less education (Wehman et al., 2018; Grigal, Hart & Migliore, 2011).

Vocational skills development and Work Integrated Learning (WIL)

Work-based training such as apprenticeships and traineeships are strong vocational pathways with good employment outcomes for young people with disability (Cocks & Thoresen, 2013). Vocational skills development should occur in **real world contexts**, through offering community-based training experiences (Fields & Demchak, 2019).

Vocational Education and Training (VET) improves employment prospects for people with a disability (Cocks & Thoresen, 2013; Cavanagh et al., 2019; Southward & Kyzar, 2017). In Australia, 73.7% of students with disability who graduated from VET programs in 2018 were employed or continued to further study. 45.5% of graduates from VET in 2018 who had a disability improved their employment status as a result of their VET studies. This includes getting a job when they previously did not have one, or getting a job benefit such as being promoted to a higher skill level job (Productivity Commission, 2020a). An Australian study found that completing a VET qualification increases the chances of employment and improves the chances of continuous job tenure two to three years after completion, and that completing a VET qualification may indicate to employers that their disability does not affect their ability, motivation, and commitment to perform employment and general tasks (Cavanagh et al., 2019). In addition, the social benefits for people with disability in participating in apprenticeships and traineeships were identified by Cocks and Thoresen (2013) and also by Gomes-Machado et al., (2016) who evidenced 'an expansion of sociability through interpersonal relations with colleagues' (p.38).

Evidence suggests that internship models are effective, although whether that effectiveness is related to particular employment settings, and which factors contribute to the success are not clear. A range of studies on the Project SEARCH internship model have shown that the model is successful in supporting students to obtain paid employment post-school (Wehman et al., 2017; Christensen et al., 2017). Likewise Australian studies of the Integrated Practical Placement (IPP) program, adapted from the Project Search model, have shown that 80% of students attained paid employment or paid traineeships and experienced other outcomes such as increased confidence, independence, and maturity (White et al., 2019). Studies have also shown the effectiveness of Project SEARCH for participants with intellectual disability (Kaehne, 2016).

Carter et al. (2011a) found that students with intellectual disability who participated in internships and other work preparation programs gained more paid work experience. Participation in a structured school-based internship program positively predicted employment outcomes for students with cognitive disability (Jun et al., 2015).

College-based post-school education

Research on post-school education for young people with disability is currently lacking (Wehman et al., 2018). The overwhelming majority of the available literature is descriptive in nature (Moore & Schelling, 2015), and provides little understanding of how post-school education specifically impacts on employment rates, or how the various practices used in post-school education programs impact employment outcomes (Grigal et al., 2012).

However, available evaluations demonstrate substantial gains in employment outcomes for students undertaking college-based transition programs (Moore & Schelling, 2015). Moore and Schelling (2015) used US national data *(NLTS-2)* to compare outcomes, finding that post-school education programs achieved integrated employment rates for people with intellectual disability of between 73% and 91%, while previous research reported rates of 58- 83% across two programs (Migliore and Butterworth, 2009; Grigal and Dwyre, 2010). In addition, once in the workforce, college graduates with intellectual disability worked more hours and earned higher wages across a wider range of occupations than those without college experience (Cimera et al., 2018). Young people's sustained involvement in social activities on campus combined with inclusive academic coursework enabled them to develop skills needed for employment success (Prohn et al., 2018). The building of social capital occurs through involvement in co-curricular activities. Students with intellectual disability enrolled in US colleges experience college life alongside their peers, meet new people and form friendships (Uditsky and Hughson, 2008; Rillotta et al. 2020).

There have been few studies on post-school education for young people with intellectual disabilities in Australia, with two notable exceptions: the 'Up the Hill Project' delivered at Flinders University (Rillotta et al., 2020), and the 'Uni 2 beyond' program developed by Sydney University to include young people with intellectual disability in university life as a means of increasing social inclusion and employment (O'Brien et al., 2019). Individual participants reported positive experiences, including increased learning, independence, self-determination, social networks, and preparation for employment (Gadow & MacDonald, 2018; Rillotta et al., 2020).

Work Experience / Paid Employment

What is it?

Work experience includes short on-the-job tasters, internships, work sampling, paid work (i.e. an after-school job), Apprenticeships and Traineeships, and unpaid work. Work experience is a key mechanism by which individuals, including people with disability, learn about the world of work and build relevant skills and confidence.

What are the key ingredients?

Early work experience opportunities are a key ingredient of work experience. A number of state-based strategies in the US, such as Tennessee Works (Carter et al., 2017) and The Let's Get to Work Wisconsin program (Molfenter et al., 2017), have focused on early work experience as a way to change expectations and attitudes among families, educators, employers, and other professionals about students with intellectual disability's outcomes.

Work experience needs to be both **structured and well-supported**. Lindstrom et al. (2014) reported that structured and well-supported work experience helped young people learn about work, develop soft skills, and task skills and become more independent in the workplace. Molfenter et al. (2017) found that participating in more highly structured school-sponsored work and unpaid internships positively predicted employment outcomes for students with intellectual and developmental disability. Where studies have been unable to surface evidence about the efficacy of work experience as a predictor of later employment for young people with intellectual disability specifically, this has been linked to the quality of the work experience provided, including a lack of structure and support particularly within school-arranged work (Baer et al., 2011; Daviso et al., 2016). The provision of **tailored support** can expand work experience opportunities. Tailored support can include Discovery and Vocational Profiling as a 'person-centered exploration of an individual's strengths, preferences, interests, and needs' (Wehman et al., 2018, p.134), as well as provision of onsite supports (for example, on-site training, job coaching, customization of job tasks, personal care support, travel training, assistive technology etc.) (Petcu et al., 2015; Scheef, 2019).

Unearthing work experience opportunities is aided by **using existing social networks**. Social capital (that is, the personal and professional networks of those in the job-seeker's life) is a critical component of success in fostering employment. Many people with disability rely on the social networks of family and friends to link to employment opportunities (Southward & Kyzar, 2017; Meltzer et al., 2016; Inge et al., 2018). Work-related circles of support (small groups of

individuals working together with the person with disability to create a desired life) have also been used to generate possible work experience opportunities for people with intellectual disability (Burke & Ball, n.d.; Spagnolo et al., 2017).

Also valuable is the **building of relationships with employers** through negotiation around mutually beneficial job roles, seeking feedback, engaging employers into the school or post-secondary education program, utilizing existing employer networks and providing training to employers about how to work with people with disability (Scheef, 2019).

Molfenter et. al. (2017) identified the promising practice of **utilising a range of funding sources** for services and supports (for example, from the school, from individualized funding) to 'braid' funding together to support early work experiences (Molfenter et al., 2017).

What is the evidence of outcomes?

Work experience has a range of benefits for young people with intellectual and developmental disability that may support later employment, including influencing parental expectations (Blustein et al., 2016; Carter et al., 2017; Luecking & Luecking, 2015; Lysaght et al., 2017). Work experience has also been identified as a strategy to promote self-determination. When linked to Individual Education Plans and goals it can be used as an assessment tool. It also builds confidence and helps to identify young people with intellectual disability's strengths and interests as well as supporting understanding of the accommodations they need (Dean et al., 2019).

Numerous studies (Test et al., 2009 & 2013; Wehman et al., 2014) have associated work experience with positive employment outcomes for students with disability, particularly intellectual disability. Work experience in general, and especially during school years, is a strong predictor of later employment for people with intellectual disability (Molfenter et al., 2017; Petcu, Chezan, & Van Horn, 2015; Scheef, et al., 2018; Wehman et al., 2018; Joshi et al. 2012; Southward & Kyzar, 2017). A number of studies found that paid work experience, while attending secondary school, more than doubles post-secondary open employment outcomes for people with intellectual disabilities (Southward & Kyzar, 2017). Papay and Bambara (2014) found it to be a predictor of employment two to four years post-school. Multiple studies (Carter et al., 2011a; Carter et al., 2012; Wehman et al., 2014) have analysed US national data (*NLTS-2*) which strongly suggested that youth with intellectual and developmental disability who had paid work experience during their schooling were more likely to have a paid job after graduation. Likewise, Luecking and Luecking (2015) found that while work experience was the single most important predictor of later work for students with intellectual disability, the impact doubled if they had paid work. Carter et al. (2012) also found

paid work, either school-sponsored or in community employment, was associated with employment post-school.

Employment Supports

What is it?

A range of supports and services have been provided to people with disability seeking to attain employment, including those who are at the stage of school to work transition.

Supported employment[1] is an evidence-based practice widely used in the United States to support individuals with significant disabilities in achieving inclusion in integrated work (Drake et al., 2012; Verdugo et al., 2006; Wehman, et al., 2014). Underpinning supported employment is the understanding that the majority of people can work in a competitive job if provided with appropriate workplace and family supports (Wehman et al., 2018). Over time, it has become an accepted best practice in the employment of people with intellectual and other disabilities (Lysaght et al., 2017). As practiced in the US, supported employment has four phases: getting to know the jobseeker; job development and matching; training and support; and job retention services (Schall et al., 2015; Wehman, 2012).

There are four elements of supported employment:

- Personalised assessment
- Job Development and Placement
- Job Site Training
- Ongoing Support

(Kregel et al., 2020)

Two more targeted approaches within supported employment: customised employment and Individual Placement and Support. These are summarised below.

Customised employment is a highly personalised supported employment approach for people with significant disability, including intellectual disability (Riesen et al., 2015). As with supported employment, this approach is fundamentally underpinned by the belief that

everyone can work in an open environment if well supported (Griffin et al., 2012). In particular, it targets individuals who require customisation of job responsibilities beyond those that naturally occur within the labour market, reducing competition with other job seekers by engaging in direct negotiation with an employer to customise a role so that it is suitable for a specific individual (Inge et al., 2018). Customised employment commences with a Discovery process in which the individual's strengths, interests and preferences are identified, resulting in a clear understanding of available employment opportunities that meet both an employer's and the young person's needs and interests (Wehman et al., 2018). It develops job roles through job carving, negotiation, and creation, and through the use of microenterprises (Riesen et al., 2015). It also recognises the need for long-term follow-up with both employee and employer (Wehman et al., 2018). Customising the approach and providing on-site training show promise in terms of supporting young people with intellectual disability to achieve transition to work, particularly since this cohort of people are less likely to have all the skills required to satisfy a typical open employment job vacancy (Xu & Stancliffe, 2019).

Individual Placement and Support (IPS) is an evidence-based approach to supported employment that is predominately used to support people with mental illness (Drake et al., 2012; Noel et al., 2017). There is growing interest in using it to support people with other disability types, including intellectual disability (Noel et al., 2017; Wehman et al., 2020). However, due to the different employment support needs of people with intellectual disability, Noel et al. (2017) suggest that it would need to be modified to provide additional on-site support and social skills training, and fully involve young people and their family members in order to ensure high expectations about employment are maintained (Noel et al., 2017).

What are the key ingredients?

Increasingly there is a shift to a strengths-based approach which recognises that people with disabilities have personal competencies that need to be understood and leveraged to guide the planning of supports (Buntinx & Schalock, 2010; Wehmeyer, 2020). Supported employment therefore emphasises capacity and capabilities, and an individual's positive attributes rather than their deficits (Wehman et al., 2003). Evidenced common ingredients of supported employment include:

- a commitment by stakeholders to competitive (open) employment as an attainable goal for people with disability;
- a rapid job search approach to help people obtain jobs directly, rather than through lengthy pre-employment assessment, training, and counselling;

- individualized job placements are made according to individual preferences, strengths, and work experiences;
- supports are maintained indefinitely;
- the supported employment program is closely integrated with any mental health treatment / service (Bond et al., 2001).

Overall, Wehman et al. (2020) note that 'a significant body of evidence exists that support its specific components—assessment, job development, on-the-job training, and ongoing support' (p.10).

Common ingredients of the customised employment approach include:

- the job-seeker's interests, preferences, and talents drive the employment development process, not the labour market;
- a negotiation of mutual benefit between the jobseeker and the employer;
- the provision of long-term workplace supports, such as workplace training and support, that are not time limited;
- supports are tailored to the needs of the person and to the employer to ensure ongoing employment is maintained (Inge et al., 2018; King & Waghorn, 2018; Luecking & Luecking, 2006; Riesen et al., 2015; Smith, et al., 2018; Wehman et al., 2018).

What is the evidence of outcomes?

Wehman et al. (2014) found that provision of supported employment increased employment rates for youth with all types of disability, but especially for youth who were Social Security beneficiaries, special education students, and individuals with intellectual disabilities or Autism who were high school graduates. In the US, where supported employment is widely used, between 20% and 25% of people with intellectual and developmental disability are employed in a community-based job (Wehmeyer et al., 2019). Supported employment has also been found to be more cost-effective than sheltered employment (Cimera et al., 2011; Wehman et al., 2018), and is related to improvements in social inclusion and quality of life (Akkerman et al., 2016; Dague, 2012; Voermans et al., 2021).

The evidence base for customised employment has been developing since the early 2000's. In the US, Inge et al. (2018) reported that using customised employment led to high employment rates for people with intellectual disability, as did Wehman et al. (2014) in a randomised controlled trial with young people with Autism. In addition, customised employment has been

used as a component of other successful programs, including college-based post-school education and Project SEARCH (Moore & Schelling, 2015; Persch et al., 2015).

Inter-agency Collaboration

What is it?

Interagency collaboration describes coordination between education agencies and adult services, including employment-related service providers (Plotner et al., 2018), and is described as:

> *key people from school personnel, family members, businesses, and human service agencies working together to promote successful post-school outcomes (Steere, Rose, and Cavaiuolo, 2007 quoted in Taylor et al., 2016, p.163).*

There is increasing interest in the role it plays in supporting post-school success for young people with disability, including intellectual disability.

Interagency collaboration can occur at several levels: 1. around a single school and its students, 2. on a broader local or regional basis, 3. at the level of State policies and programs (Butterworth et al. 2017).

> *Interagency collaboration can also be addressed on a wider basis than an individual school collaborating with individual businesses, post-school service and educational providers. Community transition teams consisting of secondary school transition personnel, post-school providers, employer groups, parents, chambers of commerce can identify common goals, address local transition issues and work together to solve the transition problems that exist in local communities (Meadows, 2012 quoted in Wakeford & Waugh, 2014, p.26).*

What are the key ingredients?

The research identifies a range of approaches to collaboration. Collaboration has been found to increase when there are **dedicated roles** to this function, such as dedicated transition support coordinators rather than schoolteachers, due in part to the transition support focus of the coordinators' role (Plotner et al., 2018). Effective school-based models utilise **multiple integrated strategies,** have **a system-wide focus**, and focus collaboration around the goal of increasing the number of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities who are employed (Hughes Jr, 2017; Carter et al., 2017; Molfenter et al., 2017).

In Australia, local collaborative structures such as the Integrated Practical Placement (IPP) program are emerging (White et al., 2019). Such models have drawn on the international literature to create bespoke models for the Australian context. In Victoria (Australia), the pilot IPP program created a collaboration between a major hospital (as the employment setting), a training provider and an employment agency (White et al., 2019).

Specific strategies and activities used by collaborative partnerships include:

- provision of training,
- coordinated referral,
- co-location (i.e. employment/transition specialist placed in school),
- holding joint meetings between an individual with disability, service providers, school, and other stakeholders,
- creating inter-agency collaborative teams (to support transition activities and employment placement),
- creating and sharing resources and information for all stakeholders,
- hosting a community transition committee to coordinate activity,
- sharing funding,
- cross pollinating ideas and brainstorming strategies to overcome barriers,
- involving young people with disability as self-advocates

(Hummell et al., 2022; Meadow, 2019; Molfenter et al., 2017; Taylor et al., 2016).

What is the evidence of outcomes?

A recent US study confirms:

> *Interagency collaboration is well established as a predictor of employment outcomes during transition (Butterworth et al., 2017, p.266).*

In the US, states with school based inter-agency collaboration models have been more effective in increasing competitive employment outcomes for young people with intellectual disability than states without them, for example. the Mississippi Partnerships for Employment (Hughes Jr, 2017), Tennessee Works (Carter et al., 2017) and Let's Get to Work Wisconsin (Molfenter et al., 2017). Resonant with this, Papay and Bambara (2014) found that interagency collaboration was an important predictor of four employment-related outcomes, including four-year employment and post-school education outcomes. Similarly, Let's Get to Work Wisconsin

increased students with disability's participation in paid employment during school from 11.5% to 73% over three years (Molfenter et al., 2017).

There is increasing evidence that additional focus on the role of collaborative structures is needed (Haber et al., 2016; Hudson, 2006; Kaehne, 2013; Kohler et al., 2016; Meadow, 2019; Papay & Bambara, 2014; Sheppard et al., 2017). Haber et al.'s (2016) meta-analysis found that student development and program structure were weak predictors of post-school success for students with intellectual disability, recommending a shift in focus from these to multi-stakeholder collaboration. Similarly, at this time, Kohler et al. (2016) strengthened the focus on interagency collaboration in their 2016 update to the Taxonomy for Transition Programming.

Even before this, Kohler & Field (2003), US researchers in this field, document a number of research studies that confirm

> *that interagency collaboration and support for individual students in transition and their families is a factor so important that when done well, it facilitates achievement of transition goals, and when done poorly, it limits or impedes those goals (p.178).*

Conclusion

The international and Australian literature related to successful transition from school to work for people with disability has been synthesised to distil six key components. These components, and their underpinning ingredients, can then be used to inform the design of both policy and programs to increase transition outcomes for Australian young people with disability.

Section 2 explores the wider employment ecosystem in which Ticket to Work operated, in order to identify the ecosystem factors that either enable or hinder the implementation of approaches such as this, that seek to implement evidence-based transition elements.

Section 2: The Employment Ecosystem Context in Australia As an Enabler or Barrier to Evidence-Based Transition Practice

Implementation of Evidence-Based Practice

Despite a substantial and growing evidence base related to supporting young people with disability to transition from school to work (as described in Section 1), few Australian young people have access to transition supports that utilise this evidence in their design. This gap was surfaced by early research conducted by Ticket to Work founders (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014), and others. As early as 2012, Beamish and colleagues investigated whether the evidence-based components of Kohler's (2016) Taxonomy for transition were in use in schools in one Australian state (Queensland), finding that while there was strong support for a significant number of practices, very few were being used. Little, if anything, has changed since then, and gaps in, and barriers to effective transition practice have repeatedly been identified across the last decade (Foley et al., 2013; Crosbie, 2023). This is particularly true for young people with intellectual disability, who have been found to be less likely to receive economic participation-focused supports such as career education and work experience during their secondary education (ARTD Consultants, 2019a; New South Wales Legislative Council Standing Committee on Social Issues, 2012; Smith et al., 2016).

Recent reviews of Australian education have also highlighted the same key evidence-based elements, discussed in Section 1, as critical to outcomes for young Australians with disability (Education Council, 2020). However, in order for the evidence-based elements that underpin school to work transition to be operationalised, a supportive employment ecosystem has to be in place. An ecosystem lens acknowledges that human experience is the product of overlapping social systems including at the *macro* level of policies, funding, and community attitudes; the *meso* level of service provision and organisational contexts (operational policies, procedures, and practices); and the individual, family, and social contexts at the *micro* level. An employment ecosystem is comprised of various elements such as attitudes, market forces, policies, funding arrangements, service provider organisations, service delivery practices, and interpersonal contexts that interact to shape opportunities for economic participation for people with disability (Crosbie, 2023; Lindsay et al., 2018; Nicholas et al., 2018).

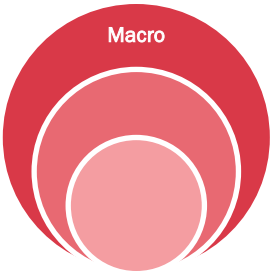
Ecological analysis has been used in past disability research to explore the complexity of factors and their interaction in mediating opportunities for people with disability (e.g. Clifford Simplican et al., 2014; Lindsay et al., 2015, 2018). This section uses an ecosystem lens to explore the barriers and enablers in the Australian context to the implementation of each of the six evidence-based components identified in the literature review in Section 1 and that were embedded in Ticket to Work design. This analysis aims to surface areas of potential change so that the ecosystem enables evidence-based school to work transition for young people. The analysis focuses on the macro and meso levels of the ecosystem in relation to each evidence-based component.

In each instance below, it should be noted that the elements of the micro level - of the individual and their family - interact with the meso and macro contexts. At the micro level, young people with disability, particularly those with intellectual disability, are inevitably affected by the nature of their disability. While they have unique strengths, skills and interests, young people and their families identify the importance of understanding how impairments and functional restrictions can limit economic participation opportunities. Some, particularly those with intellectual disability, experience reduced cognitive functioning and behavioural and communication difficulties which can affect their capacity to engage in day-to-day activities without support, as well as skills necessary for economic participation, such as literacy and numeracy, problem-solving, and learning new things (Crosbie, 2023). This personal context should therefore shape the way supports are designed and delivered. In addition, young people with disability heavily rely on family members to support their transition planning, and access to economic participation and related activities (Crosbie, 2023; NDIA, 2020). During the transition period, young people with disability are at risk of increased social isolation and loss of social supports as they move beyond established school communities (Mogenson et al., 2023). Given this, they require more support from the meso and macro levels of the system at this time, as do their families as their key supporters (Crosbie, 2023; Russo et al., 2021).

Ecosystem Analysis Related to Evidence-Based Elements of Effective Transition

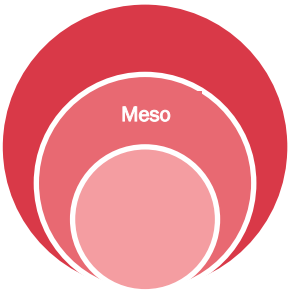
Family involvement and high expectations

Macro



There is little structural support for families that underpins their important role in activating employment for people with disability. As an individualised funding model, the NDIS provides funding directly to the person with disability. However, studies have highlighted how individualised funding systems like the NDIS shift responsibility and workload to parents and carers (Russo, et al., 2021; Tune, 2019). While the NDIS Act 2013 makes reference to 'strengthening the sustainability of informal supports available to the person, including through building the capacity of the person's carer' (Chapter 3, Part 1A, 25, 1c(iv)), there is little detail about how this is operationalised. The Tune Review of the NDIS Act (Tune, 2019) identified how funding was not being directed to family member capacity building and too much was expected of the informal support provided by families. Overall, there is little formal policy and funding recognition that, where people have significant disability or are children or young people, parents and family members are the core activator and manager of funding and services and require funded support to build their capacity to do so, and access additional supports.

Meso



International and domestic evidence highlights that families/parents are the main source of transition support for young people with disability. Australian studies also show that, with the establishment of the NDIS and the market-based system, it falls to families to become informal funding navigators and advocates (Mogenson et al., 2023; Crosbie, 2023; Russo et al., 2021). Crosbie (2023) explains that, in the absence of formal transition supports and services, parents/families have become quasi service providers, taking on a range of roles beyond funding advocacy and navigation, to seeking work experience and employment placements for their family member. However, families have diverse capacities to undertake this role as a quasi-service provider, and this is likely to be linked to factors such as socio-economic status, cultural background, literacy levels, family structure, access to informal supports, and whether parents themselves have a disability (Carey et al., 2021; Russo et al., 2021; Crosbie, 2023). In

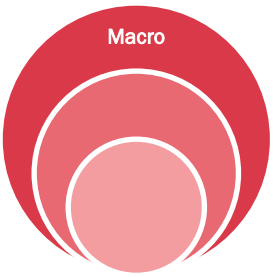
addition, a systematic literature review of a range of Australian research has highlighted how families are not supported in these roles, lacking information about funding and services, and lacking support to understand and navigate the complexity of systems (Russo et al., 2021).

Multiple studies emphasise 'the need for effective family supports in the context of individualised funding schemes like the NDIS' (Russo et al., 2021, p.74). This includes the provision of professional supports for families, especially those who lack adequate skills, capacity, or resources to undertake the support roles required of them in the NDIS context (Russo et al., 2021). Family advocacy and capacity building organisations do exist at the meso level but not all families have access to them. In general, they are funded via short term competitive grants (for example the Department of Social Services, Information Linkages and Capacity Building grants) to support families to explore community-based options for people with disability. However, the potential for families to utilise peer support has been identified as an enabler in several studies, and one that requires further support (Crosbie, 2023; Russo et al., 2021).

In the transition context, ad hoc transition supports that typically start in the final year of school result in families being ill prepared for transition, lacking important information about services and supports available. Many activities are focused on supporting family members to make decisions on behalf of their young person. Family members report difficulty accessing information about transition and post school employment (Wakeford, 2020; Children and Young People with Disability Australia, 2015; Crosbie, 2023).

Student focused transition planning

Macro



In the Australian context, transition policy responsibility is shared between Commonwealth and State governments and is complicated by different policy settings across different states and territories, which results in a lack of uniformity in transition practice. Australia does not have a nationally consistent transition model for young people leaving school and consistent data is not collected at the national level to provide evidence of outcomes (Beamish, Meadows, & Davies, 2012; Education Council, 2020). Overall, the transition process is highly fragmented and siloed, with lack of – and barriers to – funding to support transition activities (ARTD Consultants, 2019a; Davies & Beamish, 2009; Education Council, 2020). The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities (2023) noted that not all States and Territories had transition policies targeting students with disability.

At the Commonwealth level, an array of policy settings influences this space including both education and disability policy frameworks. In the main, education policy and review pays little attention to people with disability.

The National School Reform Agreement, now expiring Dec 2024, is a joint agreement between the Commonwealth, States and Territories to lift student outcomes across Australian schools. This is currently under review (Review to Inform a Better and Fairer Education System) and has also included other reviews such as the Review of Senior Secondary Pathways which has recommended the development of a national Transition from School Program to identify and guide best practice (Education Council, 2020). There is only a cursory focus on students with disability within these reviews.

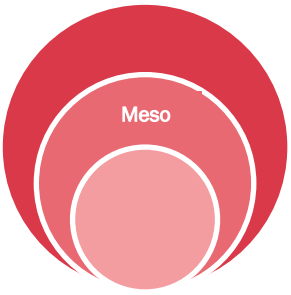
Australia's Disability Strategy (ADS) is Australia's overarching disability policy framework, and it includes improving transition from school as a key priority. Despite this, there is little Commonwealth focus on school to work transition policy or programs, beyond some discussion of expansion of the Transition to Work program (Department of Social Services, 2021; House of Representatives, 2023). State and Territory Targeted Action Plans, flowing from the ADS, in relation to the transition priority are diverse but mostly encompass ad hoc rather than systemic action.

The National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS), operating under the Commonwealth National Disability Insurance Scheme Act 2013, provides a mechanism for both individual planning and associated funding of eligible activities and supports. The NDIS Participant Employment Strategy 2019—2022 (Department of Social Services, 2019) drew attention to transition and employment-related supports for participants aged 14—25. However, within the NDIS system, there has been critique of the insufficient attention on employment goals for NDIS participants. In December 2020, for example, only 45% of NDIS participants aged 15-24 had work-related goals in their NDIS plans (NDIA, 2020). Since 2016, the main funding mechanism for school to work transition has been the funding category of School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES), though this is only available for a two-year period at the end of school and hence has been inconsistent with evidence-based components in the literature. Additionally, the utility of NDIS funding has been further limited by the underlying funding design that people with disability will be supported by either NDIS or another (government) system, not both (or many), despite the need for this (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). In general, NDIS funding has not been able to be used to 'complement' other Commonwealth or State services which has restricted its ability to fund/support school-based transition activities (Crosbie, 2023; Commonwealth of Australia, 2023). Additionally, the design of the Scheme, with its lack of attention to decision making supports, structurally disadvantages people with intellectual disability and excludes

them from being involved in their own planning (Mogenson et al., 2023), a key element of effective transition planning.

Despite some high-level policy identification, it appears that transition planning for young people with disability, is not supported by elements of the macro level.

Meso



People with disability (particularly those with intellectual disability, developmental disability, severe or dual disability) typically experience poor quality, or a lack of, transition planning in moving from school into post school options, which frequently results in uptake of segregated offerings such as day programs and Australian Disability Enterprises (Wakeford & Waugh, 2014; Foley et al., 2013; Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities, 2023; Stafford et al., 2017).

The common experience of transition, especially in Australia, is one of a short-term process accompanied by narrowly focused transition supports, frequently targeting transitioning into adult support services, with little consideration of the individual needs and aspirations of the person (Davies & Beamish, 2009; Redgrove, Jewell, & Ellison, 2016; Mogenson et al., 2023). Where effective transition occurs, it is reported to be reliant on committed individuals, for example teachers or parents, and rarely experienced by students with intellectual disabilities in schools (Mogenson et al., 2023). While their non disabled peers are offered transition activities such as career-oriented events, students with disabilities receive a services expo, mislabelled as a ‘career’ event, which is focused on choosing post-school disability services rather than creating employment pathways (Crosbie, 2023).

The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities (2023) found a lack of adequate and specialised career counselling support, role models and mentors, with some evidence showing up to 80% of young people receiving no career planning from schools. Additionally, there is a lack of formal structures that ensure that students with disability are involved in their planning (rather than their parents) and self-determination is not taught within settings in any structured way. There appears to be no use of evidence-informed tools such as the Self-Directed Career Development model. Australian young people with intellectual disability report a lack of choice, autonomy, or control in the transition process (Mogenson et al., 2023).

The recent Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training (Education Council, 2020) has recommended transition planning to start early in secondary

school and that all students with disability should have an individual post-school transition plan that:

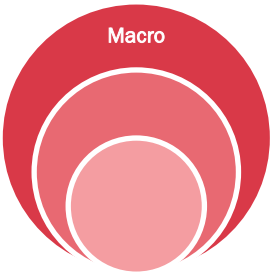
- *'involves the student in their own goal setting*
- *includes both school-based and work-based learning experiences*
- *is supported by effective interagency and interdisciplinary collaboration*
- *involves and includes families' (p. 130).*

The Review also recommended a technical assistance centre like those operating in the United States (page 136), Likewise, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities (2023) recommended that all jurisdictions 'should implement a careers guidance and transition support service for students with disability' (Rec 7.5, p.202). Consistent with the evidence-based elements identified in section 1 of this report, the Royal Commission's recommendation includes a focus on transition planning that commences in Year 9, involves students and families, and provides opportunities for work experience aligned with individual interests.

At the meso level, there is evidence that transition planning with students with disability is not a systematised feature of the education system, nor of any other service.

Skills Development (in-school and post-school)

Macro



Complex intergovernmental responsibilities related to in-school and post-school vocational training result in lack of uniformity across States and Territories and education settings. Fragmentation of funding and responsibility, particularly for the provision of disability related adjustments and supports, has been identified as an issue, at least since 2005, with complex overlapping responsibilities of DES, RTOs, apprenticeship authorities, schools, and employers, as well as funding such as NDIS (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014).

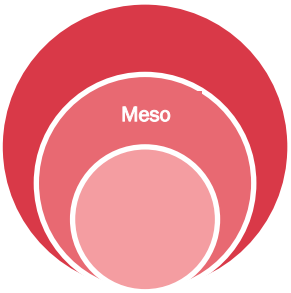
In Australia, the Commonwealth government funds universities to improve the access, participation, retention, and success of identified equity groups including people with disability. In recent years there has been a slight improvement in commencing and continuing enrolments and completions of people with disability in undergraduate and postgraduate programs. However, this improvement has been gradual and coming from a low baseline and fails to meet parity targets. Both access and participation need to be addressed (Grant-Smith et. Al., 2020).

The recent Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training (Education Council, 2020) found that there are systemic barriers to VET pathways when University is the recognised 'default' pathway in the secondary education system (reinforced by entrenched educational structures and attitudes). Barriers can include fees for VET which disincentivise participation and are unfair to early school leavers who enter a VET pathway given fees do not apply to those students who remain in secondary school (Education Council, 2020).

As described above, the design principles underlying the NDIS emphasise separation not complementarity of funding across programs. In this context, these 'interface' issues between NDIS and other parts of the system (such as VET) reduce opportunities to 'blend and braid' funding and supports available across different parts of the system. One example of this is clear demarcations of what NDIS will or won't fund in relation to skills development with Devine et al. (2020) noting that 'NDIS will not fund skills development that should be funded by employers, DES, or other sectors' (p.7).

Overall, this context at the macro level sets up a complex terrain for individuals and services to navigate and creates barriers to accessing skills development activities.

Meso



VET qualifications are provided by registered training organisations (RTOs) which include government institutions (Technical and Further Education [TAFE]), as well as private institutions but also include other providers such as some Australian Disability Enterprises (ADEs). VET is open to a wide range of applicants including those entering the workforce for the first time, re-entering the workforce, upgrading work skills for an existing job, or retraining for new work. Students can choose to undertake a single subject/unit of competency, module, skill set or VET qualification from Certificate level I to Graduate Diploma level.

VET is also available in secondary schools through the 'VET in schools' program (Productivity Commission, 2020b). Students with disability typically undertake a Certificate 1 in Work Education and Certificate 1 in Transition if they attend TAFE. Certificate 1 and 11 levels are typically foundational, focusing on literacy, numeracy, life skills, communication and foundational occupation and trade skills. Neither of these certificates have established pathways to employment. Data shows that people with disability are over-represented at this level of the VET system (Cocks and Thoreson, 2013). By contrast, School based Apprenticeship and Traineeships provide a clearer pathway to employment for students with disability.

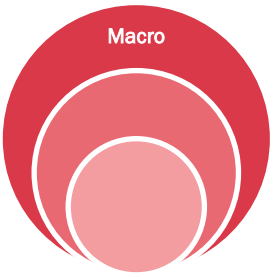
However, students with disability are less likely to undertake apprenticeships and traineeships than their nondisabled peers (Cox and Thoreson, 2013).

The recent Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training (Education Council, 2020) identified significant barriers to School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships for all students, including school timetabling, stigma, resource gaps in schools that hinder establishment of School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship opportunities and engagement with employers. Employers also face barriers to School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships including lack of information, restrictions on time availability of employee (due to school requirements), and poor job alignment due to age of student (Education Council, 2020). These barriers are concerning given that Ticket to Work has shown that School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships are a successful skills development and economic participation strategy for young people with disability, including intellectual disability.

Overall, barriers to vocational skills development for students still at school have been identified for all students, with young people with disability being further marginalised in the few processes available.

Work experience/paid employment

Macro



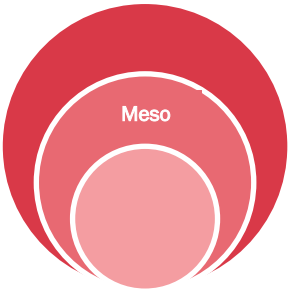
Work experience for all secondary students is regulated within the education system where it is embedded into the curriculum for students in years 9 and 10. However, for students with a disability in Australia, there has been a lack of supports to assist with accessing and supporting work experience commencing from years 9 and 10, through the final years of school and post school.

Historically, Commonwealth-funded Disability Employment Services (DES) have not been available to support students with disabilities in relation to employment, including work experience opportunities (typically part of Year 9 and 10) and after-school employment. At the commencement of Ticket to Work, Wakeford & Waugh (2014) highlighted this as a barrier for students with disability, particularly in special schools.

The NDIS School Leaver Employment Supports (SLES) funding, available to young people with disability primarily during the final year of school and after school leaving, has had some focus on work experience, with approximately 15% of activities focused on work experience (NDIA, 2022). However, SLES funding has not been available in years 9 and 10 to support in-school work experience activities. It is unclear if other items of NDIS funding, such as NDIS 'Supports

in Employment', can be used to support work experience programs linked to years 9 and 10 school curricula.

Meso



The Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities (2023) found that students with disability were often denied opportunities for meaningful work experience while at school. This suggests that little has changed over several decades, given that one Queensland study of students with intellectual disability found that nearly one third of students had not received work experience whilst in school (Davies & Beamish, 2009).

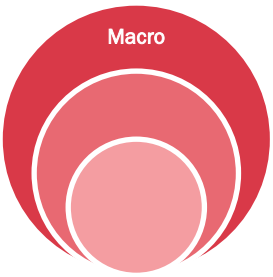
When work experience opportunities are provided, they are not always individualised or tailored to the students' interests. One study showed that students in special schools typically undertake work experience in an ADE or an op shop or within the school setting (Crosbie, 2023). For those receiving NDIS SLES funding, SLES funded work experience is not always individualised and can occur in group settings. The 2022 SLES data shows that more than 55% of activities occur in group settings (NDIA, 2022). Additionally, there is a risk that work experience within SLES settings is not progressing to paid employment, as less than one third of participants exiting SLES in 2022 were entering open employment (NDIA, 2022).

Beyond SLES, it would appear that there is not a market of employment service providers for young people who have NDIS 'Supports in employment' funding to access. Crosbie (2023) found that families reported that they were required to organise work experience for their young person themselves.

Overall, there is a missing emphasis, at both the meso and macro levels, on work experience given that it is as a key predictor of employment outcomes for young people with disability. This results in a significant gap in available supports.

Employment supports

Macro



The recent Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services has described the macro system of employment services as:

> *'highly and needlessly fragmented across the Commonwealth; between the Commonwealth and other jurisdictions; and within the service system itself—often by deliberate design. There is little coordination or integration across the various Commonwealth and state employment services, and limited connection between employment services and the broader human services ecosystem which is systemically unmapped and unknown to the employment services system, absent a public sector spine to perform these core enabling functions' (House of Representatives, 2023, p.72).*

Numerous reports have identified the complexity of Australia's employment supports system. This includes multiple agencies operating in parallel, a 'lack of coordinated design' across programs, a lack of clear pathways and integration of services (Boston Consulting Group, 2020, p.98). In particular, systems are designed separately around disability and non-disability cohorts, with neither employment system suitable for young people (House of Representatives, 2023).

Diverse research has identified program restrictions on Commonwealth government employment supports for people with disability in Australia (Wilson et al. 2021). One key issue is the requirement that, in order to access Commonwealth employment services, including DES, an assessment of work capacity is required. This has been criticised for its inaccuracy (Boston Consulting Group, 2020; House of Representatives, 2023), but despite this, continues to be the eligibility mechanism for different employment supports, thus limiting supports available based on the number of hours a person can work per week (Wilson et al., 2021).

Assessed work capacity guidelines (minimum of 8 hours per week) reduce access to employment services for young people with significant disability who are seeking employment for fewer than 8 hours per week. Additionally, for those who have a 'manifest' DSP eligibility (with no mutual obligation requirements), such as many people with intellectual disability, this has resulted in substantially reduced access to Commonwealth government employment programs (Crosbie, 2023).

Access to employment supports for young people with disability are limited while they are at school. For example, DES guidelines discourage engagement with young people while at

school, and anecdotally, few young people receive NDIS funded employment supports before the age of 18. 'Early career development for people with disability is further impacted due to the current design of both DES and NDIS supports, which places age restrictions on when participants can start receiving employment related services' (Devine et al., 2020, p.13). DES guidelines limit availability of employment support for school students and have been identified as a barrier in different reviews and inquiries. Barriers to DES engagement with students with disability have been identified by Boston Consulting Group (2020), including via restricting access to those with significant disability and in the final year of school, along with funding barriers that remunerated providers at the lowest payment level with no recognition of the impost of supporting people with significant disability (Boston Consulting Group, 2020). Similarly, despite changes to DES guidelines since 2020, the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities (2023) noted that while DES could offer services to school leavers under the Eligible School Leavers Program, this was restricted to those students with 'significant disability'. Further restrictions have applied to DES in offering employment support to students with disability seeking part time (less than 8 hours a week) after-school employment (Australian Human Rights Commission, 2020).

Restrictive age and stage restrictions also apply to the NDIS School Leaver Employment Support (SLES) program that is only available to eligible NDIS participants, and targets people in the final years of school or after they have left school. Some research has identified that there are further issues within the NDIS with restrictions being applied to access other NDIS employment-related funding if the individual is allocated SLES funding (Crosbie, 2023).

While eligibility guidelines restrict access to DES, and therefore to employment support, other DES guidelines restrict the types of support that can be provided by DES. In particular, the Boston Consulting Group (2020) suggest that program rules 'unnecessarily restrict provider behaviour and limit innovation' (p.135) including restricting tailored support.

While DES is a specialist disability employment program, the Commonwealth government also funds a targeted youth employment program, Transition to Work, for young people at risk of employment disengagement. Students with significant disability generally do not meet the criteria to engage with the program. Transition to Work eligibility requirements include being in receipt of Youth Allowance and being out of school, education, training, and work for at least 6 months. This results in those leaving school being ineligible. Such eligibility criteria function as barriers to attainment of transition outcomes (House of Representatives, 2023) and are antithetical to the evidence-based design principles for transition from school programs that require early engagement in transition activities, including employment support, while in school. Overall, the Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services identified

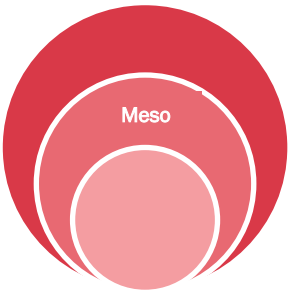
that there is a need for specialist employment services for youth as even those without disability are not well serviced in the current system, which does not tailor services to their needs (House of Representatives, 2023),

In addition, to the Commonwealth system, State and Territory governments provide employment programs to varying degrees, contributing to the complex patchwork at this level. 'Concurrency' of employment and/or training supports has historically not been permissible in most cases, as described earlier, meaning that young people can only receive support from a single government funded program. Lack of integration between DES and NDIS has been repeatedly identified across multiple reviews including the DES Mid Term Review (Boston Consulting Group, 2020); the NDIS Review (2023) and the Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disabilities (2023). In 2023, notions of 'complementarity' of programs along with 'hybrid' or 'blended' funding have begun to be explored with proposed trials across DES and NDIS (House of Representatives, 2023).

The NDIS Review identified multiple macro level barriers to employment and school to work transition for people with disability and made several relevant recommendations including:

- Recommendation 1.13: 'National Cabinet should agree to jointly invest in programs and initiatives to support adolescents and young adults with disability aged 9 to 21 to prepare for and manage key life transition points, such as secondary school, employment and living independently'
- Recommendation 1.7: 'The Department of Social Services and the National Disability Insurance Agency should improve linkages between the NDIS, Disability Employment Services and related initiatives targeting improved employment outcomes for all people with disability, including NDIS participants'
- Recommendation 2.8: 'The National Disability Insurance Agency and the Department of Education, with state and territory education and disability agencies, should develop a plan to better connect the NDIS and school education systems and improve educational outcomes for children with disability' (Commonwealth of Australia, 2023, p. 4).

Meso



The employment services system at the delivery level has been found to be fraught with problems.

Commonwealth funded employment services have been found to be delivering services and supports not designed to meet the individual needs of service users. The Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services (House of Representatives, 2023) found that, as a result of the macro level drivers and requirements, capacity of the service system to innovate or implement tailored and personalised services has significantly decreased since the marketisation of employment services in Australia.

> *'The current employment services system is failing to provide tailored, individualised support to jobseekers as was envisaged and is required. Within a rebuilt system services for jobseekers need to be far more differentiated—both by recognising that there are multiple and diverse pathways to employment and by varying the intensity of support depending on a client's pathway to employment and their aspirations, needs, and circumstances' (House of Representatives, 2023, [pp.184-5).*

Also limiting the capacity of services to provide relevant and tailored supports is an employment services workforce that is insufficiently skilled in this regard (House of Representatives, 2023).

In this context, it is not surprising that the experience of Australian young people with disability in regard to accessing and utilising employment supports is largely an unsuccessful one. Mogenson et al., (2023) report a lack of support from employment services to this cohort, and a churning through limited VET and employment programs.

While the Commonwealth supports a national Disability Employment Services (DES) program, at the service delivery level, it is comprised of a fragmented system of DES providers, not all of whom support young people, nor have skills to support or target young people with significant disability. This means suitable supports are not equitably available across Australia with little or no access to specialist services (in relation to intellectual and other disabilities) in regional areas across Australia (Boston Consulting Group, 2020). Boston Consulting Group (2020), in their Mid-term Review of DES, found that participants (job seekers with disability) described DES as lacking individualised support, providing poor quality job matches, and generally found the process complex to navigate with insufficient information to guide decision making.

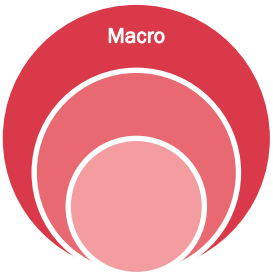
A patchwork of largely short-term funding (1-3 years) from Commonwealth and State governments and philanthropy, offers a supplementary array of employment supports, often focused on piloting new approaches. There is some evidence that these programs provide a different focus of employment supports than Commonwealth employment services this filling identified gaps (Wilson et al., 2021). While some of these pilot programs deliver elements of evidence-based practice including customised employment, and internship programs, the providers are largely localised and the programs not widely available. The Select Committee also found barriers to entry into the employment services market for smaller, community-based organisations, including social enterprises, and those who offer more specialised cohort knowledge (House of Representatives, 2023).

> *'There is little support within the current system for social enterprise or for small local organisations or bespoke programs for particular cohorts. Instead, these organisations and programs work alongside and outside the system, and often duplicate effort or do the intensive work to support disadvantaged people back into the labour market.' (House of Representatives, 2023, p. 75).*

Overall, these factors operating at the meso level have resulted in few young people with disability having access to evidence informed employment supports prior to completing school or after leaving school.

Inter-agency collaboration

Macro



'A common theme in evidence was that human services—including the employment services system—are fragmented, disconnected, and hard to navigate. Moreover, service delivery at the Commonwealth, state and territory, and local government levels is characterised by policy silos which limit coordination and collaboration' (House of Representatives, 2023, p.31).

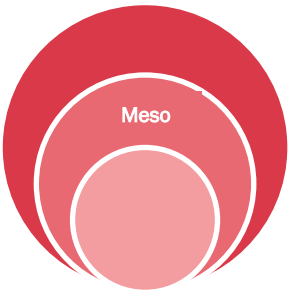
As described above, there are a large number of agencies relevant to the transition sector, funded from Commonwealth and State/Territory governments, as well as private providers. This has produced a highly complex employment and education system (Wakeford & Waugh, 2014; Boston Consulting Group, 2020; House of Representatives, 2023). There is also a high degree of change in government funding and resultant commencement and closure of funded initiatives, creating an unstable and unclear environment that disrupts both service delivery and destroys relationships and collaborations between services (House of Representatives,

2023). Additionally, in some areas, service saturation (i.e. a high number of separate employment and training programs) also prevents the establishment of effective partnerships and relationships between services and with employers (House of Representatives, 2023).

A range of structural elements at the macro level also function as barriers to inter-agency collaboration. For some time, the market-based principle of competition has been critiqued in its application to human services (e.g. Productivity Commission, 2017). The privatisation of service providers, including DES and VET providers, via a market-based system and its associated funding and payment arrangements, acts to disincentivise providers to work collaboratively as they view others as competitors. Government agencies themselves identify that the 'competitive model inhibits the collaboration that is often critical to effective service delivery for jobseekers and employers' (House of Representatives, 2023, p.50 citing the Australian Commonwealth Department of Employment and Workplace Relations). Funding arrangements of programs of Commonwealth and the States/Territories, including a siloed procurement approach and 'rigid' KPIs, raise barriers to effective collaboration of services (House of Representatives, 2023).

In relation to effective transition, the recent Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training (Education Council, 2020) identified the lack of an 'authorising environment' from education authorities for school-industry/employer partnerships. Similarly, the Select Committee on Workforce Australia Employment Services found that better integration between employment services and the school system is required to meet the needs of young people during transition, as is deliberate connection to supportive wrap around services addressing a wider range of personal, health, social and economic participation needs of young people (House of Representatives, 2023). Overall, the Select Committee recommends integration or vertical alignment of programs across jurisdictions. It sees integration or coordination with local programs and services as 'critical to ensuring a full range of supports… that are needed to respond effectively to the diversity of jobseeker needs' (House of Representatives, 2023, p.131). This may include co-investment across jurisdictions. However, aside from some small, targeted pockets of collaboration funding (such as the National Disability Coordination Officers program targeting school to tertiary education pathways for people with disability [Orima Research, 2022]), there is no clear source of collaboration and coordination funding for transition.

Meso



At the service delivery level, there are a plethora of services and programs within this level of the ecosystem being described as a mess of 'spaghetti and confetti' and impossible to navigate due a lack of mapping, information, and interconnection (House of Representatives, 2023, p.34). This localised 'mess' of services is further polarised through competitive tendering that undermines or destroys local networks, where they do exist, with the resultant loss of 'capital' (social networks, knowledge capital, human resources) as services are de-funded and exit the local area (House of Representatives, 2023; Wilson et al., 2021b).

In relation to school to work transition, historically, there have been poor links between schools and post school employment and training providers (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014). This limited coordination across agencies has persisted. For example, Boston Consulting Group, (2020) highlighted the lack of coordination and collaboration between schools, DES providers and SLES providers. Wakeford and Waugh (2014, p. 28) provide a map of overlapping activity areas of stakeholders in relation to transition that require coordination (see Appendix 1). The NDIS Review responds to the complexity of the service system with recommendations to increase local navigation services. However, navigation emphasises support to traverse a complex local system, not activities to achieve inter-agency coordination.

The recent Review of Senior Secondary Pathways into Work, Further Education and Training (Education Council, 2020) identified substantial need to 'scale up' school-industry partnerships across Australian jurisdictions. However, schools face barriers to progressing these partnerships and mechanisms are not 'systematised' but rely on individual 'champions' in each location to progress. Financial and other barriers affect all parties. There is a lack of formal partnership 'brokers', with sporadic government initiatives to address this (Education Council, 2020).

Conclusion

Young people with disability and their families are operating within a complex ecosystem as they prepare to transition from school to post school activities, one that has failed to deliver the evidence informed activities that result in employment outcomes post school. There is therefore a need to deliberately design school to work transition approaches and models that bring evidence-based practice into the ecosystem, making it available to young people with disability as 'business as usual'. Section 3 of this report describes one such initiative that

intentionally utilised evidence-based elements in its design in the Australian context -Ticket to Work.

Section 3: Ticket to Work – Enabling Improved School to Work Outcomes for Young People with Disability

Introduction

> *Connecting a student with disability to the world of work before they leave school through a coordinated approach greatly improves the likelihood of securing ongoing open employment and creates better economic and social outcomes.*

Ticket to Work was centered on building the employment aspirations of young people with disability and preparing them for employment. It was established in 2011 in response to the poor school to work transition rates for young people with disability in Australia. Ticket to Work is predicated on providing young people with disability the opportunity to experience a 'good transition' from school and into post-school employment. Ticket to Work aims to replicate the 'typical' transition and careers pathways that young people without disability take during their final years of schooling and offer it to young people with disability. This is achieved through building network and system collaboration, building the system actor's capacity to deliver evidence-based practice, and providing career planning and workplace preparation, work experience, access to accredited training (also known as Vocational Education and Training (VET), and access to School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

Background:

Conceived in bayside Melbourne in 2011, a mission statement and Theory of Change were developed for Ticket to Work in 2012. The Ticket to Work mission was to ensure that all students with disability are prepared and have opportunities to take an open employment pathway. The initiative had a focus on practice, policy, and research.

Practice: Promoting, exploring, and supporting communities to implement evidence-based practice that improves outcomes for young people with disability.

Policy: Influence good employment and education participation policy development at local, state, and national levels.

Research: Explore, identify, and highlight good practice through research in school-to-work transition for young people with disability

The Objective of Ticket to Work Networks was to:

- Bring together disability-specific and mainstream representatives from a variety of sectors to work strategically and collaboratively
- Support young people to gain access to early experiences that positively influence their views of themselves as workers
- Prepare young people with disability for the workplace and gives them an employment pathway that is typical of other young adults
- Meet the needs of employers, providing enhanced retention and profitability (Crisp, 2021)

The Ticket to Work Theory of Change:

> *Connecting a student with disability with the world of work before they leave school through a coordinated approach, greatly improves their chances of securing ongoing open employment and creates better economic and social outcomes* (ARTD Consultants, 2019a, p.7).

The Ticket to Work Approach

The activities of Ticket to Work were delivered via place-based Networks and by a central coordinating and enabling body, which had a key role in Network formation and sustainability. These are outlined in further detail in this section. Each Network included local schools, employment services, registered training organisations, employers and others who were supported by a National Network who facilitated the collaborative place-based approach.

Each place-based Network developed transition activities based on their local needs. The Networks met regularly and offered resources and training to Network members. Young people participated in a range of activities dependent on those offered via their local Network and which were relevant to their own career goals. Networks supported individual young people through undertaking planning and supporting them to access work experience, career development activities and paid work and training opportunities. Individual planning drew on the resources available within each Network to blend and braid funding which resulted in the young person potentially having access to a larger pool of resources than they might have had if not engaged in a Network. There was also a focus on sequencing of supports, which took a developmental approach.

Ticket to Work Core Elements

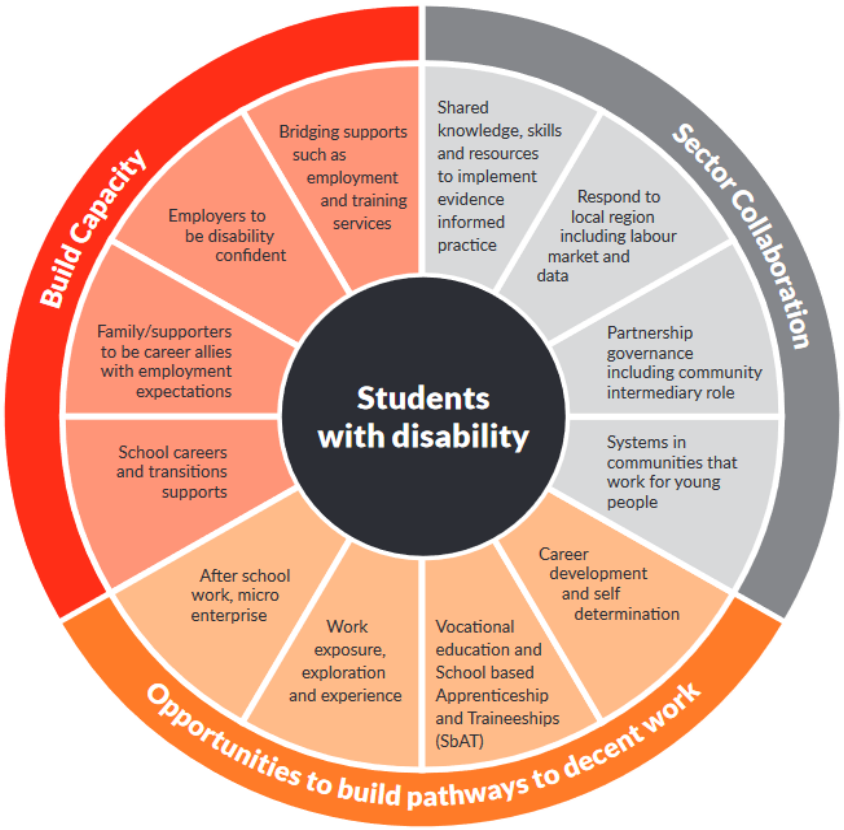
Consistent with and drawing on the evidence base outlined in Section 1, Ticket to Work founders outlined a set of core elements that underpin the Ticket to Work approach (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014). They articulate four elements of 'good transition' around which Ticket to Work is built: career development and workplace preparation, work experience, vocational training including Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships, and after school work ,though the focus on this feature was added as Ticket to Work evolved.

The Ticket to Work approach delivers on these ingredients through three activity areas:

1. sector collaboration
2. providing the opportunity for young people with disability to build employability whilst at school,
3. building capacity of key stakeholders: schools, parents, and employers (ARTD Consultants, 2019a).

The Ticket to Work approach is outlined in Figure 1 below.

Figure 1: Ticket to Work approach (Ticket to Work, 2024).



Drawn from the evidence

The design of the Ticket to Work approach drew heavily from the international and Australian literature about 'what works' to support young people with disability to transition from school to work. There was a deliberate strategy to include key evidence-based practice, including raising expectations about employment for this cohort, early access to work experience opportunities, and creating collaborative structures that worked together so that the Network became more than the sum of its parts. In its earliest iteration, Ticket to Work had a strong focus on supporting young people with disability to access School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships. In order to develop School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, Ticket to Work focused attention on supporting young people to undertake work experience, career development activities, and paid after school jobs and supporting families to become career allies. These are explored in more detail later in the report.

Evidence about Ticket to Work

Over the period 2012-2023, the Ticket to Work approach and individual elements and activities of the approach were evaluated by various academic researchers and consultants to document the activities delivered and the outcomes achieved. These reports have utilised different sources of data and analysis approaches to answer diverse research questions. In order to compile a synthesis of the Ticket to Work activities and outcomes, extant reports and available data have been analysed. It should be noted that each report utilises differing data sets (spanning different time periods) and uses different methodologies to draw conclusions from this data. Data from Ticket to Work Networks, between 2014 and 2020 has also been utilised. However, although it is a large data set over many years, the data is often incomplete and should therefore be treated with some caution.

Literature specific to Ticket to Work that has been utilised in this report is listed below in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of literature specific to Ticket to Work, reviewed for this report.

Author and title	Date	Timeframe	Sample and method	Purpose
Wakeford, M and Waugh, F *'Ticket to Work – A best-practice SBAT model for students with a disability'*	2010	Pre-commencement	Literature review	Evaluate national and international models and approaches to apprenticeships and traineeships and recommendations for developing a best practice support model that would assist young people with a disability make an effective transition to School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeship employment
Wakeford, M and Waugh, F *Transitions to Employment of Australian Young People with Disability and the Ticket to Work Initiative*	2014	TTW data collected in June 2014	Mix of Australian and international data, and TTW data (n=46 young participants of TTW in 2013-2014, 57 stakeholders)	Provide a consolidated picture of the current status of youth disability transition in Australia, identify what can be done to improve the post-school outcomes and highlight Ticket to Work early outcomes
ARTD Consultants, *Ticket to Work pilot outcomes study. A Quasi-Experimental analysis of pathways from school to economic and social inclusion. Report for the National Disability Services.*	2016	2018	Treatment and comparison group design. Treatment group sample: N=7 participants in TTW pilot who had been out of school 1-3 years Comparison group sample: HILDA survey n=56; SDAC survey n=42.	Identify outcomes that have been achieved by Ticket to Work participants and compare to those of similar cohorts
ARTD Consultants *Ticket to Work Stakeholders*	2018	2018	Not stated	Present the views of Ticket to Work Network members about their involvement in the initiative
ARTD Consultants *Ticket to Work Outcomes Evaluation – Customised Employment Report*	2019	2018	The study used a quasi-experimental treatment and comparison group design. The treatment group comprised those who had participated in CE and had left school (n=7). The comparison group was composed of similarly aged young people with comparable disability types identified in	Outcomes data from a School to Work pilot funded by NDIA that utilised Customised Employment.

Author and title	Date	Timeframe	Sample and method	Purpose
			the following data sets: • Household, Income and Labour Dynamics in Australia (HILDA) • ABS Survey of Disability, Ageing and Carers (SDAC) • National Disability Insurance Scheme Outcomes Framework Pilot Study (NDIS).	
ARTD Consultants, *Ticket to Work Post School Outcomes. Report for National Disability Services Final Report*	2019a	2012-2018	56 Interviews, quasi experimental (comparison TTW with like sample)	Identify outcomes of TTW participants comparative to non-participants
ARTD Consultants *Ticket to Work Network Analysis. A Report for NDS*	2019b	2015	9 Networks (5 States) with min. of 4 responses per Network, n=48. Survey	Explores TTW Networks and partnership approach to better understand the essential ingredients of a highly functioning Network
Wakeford, M. *Parent engagement in school to work transition for their child with disability*	2020	2012-2018	Review of the literature and feedback from parents involved in Ticket to Work parent engagement activities	Explore the literature regarding parents' experience of their child with a disability's transition from school, and the experience of TTW parent Network members
Kellock, Peter. *The Employer Experience: hiring young people with intellectual disability. Ticket to Work Report.*	2020		Literature review, with particular focus on Australian employers reported in two national studies (2011 and 2017)	Report on the experience of employers who offer work opportunities to young people with intellectual disabilities
Social Ventures Australia Consulting *Ticket to Work: Valuation of key outcomes*	2020	2014- 2018	Based on ARTD 2019 data from sample of 56. Counterfactual comparison - estimate the value of participation in TTW over a three-year post TTW	Understand the financial impact that Ticket to Work has on people and government
Crisp, W. *Customised employment*	2020		Literature review	Summary of literature of customised employment in school transition
Crisp, D. *Beneficial for all: The After*	2021	Dec 2018-2020	Interviews with young people on commencement and	Understand experiences of stakeholders in project

Author and title	Date	Timeframe	Sample and method	Purpose
School Jobs Project. Ticket to Work Report.			follow up in 2020. Interviews with stakeholders	
Bigby, C. & De Losa, L. *After-school jobs for students with intellectual disabilities*	2021	2018-2021	Literature review about after school work for young people with intellectual disabilities and empirical data about the experiences of participants in the After School Jobs project	
Ticket to Work (TTW) *Inclusive higher education for young people with intellectual disability. An overview of the literature and outcomes*	2021		Literature review	Explore inclusive university programs for people with intellectual disability
Ticket to Work, *The experiences of young women with disability transitioning from school to work. Ticket to Work Paper.*	2022		Literature review	Examine the existing literature on the experiences of women in the workforce and inform the implementation of the Ticket to Work approach
Mosen, J. & Page, A. Inclusive Career Development Project Evaluation Report 2023	2023	2022	Evaluation Report	An evaluation was conducted of an inclusive career development framework for schools that was developed with a focus towards addressing the career development needs of students with disability. The framework, specifically informed and guided the practices of the development of an Inclusive Careers Benchmarking Tool.

The profile of Ticket to Work Participants

ARTD Consultants (2019a) estimate a total of 3,207 young people with disability participated in Ticket to Work career development and work preparation activities between 2014 and 2019. Ticket to Work program data for 2014-2020 suggests that this increased to 3,778 participants.

Ticket to Work program data (for a smaller sample between 2016-2020) provides further detail. The majority of Ticket to Work participants (of the sample of 1379) were male (69.4%). Of those who provided a disability type, the majority had intellectual/learning disability (including Down syndrome (48.5%) and Autism Spectrum Disorder (38.8%).

Table 3: Primary disability classification of Ticket to Work participants

Primary disability	Frequency	Percentage
Autism Spectrum Disorder	491	38.8
Vision impairment (Sensory/Speech)	9	0.7
Hearing impairment (Sensory/Speech)	20	1.6
Psychosocial disability	13	1.0
Intellectual/ learning disability (includes Down Syndrome)	613	48.5
Other physical disability	14	1.1
Cerebral Palsy	22	1.7
Acquired Brain Injury	4	0.3
Speech impairment (Sensory/Speech)	61	4.8
Deaf/blind (Sensory/Speech)	3	0.2
Other	15	1.2

The majority of Ticket to Work participants attended some form of special education (55.3%), while forty-two percent (42.1%) attended a mainstream school. Of those in a special education setting, most attended an education unit in a mainstream school (30.6%). As a comparator, the 2018 national enrolment data on students with disability (primary and secondary) (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2023) is included in the table below, highlighting that Ticket to Work has focused substantial attention on specialist education settings comparative to the location of students with disability across Australia.

Table 4: Type of school Ticket to Work participants attended.

Type of school	Number of participants	%	2018 Australian data students with disability* %
Special Education unit in mainstream school	368	30.6	18
Mainstream school	506	42.1	71
Special development school	18	1.5	12
Special School	279	23.2	
School of the air/distance learning	2	0.2	
Other	19	1.6	
Don't know	9	0.7	

* Provided in Royal Commission into Violence, Abuse, Neglect and Exploitation of People with Disability Final Report, (2023), Vol 7, p. 140.

The Ticket to Work Approach in Action

Ticket to Work Networks supported thousands of young people to engage in work exposure, exploration and experience activities, Vocational Education and School Based Apprenticeship and Traineeships, Career Development and self-determination activities and after school work (The After School Jobs project 2017-2020, see Crisp, 2021), and micro enterprises.

Ticket to Work and the place-based Networks that developed nationally, focused attention on improving transition outcomes for students with disability that were classified under three core areas; opportunities to build pathways to decent work, building capacity and sector collaboration. These are outlined in more detail in this section.

Ticket to Work program data (2014-2019) also highlights that, while work experience placements have been across a wide spread of industry types, the main industry areas were retail (approximately 39% of placements), hospitality (18%), horticulture (17%) and business administration (9%).

Customised employment was also utilised as an approach to support placement into work experience, Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships and after school jobs.

> *'I was sad about leaving school but now I feel positive about the future because I am sure I will get a job after I leave school because I know what working means.' (Ticket to Work participant quoted in Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p. 49).*

Opportunities to build pathways to decent work

Drawing from the evidence about the effect of early work exposure and work experience on later employment outcomes for young people with disability, and recognising that young people with disability were missing out on work experience in Australia, Ticket to Work had a strong focus on supporting young people to engage in early work experience activities while at school (Ticket to Work, 2024; SVA, 2020; Wakeford & Waugh, 2014). Ticket to Work Networks utilised a number of key strategies to develop and deliver activities that created pathways to work for young people with disability which are outlined below.

Program data provided by Ticket to Work Networks between 2016 and 2019 outlines young people's participation in Ticket to Work activities in the period 2016-2019, demonstrating that the types of activities young people engaged with shifted over time as the Networks expanded and specific evidence-based projects focused attention on specific interventions. For example, the 'After School Jobs Project' operated between 2017-2020, with 75 participants employed in after school jobs as a direct result of that project which is reflected in the data below.

Across the period 2012-2018, work experience, vocational education, and training in school, and Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships were the focus of Ticket to Work Networks. Table 5 outlines the frequency of participation in Ticket to Work activities across a sample of 56 participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a). Work experience, vocational education, and training and Australian School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships were the activities of highest prevalence.

Table 5: Participation in Ticket to Work activities (data from ARTD Consultants, 2019a, p. 26).

Activity (interviews n=56 participants 2012-2018)	%
Work experience	89*
Vocational education and training in school	67
School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships	52
After school work	27
Customised employment	13
Mico business	4

* Wakeford & Waugh (2014) data from 46 Ticket to Work participants during 2013-14 shows 91% undertake work experience.

School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships

Ticket to Work initially had a strong emphasis on developing opportunities for students with disability to undertake a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships. While School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships had been available to young people, young people with disability did not take them up in high numbers and so the emerging Network decided to focus their attention here initially, because they incorporate key elements of good transition practice. In 2010, a scoping review was undertaken which included recommendations for developing a best practice support model that would assist young people with a disability make an effective transition to School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship employment (Wakeford and Waugh, 2010). The initial Network then developed a pilot model, and steered its implementation across two neighbouring regions in Melbourne. At the same time, the initial Network began to build partnership governance structures, develop operational materials and strategic marketing collateral, and establish employer networks, as well as the formal structure of the School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships model which was rolled out in 2012 (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014). The focus on School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships is reflected in Table 6 below which demonstrates high numbers of students participating in School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships from 2016-2019 as the Ticket to Work program expanded.

Table 6: Ticket to Work program data: participation in Ticket to Work activities by year

	2016 %	2017 %	2018 %	2019 %	Average %
In school - Australian School based Trainee or Apprenticeship	56.8	72.8	46.7	36.5	53
In school - Part time work after school	3.3	6.6	3.3	13.5	7
In school - Work Experience	14.2	9.2	22	38.1	21
In school - Volunteer work	1.1	0.4	4.9	0.8	2
In school – career development activity	Not listed	0.9	24.2	54.8	20
In school – industry awareness activity	Not listed	4.2	18.7	27	12
In school - Mentoring/coaching activity	24.6	0.7	11	4.8	10
In school- work preparation activity	Not listed	5.3	13.7	13.5	8
Total sample size	193	456	263	238	

NOTE: the percentage figures in this table tally to more than 100% because Ticket to Work participants engaged in multiple activities.

This data highlights that School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships were the most common form of activity young people participated in across time, with an average of 53% of Ticket to Work participants engaged in this activity between 2016 and 2019. Ticket to Work program data, though incomplete, also indicates that 764 students completed a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship between 2015 and 2020, with the vast majority of these occurring in 2016 and 2017 when enrolment in School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships was at its peak. A further 179 students commenced a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship but exited before completion in the same period. Vocational Education and School based Apprenticeship and Traineeships at secondary school, had an emphasis on blending formal learning with workplace experience and on-the-job training, recognising that young people with disability learn best 'in-situ' (Wilson & Campain, 2020).

In many instances, work trials or work experience functioned as a prelude to School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships , enabling a good assessment to be undertaken regarding the

suitability of the School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships for both the young person and the employing organisation (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014).

Work experience:

Ticket to Work had a strong early focus on work experience. Network partners, including DES providers and local employers in particular, were supported to create well matched and well supported work experience opportunities for young people with disability. Program data (2014-2019) highlights that work experience placements were provided across a wide spread of industry types, with the main industry areas being retail (approximately 39% of placements), hospitality (18%), horticulture (17%) and business administration (9%).

Networks focused attention on work opportunities at Network meetings, including families who sourced opportunities that were matched to the young person's interests. Employers received disability confidence training from the intermediary (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014), and were supported by a DES provider, who, while not funded directly to provide work experience support, could claim an outcome fee later if the work experience converted to a paid role. DES providers were asked to provide the support unfunded, on the basis that the work experience could convert to a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship if successful and the DES could then be engaged formally to provide support and therefore receive outcome payments. Schools also provided staff to support work experience where a DES was not available. Support provided by school staff was variable in terms of the quality of support provided.

In terms of work experience, the use of a collaborative network and a focus on blending and braiding and sequencing of supports meant that each individual partner was able to make a contribution that often went beyond what they were funded to provide, and this enabled individualised work experience to occur The intermediary and Ticket to Work Enabling Body supported Network members to understand their role in supporting early work experience, including encouraging DES providers to take a longer-term view, and developed a business case to support partners to go above and beyond 'business as usual" (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014).

The After School Jobs Project

In recognition of the low number of students with disability who were employed in an after-school job within Ticket to Work Networks, in 2017 Ticket to Work developed an action learning project – the 'After School Jobs Project'.

The Project Objectives were:

1. Young people with significant disability will have the opportunity to experience work while at school.

2. Explore, demonstrate, and document a model of after school jobs that supports both young people with disability and employers of student labour.

3. Explore the benefits to students with disability in participation in after school jobs.

4. Explore the long-term effect of participating in after school jobs for students with disability.

5. Identify good practice through models of after school jobs and develop tools to support others to implement (scalability/transferability)

Building on an action leaning approach, and funded by the Paul Ramsey Foundation, Ticket to Work Networks volunteered to participate in the After School Jobs Project. Funding was provided to fill the gap in the service system, whereby NDIS funding was typically not available to school students for employment support, and DES guidelines specifically stated that the program does not support school students.

Networks utilised a collaborative approach, identified interested students, and developed their work readiness skills. Networks and employment support services leveraged existing relationships with employers and connected new employers to place students in after-school jobs. Funding was available to Networks to enable them to provide employment related support to young people as they commenced their after-school job, which was often provided by the DES provider (Crisp, 2021).

During the project, Ticket to Work advocated to the NDIA about the need for support to be made available to young people to obtain an after-school job. Consequently, the NDIS Operational Guidelines in relation to work and study were updated in 2020, specifically stating:

> *Even though you are at school, you might want help to find or keep a part-time job outside of school hours. If you need this extra help because of your disability, we might be able to fund support to help you build skills to get a job. This might include things like working in a team, staying on task or learning to catch the bus or train.*

The NDIA also updated guidelines related to school-based work experience and school-based traineeships:

> *Work experience as part of your school curriculum is the responsibility of your school. But if you need extra supports because of your disability to be able to do work experience, we may be able to help with that.*
>
> *You might also have an opportunity to do a school-based traineeship, where you combine school, study and work. We can't fund supports that are the responsibility of your employer, school or traineeship provider. But if there are extra disability related supports you need, we might be able to fund those to help you successfully complete your traineeship.*

Reported outcomes

75 students across school years 11-13 were supported to obtain a part time after school job. 52% had an intellectual or learning disability and 36% had Autism or Aspergers Syndrome. 15 students attended mainstream school, 43 attended a special education program, 16 attended a special school and 1 was in distance learning (Crisp, 2021).

Follow up surveys asked students who participated in the after-school jobs project about their post school destination (n=35). None of the students involved in the project transitioned to supported employment in an ADE after school completion. 83% moved into open employment or a traineeship/apprenticeship, and 17% were actively looking for work including engagement in School Leavers Employment Support (SLES) funded activities.

A broad set of stakeholders including parents, teachers, disability employment agency staff and employers were asked about their experiences of the After School Job Project (Crisp, 2021). Overall, the data supports the need for strong collaboration between a broad range of stakeholders, supported by an intermediary who brings stakeholders from different sectors together to work towards common outcomes.

The approach of focussing on work related opportunities and activities resulted in outcomes for individual young people who participated in Ticket to Work. These are described below.

Ticket to Work Outcome 1: Increased year 12 completion

There is strong Australian and international evidence that year 12 completion rates for students with disability are generally lower than their non-disabled peers. Students who participated in a Ticket to Work Network had a range of positive outcomes related to year 12 completion.

- Students with disability who were Ticket to Work participants were twice as likely to finish year 12 when compared with students who were non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a)
- Students with disability who were Ticket to Work participants were more likely to complete their secondary education than students with a similar disability who were non-participants, and also the general population of young people (ARTD Consultants, 2019a).
- 92.7% of students who are Ticket to Work participants complete year 12. In addition, 1.7% completed Year 13 (Ticket to Work data, n=700).

Outcome 2: Increased engagement in work, training, or study

Engaging in work or study post school is a key predictor of later employment for young people with disability across the lifespan. However, in the Australian context young people with disability were typically transitioning from school to disability services instead of work, training, or study.

- Ticket to Work participants were twice as likely to obtain a post school qualification than non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a)
- Ticket to Work participants were half as likely to be disengaged from work or study than non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a)
- Ticket to Work participants in employment spent an average of 2 months unemployed after completing full time education compared to 14 months for the comparison group (ARTD Consultants, 2016).

Outcome 3: Employment outcomes

Ticket to Work focused on delivering employment outcomes for young people with disability that were in open employment settings and at award wage rates. These employment outcomes are summarised below:

- It is estimated that Ticket to Work created 1,315 additional employment outcomes for young people with disability in open employment settings and at award wage, above what would have occurred without Ticket to Work (SVA, 2020)
- Between 2014-2019, there were 1,403 jobs created or attained through Ticket to Work (ARTD Consultants, 2019a)

- Between 2014-2020, there were 1,671 jobs created or attained through Ticket to Work which included 18 micro enterprises, 98 after-school jobs, and 1,555 School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships (Ticket to Work data)
- Ticket to Work participants were four times more likely to be in open employment than non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a)
- The average employment rate of Ticket to Work participants was 86% compared with 21% for the comparison group (ARTD Consultants, 2016)
- There was an estimated reduction of 318 supported employment outcomes due to Ticket to Work. That is 318 fewer young people transitioned to employment within an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE) due to Ticket to Work activities (SVA, 2020). Overall, less than 5% of Ticket to Work participants post school were employed in supported employment, including ADEs (Ticket to Work data)
- Ticket to Work participants were 50% more likely to be in the workforce than non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a). It is estimated that an additional 997 young people with disabilities are in the labour force due to Ticket to Work activities (SVA, 2020)
- Approximately 60% of Ticket to Work participants were in employment post school and this outcome rate was consistent across data collected during 2016-2019. The majority were in part time employment (Ticket to Work data).

Outcome 4: Increase work skills and experience

Providing young people with disability with opportunities for skill development, both employment related skills and broader life skills, is a predictor of later post school employment. Access to employment related skills development, particularly undertaking work experience while at school, has been limited in the Australian context. Therefore, Ticket to Work had a strong focus on the provision of high-quality work experience for students with disability.

- Ticket to Work participants were 50% more likely to feel they have sufficient work experience to find a job than non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a)
- 3,778 young people involved in work experience and work preparation (career development) activities between 2014-2020 (Ticket to Work data).

Outcome 5: Increased personal skills and confidence and social participation

Personal skills and confidence, as well as work related skills, are important in supporting young people with disability to gain employment post school and in their adult life. Skills related to

communication, as well as independent living skills and using public transport are examples of skills that support employment, while low confidence can create barriers to employment for young people with disability. In addition, participation in social and community activities supports development of interpersonal and other soft skills that lead to employment outcomes.

- 98% of Ticket to Work participants identified 'increased my confidence' as a benefit of School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships in Ticket to Work (Wakeford & Waugh, 2014)
- Ticket to Work participants were twice as likely to report that they have 'about the right level of independence' than those in the 2015 NDIS Framework Outcomes pilot study (ARTD Consultants, 2019a).
- Ticket to Work participants were three times as likely to participate in recreation groups than non-participants (ARTD Consultants, 2019a).

Outcome 6: Outcomes beyond individual young people with disability

In addition to outcomes for Ticket to Work participants, a range of outcomes for carers and for the Australian government have also been reported. In calculating social and fiscal value, Social Ventures Australia (2020) estimated outcomes in relation to:

- Increased income for carers
- Increased tax revenue from carers
- Reduction in NDIS costs
- Reduction in DSP and Youth Allowance
- Reduction in Disability Employment Assistance costs.

Overall, SVA (2020) calculate a net benefit of $27,100 per participant over three years, and an estimated total benefit of $87.4M across all Ticket to Work participants.

Building capacity

For young people with disability, there is strong evidence that high expectations and a strong support network are critical to the development of post school employment outcomes. In the highly individualised ecosystem operating in Australia, there are few initiatives that focus on supporting families to have employment expectations, employers to be disability confident and school careers and transition staff to deliver ordinary career readiness activities to students who have a disability. Ticket to Work therefore drew from the evidence base to embed capacity building practices into Ticket

to Work Networks in order to improve employment outcomes for young people with disability.

School careers and transition support

> *'... it's great to now be able to pick up the phone and get an answer from one of the experts in our partnership'* (School/ *Ticket to Work* Network member, Wakeford & Waugh, 2014, p. 69).

Ticket to Work partnered with The Australian Centre for Career Education (ACCE) and the University of Newcastle with support from the Gandel Foundation to create and test a benchmarking tool, informed by contemporary research, designed to support mainstream and specialist schools to enhance their career development service and practice to improve life outcomes for students with disability (Mosen and Page, 2023).

Reported outcomes included an Inclusive Careers benchmarking tool available to be used by school career/ transition specialists and school leadership teams to assess themselves against international policy and practice in career and pathway planning for young people with disability.

The tool was designed to support schools in building inclusive practices in career development when working with young people with disability. The aim of the tool was to improve young people with disability career development journeys and transition into post school pathways. Codesigned with three schools, the tool and tool guide included a collection of tips and resources to strengthen current approaches to career development within each school. In order to provide quality, credible, career guidance for young people with disability. The tool users should meet the following guidelines:

1. be qualified career practitioners
2. regularly engage with students with disability,
3. form linkages and collaborations between students, career practitioner, family, and community,
4. maximise community networks to support real life/work experiences and pathway planning, and
5. engage in professional inclusive career development community of practice.

Family/supporters to be career allies with employment expectations

Ticket to Work developed specific activities to support parents and families (Wakeford, 2020), For example, in 2016, a suite of resources was developed to assist parents to plan with and support their children in successful transition. Parent forums and workshops were also held, which enabled family members to learn about employment options.

A suite of parenting resources was developed and delivered in print and online format. The content included material presented in text, motion graphics and interactive videos. These resources included a series of videos based on evidence-based research (Sheppard, L, Harrington, R. & Howard, K. (2017). They include, for example, an interactive guide for parents to support their children to achieve a good life; six Golden Rules: a set of strategies to support children to reach their goals; developing a vision for the future; planning (how to get here from there); a guide for families, and research about the school to work transition.

Further, a series of videos were developed and promoted on the Ticket to Work website. These include stories from parents of children with disability about their experiences supporting their young people; videos reporting positive outcomes for employers of young people with disability; and personal experiences of young people with disability transitioning from school to work or further education. The latter included stories from young people who had successfully transitioned into after-school employment, or from school into other educational opportunities such as TAFE, or from school into the workplace. Some videos included stories of young people who had learned key life skills such as how to independently use public transport.

> *'This is the first time someone has talked about employment in the context of my child' (Parent of Ticket to Work participant 2013-14, Wakeford & Waugh, 2014, p. 49).*

While these resources have not been formally evaluated, Ticket to Work did undertake data collection about the parent engagement initiative (Wakeford, 2020). When asked the open-ended question: Do you believe that participation in Ticket to Work is beneficial for students with disability? respondent parents focused on 4 key areas of improvement

- Building self-confidence and independence. 93% reported increased confidence for the young person
- Gaining workplace knowledge and improving employability. 96% of parents reported that their young person's understanding of the world of work had improved

- Collaboration and Building connections to employment organisation. 90% reported that the young person was getting on better with co-workers/others in the workplace and 83% reported improvement in taking instructions in the workplace
- Reducing parental fear, pressure and increasing optimism for their child's future. 94% reported that involvement in Ticket to Work had improved their young person's employment opportunities in the future. 100% reported that involvement in Ticket to Work had made them feel more positive about their young person finishing school and 91% reported that they felt more confident about their young person's personal independence.

Employers to be disability confident

A major focus for capacity building has been via engagement with employers. Kellock (2020) identified that between 2014 and 2020, Ticket to Work engaged 2,313 employers from diverse sectors. 'Individualised support for employers' has been provided in the form of disability awareness training, guidance, and the appropriate matching of students to work experience or employment (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p.20).

Individualised support for employers is offered through the provision of disability awareness training, guidance, and the appropriate matching of students to work experience or employment positions in their business. Employers have identified ready access to support as a key element of success (Crisp, 2020), knowing that:

> *'they were not only recruiting young students with disability; they recruited a network of supporters who worked closely together to resolve issues and make the entire process easy for employers' (Crisp, 2020, p.10).*

The employer engagement strategy has not been formally evaluated.

Bridging supports such as employment and training services

The Ticket to Work National Network delivered a range of resources and training to local Networks.

Customised employment training was delivered over two days in each Network. There was a national community of practice that met every two months where experiences and learnings were shared. The discussion led to the development of professional development opportunities

The intermediary, with support from the National Network, delivered professional development activities for network members in the region.

At the network setup stage, network members were introduced to evidence-based practice by the National Network, who also shared and demystified the various employment programs to

enable braiding of funding and sequencing of supports. Guides were created to support the delivery of evidence informed practice, build inclusive practices, as well as provide practical information, for example about after school work, collaboration, and setting up School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships.

The National Network delivered webinars on topics to build capacity. For example, how to set up School-based Apprenticeships and Traineeships, how to apply for funding for apprentices with disability (DAAWS) and how to engage employers. Expert speakers, such as Professor Richard Luecking and staff from the employment area of the NDIA who regularly provided updates.

National Network staff presented at conferences, including the annual conference for staff from special schools and Disability Employment Australia.

(Ticket to Work, no date).

Sector collaboration

> *'We've found the partnership model absolutely invaluable due to the amount of knowledge each partner holds. If something falls through one of the partners can offer assistance or feedback and the support is called upon' (Ticket to Work Network member 2013-2014 quoted in Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p.72).*

Consistent with the evidence presented in Section 1 on inter-agency collaboration, and a recognition that the Australian ecosystem is highly individualised, Ticket to Work had a strong focus on enabling sector collaboration. In particular, a key focus of Ticket to Work Networks was to:

- Share knowledge, skills, and resources to implement evidence informed practice
- Respond to the local region, including labour market and data
- Develop partnership governance structures, including a community intermediary role
- Foster systems in communities that work for young people (Ticket to Work, 2024).

Ticket to Work Networks were the main delivery mechanism of sector collaboration in the Ticket to Work approach. Ticket to Work Networks were place-based and led via a Lead Agent (or 'intermediator'). Networks seek to support collaboration and build intentional pathways between schools, vocational education and training providers, and employers, and comprise a mix of local, state, and federal agencies. Network members might include: schools (mainstream and special education), Disability Employment Services (DES), registered training

organisations (RTOs), workplace learning organisations, group training organisations, Commonwealth funded National Disability Coordination Officer (NDCO), Apprenticeship bodies, Local Learning and Employment Networks (LLENs), employers and industry bodies (e.g. Chamber of Commerce).

> *'The Local Networks use their combined skills to ensure these activities are provided in a supportive manner, in a way that reflects the individual needs of students and in many cases can negate the need for specialised disability focused programs' (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p. 6).*

Networks aim to be more than the sum of their parts (ARTD Consultants, 2019a), seeking to go beyond agency-specific funding parameters and responsibilities in order to solve barriers to create successful transitions for this cohort. Each Network had a different composition and customised their approach in order to address local contextual elements (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014). Wakeford and Waugh (2014) report that 'mainstream' Network members learnt about disability from other Network members who are 'disability experts' and expanded capacity and activity of 'mainstream' members in working with young people with disability. The Network's Lead Agent (or intermediary) is key to brokering collaboration between services and blending/braiding of funding where possible, as well as sequencing of supports, which are critical to the effectiveness of the approach (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014).

Disability Employment Services played a role in the sourcing of work experience opportunities, assisting young people to source School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships, providing ongoing mentoring and support to student trainees and to the employer and co-workers of that young person, and can continue to support the young person to maintain employment with their School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship employer at the conclusion of that arrangement or source alternative open employment. Registered Training Organisations provided accredited training to students undertaking a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships . These RTOs ensure that the training is modified to accommodate the needs and capacities of students with disability, and also receive funding to ensure that the student receives additional mentoring and learning assistance during the period of their training (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014).

Across the years 2014-2020, Ticket to Work program data suggests that there had been a cumulative total of 49 Networks operating across Australia.

Table 7: Number of Ticket to Work Networks by State and Territory

State/Territory	Number	Percentage
New South Wales	11	22.4
Victoria	13	26.5
South Australia	0	0.0
Queensland	15	30.6
Western Australia	5	10.2
Tasmania	3	6.1
ACT	1	2.0
Northern Territory	1	2.0
Total	**49**	

In 2014-2015, 32 local Networks operated, with 281 Network member organisations, the involvement of 169 schools and 455 employers (ARTD Consultants, 2016). By 2019, 31 Networks were operating with approximately 370 Network members/organisations, the involvement of 261 schools and 1900 employers (ARTD Consultants, 2019b).

An evaluation of the Ticket to Work Network approach (Hawkins, 2016) found that:

> *'Ticket to Work Network members felt they achieved better outcomes for young people with disability together than they could on their own; that duplication of services was avoided and that organisation capacity to support effective school transition was increased'* (ARTD Consultants, 2019a, p. 9).

Further evaluation in 2019 (ARTD Consultants, 2019b) identified that successful Networks relied on strong communication between members (fostered by the lead organisation), especially to clarify roles and responsibilities in the complex and overlapping environment. Additionally, Network members most frequently identified gaps in desired membership from employers, transition specialists and apprenticeship agencies and noted the critical importance of the involvement of school and DES in the Networks.

Ticket to Work also operated a national body (the 'National Network') that oversaw and supported local Networks operating across Australia (Wakeford & Waugh, 2014). The role of the national body was to coordinate, resource and catalyse the local Networks and their members, particularly via sharing research and evidence-based practice, and developing capacity building resources. The National Network had a key role in network formation, capacity building, community of practice and ensuring evidence-based practice was delivered. This body was modelled on the 'Technical Assistance Centres that operate in the USA. These centres are

funded to ensure evidence-based and promising practices are used to support young people with disability. This includes conducting research and disseminating information regarding evidence-based practices in transition support for young people with disability through tools, mentor support and professional development (Meadow, 2019).

The Ticket to Work National Network provided partnership establishment guides and governance tools as well as operational resources targeting key stakeholders such as students, parents, employers, and educators (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014).

> *'the national perspective has so much more credibility and potential to our Local Network rather than working in isolated pockets' (Ticket to Work Network member 2013-2014 quoted in Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p.73).*
>
> *'While all Local Networks operate under the Ticket to Work guidelines and overarching philosophy no two Local Networks are alike. They are grassroots, they operate in different locales, they are built around specific issues and needs particular to their cohort and are led by different Lead Agents (intermediary organisations) in each region. What is consistent, however, is that they all have the support of a National Network, have opportunities to formally connect with one another through national meetings and can gain the assistance and guidance of National Ticket to Work staff. In addition, all have access to a vast library of materials, tools, and resources (housed in the 'members area' of the Ticket to Work website) to assist them in coordinating and offering Ticket to Work in their region' (Wakeford and Waugh, 2014, p. 10).*

Appendix 1 provides further detail about stakeholder practice within a collaborative framework, as it relates to the activities delivered within Ticket to Work Networks.

Changing Policy and Practice in Australia

As Ticket to Work Networks developed across Australia, systemic policy and practice barriers impacting on transition to work for young people with disability began to be made visible. The Paul Ramsay Foundation funded Ticket to Work in 2018, for the period 2018-2020, to identify and address transition related policy and practice barriers within the Australian context. The first phase of funding (2018-2019) focused on documenting Ticket to Work's evidence base in order to build further on the approach. The second phase of funding, from 2018-2019, sought to influence policy and practice change on a broader scale.

How it was delivered

Ticket to Work used their national website to release research reports and papers to enable a wide range of individuals and organisations to develop an understanding of evidence-based practice as it relates to school to work transition for young people with disability. Publications focused on key topics related to the Ticket to Work approach, including: on the role of collaboration in generating successful outcomes for young people with disability; (Meadow, 2019) parent engagement in school to work transitions for young people with disability (Wakeford, 2020); experiences of employers in hiring young people with intellectual disability (Kellock, 2020) and customised employment (Crisp, 2020).

The website was made available to a wide range of stakeholders, and was supported by webinars and other activities that supported the uptake of evidence-based practice within Networks and beyond. The focus was on sharing the learnings with key stakeholders, including development, and sharing of online learning guides for parents, employers and young people, and guides to support after-school work and collaboration.

In addition, Ticket to Work responded to discussion papers and made submissions to enquiries relevant to employment of people with disability and school to work transition. One concrete example relates to DES guidelines related to supporting young people undertaking a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships. Following advocacy from Ticket to Work, Disability Employment Services guidelines were changed to allow Disability Employment Services (DES) to provide support for young people undertaking a School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships. The new guideline stated that 'DES Providers are encouraged to work in partnership with schools, state and territory funded vocational training organisations and local Ticket to Work Networks'.

Evidence Supporting The Ticket To Work Approach

An independent evaluation of the Ticket to Work approach and outcomes, undertaken in 2020 by SVA Consulting, reaffirmed what previous studies had found, specifically that Ticket to Work participants are substantially more likely than comparison groups to complete Year 12, work in open workplaces, participate in the labour force and be involved in social activity.

Specifically, of 3216 participants enrolled in Ticket to Work, 2,862 participants were in the labour force (compared to 1,865 in the comparison group), 2,058 were employed (compared to 1,062 in the comparison group), and 1,845 were in open employment (compared to 531 in the comparison group). Fewer Ticket to Work participants were not in the labour force (354

compared to 1,351 in the comparison group), and fewer were in supported employment (231 compared to 531 in the comparison group).

The report estimates that the financial value of Ticket to Work was an average net benefit of $27,100 per participant over 3 years, or about $87.3million across the total 3,216 participants. The benefit is based on a range of key indicators including increased income for carers, increased income for participants, a reduction in NDIS costs, an increase in DES costs, reduction in DSP and youth allowance, tax revenue from carers and a reduction in disability employment costs.

In 2022, Ticket to Work transferred to The Brotherhood of St. Laurence (BSL) and has been incorporated into a larger national disability youth focused employment initiative funded by Paul Ramsey Foundation. The National Collaborative on Employment Disability (NCED) is an enabling and capability hub that informs collaborative policy making, undertakes research and evaluation, facilitates collaboration and capability building across disability and mainstream education, training, and employment services and builds visibility of what works so that young people with disability can successfully transition from education into decent, secure, and meaningful work. As part of this initiative, BSL are also enabling the delivery of the Inclusive Pathways to Employment (IPE) pilot through the implementation and evaluation of an evidence informed model of providing individualised support to young people with disability within the mainstream, federally funded youth employment service 'Transition to Work'. The pilot is currently being delivered in four regions across Australia and will be evaluated as part of the larger project evaluation.

Several Ticket to Work Networks continue to operate, not as part of a coordinated national initiative, rather the practice continues in some regions. They are utilising in kind support as well as small amounts of funding from philanthropy, and they continue to provide a range of activities for young people with disability, families, and Network members to support improved school to work transition outcomes for young people in their area.

Conclusion

Ticket to Work grew out of a local initiative to improve school to work outcomes for young people with disability which drew from evidence-based practice. Over time, the approach deepened and broadened, remaining focused on collaboration, equipping school staff so that they could offer ordinary early work activities to students with disability, supporting families to develop capacity to support employment for their child and ensuring that a range of supports and services, including accredited training and DES, were available to support the career aspirations of young people with disability. In the years that it operated, Ticket to Work provided employment opportunities to thousands of young people with disability across Australia and supported them to obtain employment outcomes that were far greater than their peers who did not have access to a Ticket to Work Network.

Section 4 provides an analysis of how the Ticket to Work approach addressed key ecosystem barriers to enable delivery of evidence-based practice within its Networks. Section 4 also examines the enabling features of the Ticket to Work approach, including how those features could be embedded across local employment ecosystems to enable young people with disability to engage in employment related activities.

Section 4: Ticket to Work approach informing the implementation of evidence-based elements of school to work transition practice for young people with disability in Australia.

When the Ticket to Work approach was implemented through the establishment of Ticket to Work Networks in local areas, it intervened in the employment ecosystem and changed/interrupted the 'business as usual' transition approach that young people with significant disabilities in that area would have normally received. The particular mechanisms Ticket to Work established which created a changed approach to transition are explained below.

At the meso level of the ecosystem, the use of a **highly collaborative approach** was a visible and effective mechanism that replaced the siloed ecosystem. The collaborative approach within the local Networks, effectively 'joined up' the ecosystem at both the level of the individual young person and family, and also at the level of the organisations within the ecosystem. In particular, the use of an intermediary (Network lead) who was 'neutral' resulted in support providers coming to the table with a mindset of cooperation rather than competition.

For young people and families, the need to navigate highly complex and confusing systems was reduced. Instead, the planning approach brought the right organisations and providers to the table at the right time, creating seamless pathways to opportunities that had previously been difficult to unearth. In addition, the joining up of particular parts of the system enabled new opportunities to become available. Participation of different stakeholders made visible to all the different 'buckets of money' available to support young people with disability as they plan for their post school life.

The joining up of the local ecosystem also meant that the individual organisations began to view the challenges young people with disability face in relation to post school employment through an ecosystem lens, rather than focusing attention on the perceived deficits of the young person, or being stymied by the policy and programmatic limitations of their own service context. By working collaboratively to plan for an individual, organisations began to identify service gaps and also opportunities where they could work together to support young people with disability as a cohort.

The highly collaborative approach enabled local employing organisations (both large and small) to come into a supported Ticket to Work Network in order to offer critical early work

opportunities to young people with disabilities in the form of work experience, School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships and paid employment. Employers reported that a key reason they engaged with Ticket to Work was because its local approach aligned with their view of their business/organisation as a member of a local community. Therefore, new opportunities opened up for young people within their local community.

School staff also benefited from the collaborative approach that Ticket to Work created. In particular, time and resource poor school staff had access to new supports and opportunities they could engage young people in. One example is the increase in high quality and more personalised work experience opportunities that became available to students because there were new employing organisations engaged in the Networks who felt confident to support young people with disability in their workplaces.

High quality **employment supports** are critical to creating pathways to employment for young people with disability. Without them, young people can be 'set up to fail', where they are placed into work opportunities that are a poor fit, or the supports to both the employing organisation and the individual are not reliably provided. Critically, there is a low threshold for failure for this cohort, whereby a poorly matched or supported work placement can result in a determination that the young person is not suitable for work and placement into alternatives such as disability programs. Ticket to Work Networks worked with large numbers of employers to support them to offer suitable employment and work experience tailored to the needs of young people with disability, Ticket to Work also enabled young people and employing organisations to have access to employment supports (i.e. through DES) due to the involvement of these providers in local Networks and their commitment to Ticket to Work goals.

Ticket to Work provided a very strong focus on **skills development**, including work-based learning, for example through School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships and vocational education in schools. The success of the School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeship program was underpinned by the relationships built by local Networks between VET providers/RTOs, employers, and schools, supported by the Network lead. The provision of onsite support and training tapped into the way in which many young people with disability prefer to learn, in situ. This resulted in high rates of completion of apprenticeships and traineeships which opened pathways into further study and paid employment post school. Young people experienced a broader range of skills development, for example learning how to use public transport to move around the community, due to the broader range of opportunities available to them.

The evidence about the role early **work experience**, particularly paid work experience, plays in later employment outcomes for young people with disability is strong. Ticket to Work's deliberate focus on work experience drew directly from the literature about the key role early work experience plays in changing attitudes about employment for young people with disability. Work experience was encouraged for all students, and 'real' work experiences were facilitated through the Network, replacing 'tick box' style work experience in op shops and school canteens. Importantly early work experience enabled young people to experience a range of workplaces and supported decision making related to preferences and strengths helped to identify the workplace supports required. In response to a need to support after-school paid employment, Ticket to Work initiated a special focus on this area.

It was clear that the change in attitudes about employment for this cohort were wide reaching. For example, younger students and their families saw older students participating in work experience and therefore had expectations that they would also. Employing organisations, reflective of the wider community, were able to engage with employment of young people with disability through short work experiences, which enabled them to build their confidence and skills in supporting young people, but also changed their perception about the types of roles and activities young people with disabilities can undertake post school.

Ticket to Work was able to support **career/employment/transition planning** that started early and was highly individualised. This was grounded in high expectations and developmental in nature which enabled the focus to shift from a short-term placement to a life course view, whereby the period between 15 and 18 and then later 19 – 25 years of age are considered critical developmental periods to prepare for later adult life. This perspective enables young people to have time to explore their identity, recognises their capacity for lifelong learning and the need to mature post school in order to take on expected adult roles. The use of interagency planning processes also ensured that young people had exposure to a far greater range of opportunities than they would normally have had, including work experience, School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships and paid employment.

In respect to Ticket to Work's ethos about young people with disability having access to the same early career planning activities as other young people, there was a strong emphasis on building the capacity of career planners to support young people with disability as business as usual. By building capacity of existing systems, there is a stronger likelihood that these practices become embedded within schools. To support this, Ticket to Work built a resource suite to support career planning approaches.

Ticket to Work's approach drew strongly from the evidence about the critical role student involvement in planning and self-determination plays in later employment outcomes for young people with disability. In particular, the interagency collaborative planning approach placed the young person at the centre of the planning process, enabling them to direct the activities they engaged in.

Conclusion

Ticket to Work utilised a sector collaboration approach, via a set of place-based Networks, to deliver transition to work activities by connecting young people, families, schools. VET/RTOs, employers, DES, and other stakeholders into a Ticket to Work Network. The approach focused heavily on delivering evidence-based activities of career planning, skills development (predominantly through School-based Apprenticeship and Traineeships) and work experience to drive substantial employment outcomes for young people with disability, most of whom had an intellectual or developmental disability. The national Ticket to Work enabling body was effective at communicating the approach widely and supported the growth of local Ticket to Work Networks, in order to scale a well-documented and successful approach. Despite this, Appendix 2 highlights that the majority of funding to support the initiative was received from philanthropy rather than government.

The employment ecosystem analysis provided here highlights that while there is some policy discourse about school to work transition for people with disability, there is little real action to operationalise this policy into programs, funding, and quality services. However, the evidence about the key elements necessary to underpin effective transition from school to work for young people with disability is now well established and provides a clear framework around which to redesign the ecosystem. At the service delivery level, Ticket to Work is one approach that has utilised these elements as principles for its design. By taking a place-based focus, and by having access to philanthropic funding, Ticket to Work has been able to circumvent or transform many barriers to successful transition posed by the wider employment ecosystem through localised collaborative processes.

However, the ecosystem analysis highlights that the offering of evidence-based transition approach in Australia is far from secure. Key change actions are needed within the ecosystem to enable the implementation of evidence-based school to work transition practice for people with disability. These include:

1. Providing funding for inter-agency collaboration, including sufficient coverage for place-based initiatives and 'back bone' infrastructure to support them (such as Ticket to Work's national enabling body to coordinate and support regional Networks).
2. Building the capacity of the school system as the primary setting from which transition occurs and ensure it is supported to implement evidence-based transition practice. This includes a clear requirement for the delivery of evidence-informed transition planning in schools for all students with disability, with a focus on an extended timeframe of transition from age 14.
3. Enabling complementary use of programs and funding (across program and jurisdictional interfaces), with particular focus on enabling blending across school and DES, DES and NDIS, NDIS and VET/RTOs, school, and NDIS.
4. Building a market of employment providers delivering evidence-informed practice. This includes governments (both state and Commonwealth) setting the market conditions for evidence-informed transition practice through funding and program guidelines and targeted procurement.
5. Building capacity of families and young people through secure and identified funding and support (such as via the NDIS and of family representative bodies).

Transition occurs at the end of school for every student in Australia, including students with disability, across every type of school setting. It is not a niche or optional activity and yet barriers to its successful implementation sit at the heart of Australia's employment ecosystem. This is an area in which clear evidence exists about what course of action to take. Ticket to Work has shown that evidence-based implementation is possible, and able to be scaled nationally. Government's role is to build the ecosystem to enable these features to be a permanent and present feature of Australia's strategy to support employment of young people with disability. The implementation of a structured, phased rollout could result in young people with disability having access to improved transition supports within the lifespan of the current Australia's Disability Strategy.

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Appendix 1: Stakeholder Activity

Table 8: transition related stakeholder activity that requires explicit collaboration and coordination.

(Copy of table from Wakeford and Waugh (2014) p, 28)

Essential 'good transition' elements		Related or connected agencies or bodies									
		School	Disability Employment Services (DES)	Registered Training Organisation (RTO)	Workplace Learning Coordinator (WLC)	Group Training Organisation (GTO)	National Disability Coordinator Officer (NDCO)	Australian Apprenticeship Centre (AAC)	LLEN / Partnership Broker	Employers (local)	Industry bodies
Career development & planning	Career discovery, preparation, and learning experiences	■	■		■				■	■	■
	Parent engagement and support	■	■				■		■		
	Pathways / employment planning	■	■								
Work Experience & ASbAT	Work preparation	■	■								
	Work-based learning experiences	■	■		■					■	■
	Work experience sourcing and monitoring	■	■		■				■		
	Source work experience and ASbAT suit individual young people.	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■	■
Employment support	Employer support		■		■	■		■			
	Trainee on the Job support		■			■				■	
	Apprenticeship and traineeship		■			■		■		■	
	SBAT sign up	■	■	■		■		■		■	
Vocational Education & Training	Accredited training	■	■	■							
	Training adaptation and modification	■	■	■		■					

	Mentoring and tutoring										
Collaboration & partnership	Challenge cultural of low expectations and opportunities										
	Intermediary organisations										
	Governance										

Appendix 2: Timeline of Ticket to Work

Figure 2: Timeline of main phases of Ticket to Work