



# From Protection to Productivity

## An Evaluation of the Transition to Work Program

Ageing, Disability and Home Care  
Department of Family and Community Services NSW  
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Family &  
Community Services  
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## **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY**

This report details the findings of the 2009 evaluation of the Transition to Work (TTW) Program. The TTW program is one of two post school programs for young people with a disability implemented by Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Human Service NSW in 2005 to replace the previous post school Adult Training Learning and Support (ATLAS) Program.

TTW is a two year program which achieves employment for young people with a disability. The purpose of the program is to provide young people with disability with the skills development, vocational preparation, and support they need to transition from year twelve to sustainable employment.

The primary purpose of the evaluation was to examine the results that have been achieved for participants in the TTW Program so far, and to identify the critical factors for success, barriers that limit the achievement of intended results, and any opportunities for further program development.

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The primary data sources for the evaluation included:

- A literature review
- A series of case studies
- An analysis of the outcome data provided by ADHC
- The views of service providers, as gathered through a series of workshops
- The views of service users, their parents and/or carers gathered through a series of workshops, and
- Interviews with other key informants.

### **Service User Profile Summary**

Since its implementation in 2005, 2771 service users have entered the TTW program. Outcome data is available only for those 1153 service users who have completed their two year program. This dataset forms the basis of this evaluation.

The 1153 TTW service users are drawn from the following cohorts:

- Ex-ATLAS service users: 289
- 2004 school leavers (commencing TTW in 2005): 462
- 2005 school leavers (commencing TTW in 2006): 402

They comprise 649 males (56.3%), 501 females (43.5%), and 3 unknown (0.3%).

A total of 54 TTW participants (4.68%) are of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) origin, 58 (5.03%) were born in a country other than Australia, and 91 (7.89%) primarily speak a language other than English.

The profile of TTW users according to primary disability type is as follows:

<b>Primary Disability</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Acquired brain injury	21	1.8%
Asperger's Syndrome	2	0.2%
Autism	86	7.1%
Cerebral palsy	13	1.1%
Deaf blind	1	0.1%
Epilepsy	18	1.6%
Hearing impairment	12	1.0%
Intellectual	729	63.2%
Muscular dystrophy	1	0.1%
Neurofibromatosis	1	0.1%
Physical	93	8.1%
Psychiatric	21	1.8%
Specific Learning/ADHD	12	1.0%
Speech	5	0.4%
Spina bifida	2	0.2%
Spinal Cord Injury	1	0.1%
Unknown	105	9.1%
Visual impairment	30	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>100%</b>

## **Key Evaluation Findings**

### *The Literature*

The evaluation found that the TTW program, as specified in the program guidelines, is consistent with the literature on best practice. There is a very close correspondence between what the literature recommends as effective practice in career and transition initiatives for young people with disabilities, and the principles upon which the TTW program is founded.

A number of key ingredients for successful transition recur in the literature, including the importance of:

- offering opportunities for real work experience and work placements;
- designing a job to suit the individual;
- an awareness and accommodation of employer needs;
- a service perspective in regards to meeting the needs of employers;
- individualised programs, planning and services;

- flexibility in service provision;
- instruction in life skills to support work skills; and
- integrated support from a number of organisations and/or sectors.

### **Program Implementation**

The evaluators reached the following conclusions in response to the research question:

*“To what extent has the TTW program been implemented as intended”?*

*TTW is a well-designed initiative*

In relation to the features of current best practice in transition services, the evaluation found that the TTW program is a very well designed initiative. A number of factors were found to contribute to the program’s success, including its:

- focus on employment outcomes;
- emphasis upon the provision of training in a work environment;
- person-centred nature;
- responsiveness to changing work needs;
- focus upon building effective partnerships between stakeholders in the transition process (schools, parents, employers, etc.);
- emphasis upon culturally competent services; and
- responsiveness to the needs of people living in rural and remote areas.

Through its attention to these principles, the TTW program in many instances was seen to create effective bridges that assist young people to move from school to employment, or in some cases, further education. Parents, service providers and young people reported that the transitions being made by young people would be unlikely to occur without the supports available through the TTW program.

*There is wide variation in the way TTW services are delivered*

The evaluation found wide variation in service provision across various components of service delivery, which include:

- the extent of individualised learning;
- where learning occurs (i.e. centre-based, workplace-based, community-based);
- the nature of skills developed (generic life skills versus vocationally specific skills);
- the extent and nature of provider linkages with labour market networks;
- the orientation of service providers toward achieving employment outcomes;
- frequency and duration of program (days/hours per week, timing of exiting the program);

- extent/closeness of relationships with the schools sector; and
- familiarity with/approach to Aboriginal service users and people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) communities.

Broadly, it was found that delivery of services could be categorised into three areas of focus:

1. Service providers who were committed to achieving employment outcomes for young people. Their service models were outwardly focused and structured to provide young people with work-based, experiential learning opportunities, in both supported and open employment settings.
2. Service providers who considered that their focus within TTW was to prepare young people for independent lives, which might incorporate employment, but were not required to deliver an actual employment outcome. They considered that their responsibilities were met when a service user was ready to make the transition to a DEN service.
3. A small number of service providers, including some services that appeared less well equipped to facilitate work placements, who were of the view that the expectation of an employment outcome was excessively prescriptive and potentially at odds with their organisational philosophy. In these instances service provision was more likely to be focused on Community Participation type activities.

The evaluation found that satisfactory outcomes from the viewpoint of service users and families were most consistent with the delivery focus of the first category of service providers.

*Work experience opportunities and workplace training are critical to an effective TTW program*

The provision of work experience opportunities and training in actual workplaces consistently correlated with favourable program outcomes. While some providers reported difficulty in securing work experience placements that enabled training to take place in actual workplaces, it was also found that where TTW provider staff understood the local labour market, were confident and proactive in approaching employers, and were able to tailor 'jobs' to suit the needs of the young person, service users had much greater exposure to carefully constructed work experiences, and were more likely to achieve employment outcomes.

*The level of personalisation of services varies across different providers*

All service providers espoused the importance of person-centred, highly individualised service provision. However, the commitment, capability and capacity of organisations to deliver personalised services varied according to location, client cohort size, and staffing levels and models of delivery. Service models ranged from programs that offered 1:1 support for each client's unique program, through to services delivered primarily through classroom and work setting-based group activities. The development of an individual transition plan for each service user was the most commonly used mechanism to give effect to this important principle of the TTW program.

*There were differing views on how the program responds to the changing work needs of service users*

While on the whole the program was seen as responsive to the changing needs/preferences of service users, some service users and providers commented that two years was not enough time to effectively meet each person's needs, while others suggested the program needed to be as short and sharp as possible to avoid fostering the stigma associated with long-term unemployment.

There was also wide variance in the extent to which service users were encouraged to transition to work if they were considered work ready before the completion of their two-year entitlement. Some providers had a clearly structured program that young people proceeded through in a time-sequenced way, while others had a more variable menu of options and activities to accommodate the different learning trajectories of individuals.

Satisfied parents spoke highly of the responsiveness of service providers to young people's developmental needs. The transition planning process, and the ongoing review of work experience placements were seen as important factors in the success of TTW in responding to the changing needs of service users.

*Teaching independent living skills was found to be an important part of the TTW program, but the vocational application of this was not always clearly established*

Independent living skills nominated as important to good program outcomes included: travel training, money management and budgeting, time management, personal hygiene and presentation skills, and self-care activities such as shopping, cooking and exercise. However, in some cases the vocational orientation of such learning was not always readily apparent, particularly in the case of providers that did not have a strong focus upon employment outcomes and workplace-based learning.

*The evaluation uncovered mixed views and inconclusive findings as to the cultural competency of TTW services being delivered*

Providers reported a varying capacity to cater for cultural differences. Most considered that their person-centred approaches adequately catered for service users from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds.

Some providers expressed concerns about the underrepresentation of young Aboriginal people, but this was generally attributed to poor school retention rates, or the difficulty in establishing effective connections with Aboriginal communities.

A number of strategies were suggested by providers to deal with this issue, including:

- creating better linkages between Aboriginal Education Officers and transition teachers in the schooling section and TTW providers;
- becoming embedded in local Indigenous Communities by participating in ongoing rather than sporadic ways;
- employing Indigenous staff to create inroads into Aboriginal communities and to enhance cultural awareness within TTW service agencies; and
- ensuring that young people at risk of dropping out of school are identified and directed to TTW service providers, who invest in becoming part of the network of alternative education and training service providers that cater to at-risk youth.

The outcomes data did not provide any reason to be concerned about the cultural competence or culturally appropriate performance of service providers. Outcomes for both CALD and ATSI service users are in line with the broader TTW population, and there is no evidence that services to CALD or ATSI service users are any better or worse than those extended to all service users.

However, observations gained from the client workshops suggested that there were general communication issues relating to the way in which transition teachers and service providers represented the program to parents and families and the way in which this representation was understood by service users. In the case of the few CALD families who attended the workshops, it seems as though these communication issues were exacerbated, and that agreement or shared understanding as to the purpose of the program was not always reached.

*A number of challenges were identified in relation to delivering services in regional, rural and remote areas*

Some service users perceived that there is a limited choice of service providers in some regional and remote areas. On the other hand, there was concern amongst some providers that the recent expansion of the number of

service providers may threaten the viability of existing providers given the limited client base in such areas. With the increased number of service providers in 2010, it will be important that the impact on all service providers is closely monitored.

Transport issues, difficulty in finding work experience placements and jobs, as well as difficulties in finding and retaining skilled staff were also identified as issues in regional and remote areas.

The outcome data also demonstrated that there are minor variations in outcomes between metro and regional areas. Specifically, regional areas have 2% more exits to "unknown", 4% more exits to CP, and 5% less outcomes to employment.

*Effective partnerships between service user, parent/carer and provider are of key importance to an effective TTW service*

A key design feature of TTW is its emphasis upon the tripartite relationship between service user, parent/carer and provider. Providers unanimously confirmed the importance of engaging with parents, although in some instances the over engagement of parents was seen as a barrier to effective program delivery.

Where the process of transitioning from school to the TTW program had been carefully and sensitively managed, and service users and their parents had been kept well informed throughout the transition process (including the assessment process), the likelihood of better outcomes appeared to increase.

The extent to which providers are able to incorporate effective parental engagement strategies into their program delivery is a critical factor of success, and also, of client/parent satisfaction.

*There is considerable variance in the way individual transition planning is implemented across different providers*

Individual Transition Plans were found to be an important feature of most TTW services. Once again, however, there was wide variation in the extent to which plans informed the developmental career and transition needs of each young person, and the extent to which they were designed to fit, or were shaped by the 'tried and tested' service provision model of the provider.

*Opportunities were identified for improvements to the structure and mechanisms of TTW funding*

It was broadly recognised that TTW is well funded, but some providers reported concern regarding the cost effectiveness of the current TTW administrative and funding mechanisms. Certain program inflexibilities, such as its fixed duration, the restrictions on the number of hours that service users can spend in paid employment and uncertainty about which program outcomes were valued, meant that in some cases providers perceived that optimal value was not being realised from the application of TTW funding.

Some service providers felt that the way in which young people were assessed for TTW meant that many service users were unsuitable for the program, and therefore unable to achieve an outcome and likely to be transferred into the Community Participation program. Some saw this as an ineffective use of program funds.

*Flexibility in program delivery needs to be balanced with a need for greater consistency in service provision*

The program guidelines for the TTW program clearly need to allow sufficient flexibility for service providers to respond to the differing needs and capabilities of service users, and the geographical and labour market context in which their programs operate.

However, variations in service provision seem to arise as much from differing interpretations of the requirements of the program, beliefs about the legitimate place of employment in the lives of the people with disability, and the knowledge and skills of providers, as they do from responsiveness to individual need. There is therefore a need to strengthen the program guidelines to ensure a common understanding of the purpose of the program and consistency of service provision across the state.

*There is a need for greater clarity regarding data categories and greater accountability for reporting of outcomes*

The evaluation found that there was considerable variation in the ways providers applied data reporting categories. This suggests a need to more clearly define outcome categories in the program guidelines to ensure greater clarity and accountability amongst providers. From an evaluative point of view, the difficulty of correlating reported data against the Key Result Areas of the program guidelines made it difficult to comment definitively on program outcomes.

Given the confusion reported by service providers regarding these important definitional issues, it is important that ADHC ensure that the amended data categories are thoroughly understood by all service providers and that data returns are audited for accuracy from time to time.

### **The Achievement of Results**

The evaluation considered:

*To what extent has the program been successful in getting results for young people across the Key Result Areas?*

The TTW program guidelines indicate that the success of the TTW program will be measured by the extent to which young people with a disability:

1. Move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or their course of study.

2. Perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals.
3. Develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment.
4. Sustain their work and training commitments.
5. Who are Aboriginal or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have fair access to support and achieve job outcomes comparable to other young people in the program<sup>1</sup>.

#### *The Views of Service Users, Parents and Carers*

In consulting with service users and their families, the evaluation found that in many cases the program was delivering well on its intended outcomes. Many parents believe good employment outcomes would almost certainly not have been achieved without the strategic interventions of the TTW program.

Service users and families felt that the key benefit of the TTW program was that it gave young people with disability the extra time, support, skills and experience they needed to be able to become ready for work and to become active, contributing members of the community. Even where parents felt that their son/daughter had not received quality service from a particular service provider, they were in no doubt about the overall value and importance of the TTW program.

Service users and their families also identified a number of areas for improvement, in relation to:

- communication/rapport between providers and service users/families;
- the role of schools in providing information and access to providers;
- the availability of adequate work experience opportunities;
- the definition of the program's ultimate purpose/ideal outcome;
- the dilution, in some cases, of the program's vocational focus;
- confusion over the difference between TTW and Community Participation programs;
- uncertainty regarding the nature of the assessment process; and
- the need for more flexibility in program duration and delivery.

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<sup>1</sup> Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Transition to Work Program Guidelines (2008), p.9

### *The Views of Service Providers*

It was almost universally acknowledged by service providers that without a program such as TTW, transitioning from school to open or supported employment would not be a viable option for many TTW service users. Most service providers saw the program as delivering an essential transitional service that supported young people whose chances of securing employment would otherwise be extremely unlikely and remote.

Many of the reasons cited by service providers for the various successes of the program were similar to those cited by service users, parents and carers:

- its focus upon vocational outcomes;
- its allowance of time and space for the maturation of service users;
- its ability to customise, and be flexibly adapted around the client and their aspirations;
- its ability to effectively upskill service users over 2 years to an employable standard;
- its raising of service users' self-confidence and self-esteem; and
- its ability to achieve sustainable and meaningful employment outcomes for service users.

Most service providers, therefore, expressed certainty that the TTW program fills an important service gap. It was seen to provide essential assistance for individuals that require additional support to become work ready.

As is the case with many state-wide or national initiatives, there is some variation in the extent to which the implementation is in strict alignment with the program principles, i.e. the extent to which different service models:

- focus on employment outcomes;
- provide training in a work environment;
- are person-centred;
- are responsive to changing work needs;
- build effective partnerships between all stakeholders in the transition process (schools, parents, employers, etc.);
- focus on building independence;
- are culturally competent;
- are responsive to the needs of people living in rural and remote areas;
- are delivered in partnership; and
- are cost effective.

### *Outcomes Data*

As stated previously, 1,153 young people have completed their two year TTW program since the program was implemented in 2005. This section summarises the findings of the outcomes of these young people in relation to the Key Result Areas of the program.

#### *Key Result Area One*

The first Key Result Area is that young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study.

There are three recorded outcomes in the dataset that are consistent with this goal. These are:

- Exit to Employment – Other
- Exit to Employment – Open
- Exit to Employment – Supported.

It is the case that just under 49% of TTW service users (48.74%) have achieved outcomes that meet Key Result Area one. Given that the program is intended to assist people with moderate to high support needs, who may not otherwise achieve employment, TTW's performance at a 49% employment outcome rate is an outstanding result. However, it should be borne in mind that, according to the data collection categories used, "exit to employment" may not necessarily entail the securing of an actual paid job, but might simply denote referral to a DEN for job placement. Nevertheless, transition to an employment agency as "work ready" is also a positive outcome for many service users.

#### *Key Result Area Two*

Key Result Area Two states that young people will perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals.

The existing outcome data does not allow any assessment of performance against this objective of satisfying and meaningful work. However, young people (and their parents) who had secured work were generally satisfied with the outcomes of the program.

#### *Key Result Area Three*

Key Result Area Three states that young people will develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment.

49% of persons completing TTW are exiting to an employment outcome (taking into account the broad definition of "employment" used in the data collection process). They have, therefore, successfully developed the skills and qualifications for a transition to employment. However, it is not known to

what extent they have the skills and qualifications required for “*sustainable*” employment.

An examination of “sustainability” (if we presume sustainability to mean retention in employment) would require longitudinal outcome data from TTW participants. Such data does not currently exist, and would be a valuable addition to the TTW monitoring and evaluation framework.

#### *Key Result Area Four*

Key Result Area Four states that young people will sustain their work and training commitments. While the existing data collection does not enable measurement of this outcome, qualitative data suggests that the programs offered by service providers place a strong emphasis on developing the necessary resilience in young people so that they have the ongoing capacity to manage their working lives.

#### *Key Result Area Five*

Key Result Area Five states that people from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will have fair access to support and will achieve comparable outcomes.

According to the indications of existing data, it is possible to conclude that this goal is being met. ATSI service users and CALD service users are achieving outcomes comparable to other TTW service users.

Particularly, we highlight that 49% of all participants exit to an employment outcome, while 50% of ATSI participants achieve the same outcome. It is rare for any human services organisation to achieve equitable outcomes for Aboriginal participants, due to the entrenched impact of social disadvantage. Aboriginal people do not achieve equitable outcomes in regard to educational performance, employment performance, health status, nor community and individual wellbeing. That TTW does achieve equivalent outcomes is a considerable achievement.

Another criteria for KRA Five is that outcomes for CALD service users are also *comparable* to those achieved by mainstream service users. Measuring CALD status is inherently imprecise, and can only be roughly estimated from the available outcome data. However, the existing information does appear to indicate that CALD users are achieving outcomes that are *comparable* to outcomes for other client groups.

#### **Critical Success Factors**

Informants to this evaluation nominated a number of critical success factors in achieving an employment placement, including the following: ,

- Young people need extensive exposure to diverse workplace settings in order to expand their occupational horizons, to gain vocational experience and to further develop vocational skills and aptitudes.

- Providers need strong, professional links with employer networks in order to design work experience placements and to locate and/or create ongoing work roles. In some situations this can be achieved through partnering with a DEN provider. However, TTW staff will still require a strong awareness of the contemporary labour market and the needs of employers.
- Employers need deep confidence in the capacity of the service provider to provide appropriate support to the employer, the young person and their colleagues.
- A strong, balanced and inclusive relationship needs to exist between the young person, their parents/carers, and the service provider in order to achieve the goal of finding and keeping a job.
- Partnership and close integration with a DEN has a *positive* impact on achieving employment outcomes.
- Partnership and close integration with a CP program has a *negative* impact on achieving employment outcomes.

It was less commonly suggested that it was critical to have the skills to redesign and create jobs to fit the skills and dispositions of a young person seeking employment. The literature, however, stresses the importance of designing the job for the individual, rather than squeezing them into an existing vacancy. A small number of service providers do actively follow a “job design” approach, but this was a less common approach.

## **Recommendations**

The 18 recommendations below address the specified research question:

*How can the program be improved to better meet the needs of the target group, within the available resources?*

### **Recommendation 1:**

*It is recommended that the strengths and achievements of the TTW program be recognised, celebrated, widely promoted and maintained.*

The TTW program provides a much-needed opportunity for young people with disabilities to develop and apply work readiness skills in a supported environment that recognises their specific needs. The program is achieving outcomes that often exceed the expectations of many people, particularly service users, families and employers, and even in those cases where service users or their parents were dissatisfied with the services received, they were in no doubt about the need for the program. In principle, the TTW program provides an effective mechanism for young people with disabilities to move from the protected world of school to the productive adult world of work, and its achievements should be more widely acknowledged and promoted.

**Recommendation 2:**

*It is recommended that the required outcomes (and related definitions) of the TTW program be further clarified to ensure that ambiguities in defined outcomes are eliminated.*

While Key Result Areas of the TTW program have been determined, some of the KRAs are difficult to define with exactitude. For example, it is difficult to determine what constitutes satisfying and meaningful work, or what constitutes sustainable employment. Greater definition around the ideal outcomes of the program, in terms of what is considered a “good” outcome, and what is meant by “sustainable” and “meaningful” work could be helpful in creating more consistency across the sector. These areas of “greyness” result in differing and sometimes conflicting perspectives on what constitutes a successful outcome between individual service providers, service users and their families.

**Recommendation 3:**

*It is recommended that the current monitoring and data collection systems be continuously reviewed and that periodic audits be conducted to ensure the quality of data being provided by service providers. It is further recommended that these activities be brought together to create an effective TTW Management Information System (MIS) as part of the overall ADHC MIS.*

Our analysis of existing data sets has shown that the current systems of data collection and monitoring could be further improved to enable a more systematic analysis and evaluation of the program's achievements. It is recommended that the current monitoring and data collection systems be reviewed and that periodic audits be conducted to assure the quality of the data being provided by service providers.

**Recommendation 4:**

*It is recommended that ADHC review its TTW communication strategy to further strengthen the message that the primary purpose of the TTW program is to achieve employment outcomes for young people with disabilities. It should not be acceptable for funded service providers to argue against the proposition that the primary purpose of TTW is to facilitate the transition of young people from school to sustainable employment.*

Our research has shown that there is considerable diversity among service providers and client/families in their conceptualisation and understanding of the aims of the TTW program. The vocational orientation of service providers, and their sense of connectedness to the labour market were inconsistent, and for some providers achieving employment outcomes is not as central an objective, and as central a measure of service quality, as it should be in an employment program. It is therefore critical that providers are well-informed and supported to achieve these outcomes.

**Recommendation 5:**

*It is recommended that the TTW program encourage, nurture and assist service providers adopt service delivery models that strongly reflect the evidence-based best practice principles that informed the design of the program.*

This evaluation demonstrates that organisations with a strong vocational orientation are better placed to achieve outcomes in line with the objectives of the TTW program. These organisations generally have more productive relationships with employers, employ staff with job placement expertise, focus to a greater extent on work-based training and experience (and do so often from the commencement of the client's program), focus on skills development directly related to work skills, and the development of these skills within real or simulated work environments. They tend to be more business-oriented in their approach, which is reflected, in part, in the systems and processes they implement to run their own businesses. They also tend to focus on the achievement of sustainable employment outcomes for all of their service users as the primary measure of their success. They recognise the significant role they play in the career and transition pathways of the young people they serve, and should be the model for a preferred provider type for the TTW program.

**Recommendation 6:**

*It is recommended that the TTW program is conceptualised, not only within a disability framework, but also within a career and transition framework. The program makes an important contribution to the State's broader Career and Transition Strategy. This should form part of the ongoing discussions between ADHC and the Department of Education and Training, which has responsibility for implementation in NSW of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions.*

The views of service providers could be placed along a continuum that at one end comprises those who clearly see the TTW program as a transition to employment program for a particular client group - young people with disability. Those at the other end of the continuum conceptualise the program first and foremost as a 'disability' program, the outcomes of which may or may not include transition to employment.

Reconceptualising the TTW program as part of a broader network of career and transition support providers would enhance the program's vocational focus by shifting it away from the narrow focus upon "disability".

**Recommendation 7:**

*It is recommended that the process of approving service providers include a weighting of selection criteria that reflect the need for appropriately skilled staff and an organisational culture that has a strong focus on achieving employment outcomes for young people with disability.*

As with most programs, a key factor in the significantly different outcomes achieved by different service providers relates to the internal capacity of the provider, particularly in relation to the skills of program staff members in the areas of program/business management, career development and job placement. Other factors relate to the capacity of the organisation overall to deliver a well-managed, quality service.

We recommend that the following factors have a significant place in the criteria for any future assessment of TTW service provider status:

- The experience level and professional qualifications of TTW program staff in the areas of program management, career development, work placement, human resource management, and disability support in an employment context.
- The capacity of, and the methodologies used by, the organisation to develop and maintain effective relationships with employers.
- The organisation's conceptual approach to the TTW program (i.e. its concept of the program is primarily a work-related versus disability-related program).
- Its proven track record (where appropriate) of successfully placing people with disabilities in meaningful, sustained employment.
- Its ability to generate and take advantage of economies of scale.

**Recommendation 8:**

*It is recommended that any ADHC-sponsored professional development activities for 2010 focus strongly on building the labour market capacity of service providers, and their awareness of evidence based practice in transition to employment programs for persons with disability, in order to assist service users to secure and maintain work.*

As per recommendation 7 above, given the critical importance of provider suitability and quality to delivering quality outcomes, professional development activities that build the labour market, career development and employment placement capacity and expertise of providers would be an effective means of enhancing the consistency of service provision and outcomes across the state.

**Recommendation 9:**

*It is recommended that the outcomes achieved from the TTW program by service providers be highlighted and published in a "TTW Scorecard" for each service provider in the current ADHC publication "Transition to Work Information Books – Choosing a Service Provider". This scorecard must be simple, concise, and accessible to users. It is also recommended that this more accessible presentation of outcomes data be adapted for use on the ADHC website.*

The outcomes currently being achieved by service users of the TTW program vary across service providers. While ADHC publishes outcome data for each service provider on the ADHC website, not all parents are aware that this facility exists, and many find it quite difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the data in its current form.

There is a need for information that demonstrates clearly and simply and in a user-friendly manner, the baseline performance of TTW provision as a whole, alongside the individual achievements of specific service providers. This information should be added to each individual provider section in the current ADHC publication. This would:

1. give young people and their parents/families a clear yardstick to use in deciding on an appropriate service provider;
2. provide renewed focus on the achievement of tangible outcomes rather than on process and methodology;
3. make the system and those delivering the program more accountable; and
4. encourage providers to improve their outcomes as part of their promotional strategy for service users and their parents.

**Recommendation 10:**

*It is recommended that the number of service providers delivering the TTW program be reviewed to ensure that each provider has the capacity and economy of scale to deliver an effective program. This would necessarily lead to a considerable rationalisation of the number of existing service providers.*

It is apparent that in some regions, the number of approved providers exceeds the number of providers that can be sustained by the number of service users anticipated (in 2010) to require services in that region.

It is our view that ADHC needs to develop and implement appropriate procedures for ensuring that the volume of approved service providers in any area remains in proportion to the likely number of TTW service users in that area. Increasing "competition" is not likely to be of benefit in those regions where providers are already demonstrating above average outcomes. Nor is increasing competition likely to be of benefit when it results in oversupply of providers for a given region.

We recommend that ADHC give consideration to implementing minimum size standards for service providers. While some exceptions may exist in regional areas and certain unique service providers, overall, very small service providers are not in the best interest of service users. We would suggest that after appropriate analysis of the underlying factors driving economies of scale, ADHC implement minimum service size guidelines.

**Recommendation 11:**

*It is recommended that, to the greatest extent possible, TTW and CP programs should be operated and delivered as completely separate services, as the overlap of these services has a clear negative impact upon the ability to achieve an employment outcome as a result of TTW.*

Some providers that offer joint activities for TTW and CP service users emphasised that this is done primarily to achieve cost efficiencies. The integration of CP activities and TTW activities often occurs for logistical and structural reasons, for reasons of economy, and for reasons of convenience.

However, the integration of CP services and TTW services is often a source of distress to parents and service users alike and, it would seem, is not conducive to the implementation of best practice service delivery principles, or to the achievement of employment outcomes.

Providers that had clearly separated their delivery of CP and TTW programs reported marked improvements in TTW outcomes.

**Recommendation 12:**

*It is recommended that, in the assessment of tender and funding applications, preference should be given to organisations whose TTW and CP activities are clearly distinguishable in terms of the nature of the activities, the sites at which they are delivered, and the service users who participate in them.*

Given the clear correlation between separation of CP and TTW programs and improved outcomes, this should be taken into consideration in the allocation of TTW funds in the future.

**Recommendation 13:**

*It is recommended that induction, performance monitoring and remedial action processes for TTW service providers be materially strengthened.*

It is the case that a small number of providers are not achieving expected performance standards in the form of employment outcomes for service users. It is our view that any substantially underperforming organisation should be required to improve its performance or ADHC give consideration to future contract renewal.

It is also the case that many providers indicated a preference for more proactive involvement of the ADHC in its oversight of the TTW program. Many providers would welcome more extensive induction as a new service provider, as well as the provision of ongoing advice and professional development. However, they are aware that such improvements may not be able to be achieved within available resources.

**Recommendation 14:**

*It is recommended that ADHC pursue their discussions with the Commonwealth to consider the full implications of initiatives associated with the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy and to make any necessary adjustments to the post school programs policy framework..*

The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy makes a number of commitments related to improving access to education and training and career and transition arrangements for young people with disability. Specifically, it suggests that to make the transition from school to employment as smooth as possible, eligible school leavers who directly register with a Disability Employment Service provider will be exempt from the Job Capacity Assessment process. This measure is designed to provide certainty for people with disability, their parents and carers and allows providers to make solid commitments to early intervention partnerships with schools.

**Recommendation 15:**

*It is recommended that organisations that are contracted to offer TTW services ensure that staff working on the TTW program are aware of the importance of, and equipped with the skills to develop and maintain, effective working relationships with:*

- *Service users and their families*
- *Schools*
- *Employers, and*
- *Other education, training and labour market intermediaries.*

One of the hallmarks of successful service provision seems very much to reside in the ability of service providers to create and maintain positive, open, interactive and effective relationships with service users and their families, with schools, with employers and with other education, training and labour market intermediaries.

**Recommendation 16:**

*It is recommended that ADHC investigate the feasibility, and benefits of, funding TTW service users on the basis of their individual needs and the level of support required to prepare them for labour market entry.*

The model of having a single funding and program structure for a client market with such a broad range of developmental and learning needs was often singled out by providers as a key challenge to the program's capacity to be flexible and meet the needs of service users.

A differentiated or tiered system of TTW funding—and corresponding flexible time-periods—was seen by some providers as a potential solution to the diversity of developmental needs presented by TTW service users.

It was suggested that funding for individual service users could be adjusted depending on the client's support needs, with higher functioning service users receiving lower levels of funding and service users with more inhibiting disabilities receiving higher funding. It was also suggested that this assessment could be undertaken when the client's functional capacity was being assessed.

However, the validity, viability, and potential costs and benefits of this approach have not undergone sufficient investigation to warrant a conclusion on the value, or potential lack thereof, of any such approach. Accordingly, this subject remains a matter for further investigation.

**Recommendation 17:**

*It is recommended that ADHC consider all available avenues to ensure parents and service users are fully informed about the nature of the assessment process.*

Despite ongoing communication by ADHC on the nature of the assessment process, some parents and service providers reported that they lacked a full understanding of the assessment process and/or instrument.

As mentioned earlier in this report, examining the assessment process is beyond the scope of this evaluation, and to the best of our understanding the validity of the assessment process is not under question. However, it is worth noting that many parents and some staff of service providers do not fully understand the assessment process, and in particular, the grounds for making the distinction between entry into TTW or CP.

**Recommendation 18:**

*It is recommended that the eight- hour paid work restriction be reassessed and a more current and realistic upper limit be applied.*

The limitation imposed on service users of being able to work a maximum of only eight hours per week is another area of the program's guidelines that was frequently singled out as a hindrance to good practice. Whilst measures need to be in place to ensure that TTW funding is not exploited, it was felt that some clients are disadvantaged by this restriction. It is a barrier both to developing employability outcomes and a barrier to the normal social and developmental experience of holding down a part time job whilst undergoing further studies.

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## **1 INTRODUCTION**

In 2009, Ageing, Disability and Home Care, Department of Human Services NSW instigated an evaluation of the Transition to Work Program for young people with a disability, as part of its commitment to evaluate the program at least every three years.

Miles Morgan Australia, under its principal, Ms Christine Haines, together with the Innov8 Consulting Group and its principal, Dr Mark Bagshaw, was contracted to undertake the evaluation. The project team also consisted of the following Miles Morgan staff members:

- Ben Haines (Project Manager)
- Dr Jade Nobbs (Research Consultant)
- Dr Adam Trainer (Research Consultant)

### **1.1 Overview of the Transition to Work Program**

The Transition to Work (TTW) program is one of two post school programs for young people with a disability implemented by Ageing, Disability and Home Care (ADHC) in 2005 to replace the previous post school Adult Training Learning and Support (ATLAS) Program.

Transition to Work is a two-year program designed to achieve employment outcomes for young people with a disability. The Transition to Work program is available to eligible young people unable to immediately access Commonwealth employment programs when they leave school.

The program provides services to young people with a range of support needs but is primarily targeted to young people with moderate to high needs, who are unable to immediately access employment or attend TAFE or university due to their support needs.

The primary goal of the TTW program is that young people move to open or supported employment (Key Result Area 1) by developing the skills and/or qualifications needed to successfully secure and sustain employment. Each young person is offered an average of three days of support per week for not less than 48 weeks a year. The mix of days and hours (e.g. start and finishing times) and mode of service delivery (face to face or indirect) a person receives each week is negotiated between the service provider and the young person and, if appropriate, their family/advocate. The mix of days and hours should be responsive to the individual needs and goals of the person and the availability of suitable training and work-based placements.

Primarily, young people completing Year 12 commence in TTW at the beginning of each calendar year after being assessed as eligible to enter the program during the annual school leaver process, and then registering with

an approved service provider. Young people may also apply to enter the program through the ADHC regional office at any point during the year.

## 1.2 Key Result Areas

It was determined at the inception of the Transition to Work Program that its success would be measured by its achievements against the following Key Result Areas. These are the extent to which young people with a disability:

1) Move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or their course of study.

2) Perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals.

3) Develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment.

4) Sustain their work and training commitments.

5) Who are Aboriginal or from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds have fair access to support and achieve job outcomes comparable to other young people in the program.

In short, the intention of the program is that young people will have the necessary skills to get a sustainable job that suits their goals by the end of the program.

Under the Transition to Work Program Guidelines, it is a requirement that all aspects of service delivery in the Transition to Work Program are delivered in accordance with the following principles:

- Services focus on securing sustainable employment for young people by overcoming the barriers to employment they face.
- Service providers deliver relevant training and support to young people in a work environment to enable the consolidation and practical application of learning and skill development.
- Young people with the support of their families/advocates (where agreed by the young person) should be the drivers of their Transition Plans, having control over important decisions in their program.
- Services cater for young people's developing skills and independence.
- Where required by the young person, their Transition to Work program includes support to perform day-to-day functions and/or access leisure activities. This support should be focused on building the young person's capacity to sustain work through increased independence.
- All service providers will need to understand the cultural mix of communities they serve and design access strategies that specifically

target young people from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

- Sustainable models of support are required for young people living in rural and remote communities.
- Support arrangements are developed through genuine partnerships between young people and their families. Service providers are also expected to develop strong relationships with businesses and Commonwealth funded employment agencies to identify work related opportunities for young people.
- Services are provided within agreed funding benchmarks and offer the best quality and mix of support options within available resources.

### *1.2.1 The Monitoring and Evaluation Framework*

A monitoring and evaluation framework, within which this evaluation is located, was established for the TTW program in 2008. The framework specifies data collection and assessment at two levels:

- Regular monitoring of performance and reporting of service-level and program data
- An evaluation three years after the program's initiation.

Monitoring tools and processes, which were developed in consultation with the Stakeholder Reference Group, were piloted in 2008 and a number of minor changes made. A Performance Monitoring Report for the period July – December 2008, containing summary information for program management purposes, was provided to ADHC in March 2009.

### **1.3 Scope of the Evaluation**

This evaluation constitutes strand two of the monitoring and evaluation framework. The primary purpose of the evaluation was to examine the results that have been achieved for participants in the Transition to Work Program, and to identify critical factors for success, the barriers that limit the achievement of the intended results, and any opportunities for further program development.

The primary goal of the evaluation was to assess the TTW's achievements against the five Key Result Areas, as discussed above. The evaluation also considered key research questions, as established in the monitoring and evaluation framework, and contained in Appendix 1.

### **1.4 The New Environment**

Since the establishment of the TTW program, there have been a number of significant changes to both national career and transition services and employment services:

- a) A National Partnership Agreement on Youth Attainment and Transitions has been signed between the Commonwealth and all States/Territories, including NSW; and
- b) A National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy announced by the Federal government, with a commitment to reform the Disability Employment Network (DEN) and to educate employers and trial incentives to provide more jobs for people with disability. A feature of the new Disability Employment Services includes direct registration for school leavers into DEN services to significantly improve school to work transitions for job seekers.

#### *1.4.1 The National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions*

The National Partnership between the Commonwealth and all State and Territory Governments on Youth Attainment and Transitions sees the States and Territories assuming greater responsibility for career and transition activities designed to support young Australians.

The agreement, which is designed to increase educational attainment of young people aged 15 -24, has been established to:

- achieve a national Year 12 or equivalent attainment rate of 90 percent by 2015
- provide an education or training entitlement to young people aged 15 - 24
- better engage young people in education and training
- assist young people aged 15 -24 to make a successful transition from schooling into further education, training or employment; and better align Commonwealth, State and Territory programs and services related to youth, careers and transitions
- achieve improvements in the numbers of young Australians making successful transitions from schooling into further education, training or employment.

The States and Territories have agreed to progressively assume primary responsibility for the provision of career and transition programs for young people, and the Commonwealth will retain responsibility for national career development. To achieve both the targets and honour the spirit of the agreement, State and Territory Implementation plans will outline how they will increase engagement by groups at risk, including Indigenous young people and young people with disability.

It is important, therefore, that in future the TTW program is conceptualised and recognised not only as an important disability services program for young people, but as an important element of the State's broader youth attainments and transition strategy.

#### *1.4.2 The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy*

The Strategy makes a number of commitments related to improving access to education and training and career and transition arrangements for young people with disability. Specifically, it suggests that to make the transition from school to employment as smooth as possible, eligible school leavers who directly register with a Disability Employment Service provider will be exempt from the Job Capacity Assessment process. This measure is intended by the Commonwealth to provide certainty for people with disability and their parents and carers, and allows providers to make solid commitments to early intervention partnerships with schools.

The network of 31 National Disability Coordination Officers has been charged with building linkages between a range of school, post-school, employment and community organisations including Disability Employment Service providers, registered and group training organisations, and Australian Apprenticeship Centres, to help people with disability make the transition from school and further education to employment.

It is important that ADHC pursue their discussions with the Commonwealth to consider the full implications of these initiatives, and to make any necessary adjustments to the post school programs policy framework.

## 2 THE METHODOLOGY

The methodology was informed primarily by the tender specifications issued by ADHC, by the monitoring and evaluation framework, and to a lesser extent by initial consultation with and feedback from ADHC.

The primary data sources for the evaluation included:

- A literature review
- A series of case studies
- An analysis of the outcome data provided by ADHC
- The views of service providers, as gathered through a series of workshops
- The views of service users, their parents and/or carers gathered through a series of workshops, and
- Interviews with other key informants.

The workshops therefore formed the primary and most significant means of gathering information on the implementation of the TTW program. This chapter provides an overview of the methodology. Further details on each aspect of the information gathering process are provided in the appendices and in subsequent relevant chapters.

### 2.1 The Reference Group

A Reference Group was established to oversee the project. Its membership comprised of the following representatives:

**Table 1: Steering Committee Members**

Deborah Hoffman	The Spastic Centre
Phil Tuckerman	JobSupport
Neil Preston	Greenacres
Emily Caska	National Disability Services
Belinda Epstein-Frisch and Catherine Hogan	Family Advocacy
Lee-Ann Whitton	Council for Intellectual Disability (CID)
Rosemary Royer	ADHC

Emily Dempster	ADHC
Lisa Brophy	ADHC
Lorraine Larri	ADHC

The Reference Group held two meetings: the first in July 2009 to provide input to the proposed methodology and project plan, and the second in October 2009 to review and provide feedback on the draft report.

## 2.2 Interviews with Key Informants

The evaluation design was supplemented with a small number of interviews with key informants. At the beginning of the project, ADHC was asked to nominate three representatives from a diverse range of backgrounds who could provide an appropriate overview of, and a sense of historical context for, the issues and challenges facing the TTW program. The ADHC-nominated stakeholders were:

- Emily Caska, of National Disability Services
- Denise Beckwith, of People with Disability Australia
- Mary Shalhoub and Libby Brack, of ADHC, Metro South Region

Freely structured interviews were conducted with these key informants. The intention was to orient the researchers towards the strategic and operational issues and challenges faced by the TTW program, and to place the program in its historical and organisational context.

The researchers were also guided by an initial project meeting with Rosemary Royer, Director Day and Post School Programs, ADHC and by ongoing feedback from Lisa Brophy, Project Manager, and later by the assistance of Natalie Miller, also of ADHC. The researchers also met with John Gilroy of NDS, who provided advice on the participation of Indigenous young people in TTW.

## 2.3 The Literature Review

A variety of sources, including academic literature, government reports on transition-related programs and studies, and reports from a range of international disability and human rights organisations were reviewed to identify best practice and success factors in facilitating transitions to work for people with disability.

The literature review was guided by Dr Mark Bagshaw, who consulted widely with appropriate international and Australian experts in the disability transition support field to identify the appropriate literature base. This literature was then reviewed and summarised by the Miles Morgan team against the specified research questions.

The findings of the literature review are summarised in Chapter 3 and the full review is presented in Appendix 2.

## **2.4 The Workshops**

The primary means by which information gathered was through a series of facilitated research workshops. 28 workshops were conducted in 14 locations throughout NSW. Locations were selected by ADHC to ensure appropriate geographic coverage and accessibility for all service users and clients.

Letters and flyers were prepared and sent by ADHC to all service users, their parents and all service providers, inviting them to attend workshops at the following locations:

- Parramatta
- Chatswood
- Port Macquarie
- Bathurst
- Queanbeyan
- Campbelltown
- Newcastle
- Wollongong
- Gosford
- Lismore
- Tamworth
- Dubbo
- Wagga Wagga, and
- Liverpool.

ADHC and National Disability Services also phoned service providers to remind and encourage them to attend the forthcoming workshops. They also asked them to promote the client workshops to service users and their parents as an opportunity for them to have their views heard. The workshops for service providers were scheduled from 2-4pm and those for service users and their parents/carers were held outside working hours, from 6-8pm, to increase the opportunity for attendance.

The workshops were designed to elicit feedback on the effectiveness of the program for young people. The workshop structure included seven key topic areas as a guiding format. These topic areas were each of the 5 Key Result Areas, the strengths of the TTW program, and areas for improvement. The facilitators guided an open group discussion at each forum, based on these seven key discussion areas. Further information on the questions used to prompt discussion and attendance patterns at the workshops is contained in Appendix 3.

The information gathered through these forums is detailed in Chapter 5 of this report.

## **2.5 Data Review**

ADHC provided the consultancy team with a dataset that included an individual entry for all service users who commenced in TTW since the implementation of the program in 2005 (2271 young people). Outcome data, however, was only available for service users who had commenced in TTW in 2006 or earlier (Ex-ATLAS, 2004 and 2005 school leavers) and had completed their two-year TTW program. This outcome data is collected from service providers, and covers all 1153 Transition to Work service users who have exited the program.

Each record in the dataset is an individual TTW service user, identified only by number. Names were not provided.

All TTW service users were mailed a letter by ADHC, which advised that the research was taking place, and gave them the option of declining to participate in the research. 64 service users responded in the affirmative and withdrew from participation.

The outcome data includes the following fields for each record:

- Cohort
- Region
- Person ID
- Date of Birth
- Gender
- Suburb
- Postcode
- Indigenous Status
- Country of Birth
- Language (other than English)
- Primary Disability
- Provider
- Outlet

The data is reviewed in Chapter 4 of this report.

## **2.6 Confidentiality and Client Privacy**

The research team has not, at any time, been provided with identifying data regarding TTW service users, nor has the team ever collected any such information.

### **3 THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

The full literature review is contained in Appendix 2 of this report. What follows is an assessment of the extent to which the principles of the TTW program (i.e. the principles that informed the design of the program) reflect the elements of best practice as identified in the literature.

The TTW guidelines specify that all aspects of service delivery in the TTW program be delivered in accordance with the following principles:

1. Focused on employment outcomes
2. Delivers training in a work environment
3. Person centred
4. Responds to changing work needs
5. Builds independence
6. Culturally competent and respectful
7. Responsive to the needs of people living in rural and remote areas
8. Working in partnership, and
9. Cost effective.

#### **3.1 Focused on Employment Outcomes**

The key principle of the TTW program that services should “focus on securing sustainable employment for young people by overcoming the barriers to employment they face” is consistently identified as an important focus of effective transition programs for young people with disability.

Lewis and Robertson emphasise the importance of maintaining a focus on employment in all transition activities. The OECD recommends that all people with disabilities should be entitled to an individualised “participation package” that includes work elements and a wide range of employment choices (OECD 2003, p. 11).

Woolsey and Katz-Leavy also identify as features of effective program delivery employment-related activities such as identifying and building on the participant’s strengths and interests; exposing them to a number of jobs and career paths; teaching the participants about career goal planning, which can be supported by designing step-by-step processes to get them to these goals, and; providing opportunities for temporary work experiences that provide immediate income to those clients who are ready (2008, p. 17). These features also closely match the requirements of the TTW program.

Cobb and Alwell stress the importance of job placements in real jobs that have some grounding in the wider community. In particular, they emphasise

“that vocational training include work experiences in real jobs, particularly work experiences that focus on socialisation with co-workers, and access to adult role models and mentors in meaningful work roles” (2009, p. 78).

### **3.2 Delivers Training in a Work Environment**

Principle 2 states that “service providers deliver relevant training and support to young people in a work environment to enable the consolidation and practical application of learning and skill development”.

The literature resoundingly confirms the central importance of this TTW principle. Beyer (2008), Test et. al. (2009), Luecking and Certo (2003), Lewis, Drenen and Tarzia (2000), Benz (2001), and Woolsey and Katz-Leavy (2008) all highlight the importance of practical work experience in actual workplaces.

Further, the literature specifies effective supports that can be implemented in the workplace for young people with disabilities.

### **3.3 Person-Centred Services**

The TTW principles state that young people with the support of their families and/or advocates (where agreed by the young person) should be the drivers of their Transition Plans and have control over important decisions in their program.

Individual transition plans are nominated by many authors as a key feature of effective school to work transition programs. In many instances, as is the case in the TTW program, individual transition plans (and individual employment plans) are seen as the basis from which an individualised transition program operates.

Finn and Kohler define a well-executed, transition plan as capable of preparing students for their adult lives and having the potential to significantly “improve the post-school outcomes for students with disabilities” (2009, p. 18).

Lewis and Robertson (2008) list individualised support, matching of jobs to people and an effort from providers to know the whole person as key employment service strategies to benefit people with disabilities. Cobb and Alwell mention “the need for flexibility in creating and providing individualised supports to youth with disabilities, rather than simply fitting them into existing service continuum options” (2009, p. 79). Woolsey & Katz-Leavy advise the development of a “process that identifies individual strengths or ‘gifts’ as the stepping stone to the development of education, career, and life goals, and the gateway to discovery and hope”, as well as recommend programs that “individualise exposure to the world of work” and “incorporate activities that meet youth and young adults ‘where they’re at’” (2008, p. 17). Everson and Reid (1999) similarly offer guidelines for developing person-centred, individualised education programs. Wehman

(2006) suggests that setting goals is a critical and inherent aspect of the transition process.

The literature also overwhelmingly endorses the critical importance of parental engagement to the achievement of successful education, training and employment outcomes for young people.

### **3.4 Responds to Changing Work Needs**

TTW services should cater for young people's "developing skills and independence". Whilst the literature does not specifically draw attention to service provision that caters for changing needs, a significant area of focus within the literature is the need for flexible and responsive service provision. Inherent in an individualised and flexible service is the ability for service providers and employers to cater to the unique development needs of service users. One size fits all solutions or services that fail to cater for the growing independence of individual service users do not meet these criteria.

### **3.5 Builds Independence**

Principle 5 states that a young person "who needs support to perform day to day functions and/or access leisure activities should be offered it, and that the support should be focused on building the young person's capacity to sustain work through increased independence".

Numerous authors, including Wehman and Pierson et al, conclude that social skills instruction should be a component of any comprehensive transition program for youth with disabilities, due to its capacity to increase self-determination (Pierson et al p. 123).

### **3.6 Culturally Competent and Respectful**

There is limited research that demonstrates that the efficacy of an individual's career and work transitions may be influenced by their broader cultural background. However, it has been demonstrated that there are a number of general factors, which erect barriers to effective transitions for individuals from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds

Landmark, Zhang and Montoya identify a number of general barriers to effective transitions for CALD individuals that are not specific to any particular ethnic group. These include:

- limited minority leadership representation in schools
- a lack of knowledge about special education and transition programs
- anxiety due to previous negative interactions with educational professionals
- language barriers. (p. 69)

### **3.7 Responsive to the Needs of People Living in Rural and Remote Areas**

Whilst sustainable models of support are an essential requirement for young people living in townships and remote communities in Australia, the general

literature does not focus strongly upon this requirement. Although it does emphasise the importance of developing partnerships, which mirrors the TTW principle that: "service providers operating in these areas will need to consider ways to develop outreach services and partnerships with local businesses and community organisations".

### **3.8 Working in Partnership**

"Support arrangements should be developed through genuine partnerships between young people and their families. Service providers are also expected to develop strong relationships with businesses and Commonwealth funded employment agencies to identify work related opportunities for young people".

The involvement of parents in their children's transition process is universally encouraged in all academic and governmental literature reviewed. According to Grigal and Neubert, parental involvement in the transition process "is perhaps the most significant factor in the transition outcomes for students from youth into adulthood" (2004). In keeping with this general principle, family involvement is also recognised as essential in ensuring desired transition outcomes for students with disabilities (Landmark, Zhang & Montoya 2007, p. 68).

The importance of inter-organisational collaboration is also a consistent theme in the description of best practice. It is generally felt that the support offered by schools, disability service providers, employment agencies, government departments and other sections of the community needs to be harnessed in unison for individuals to be given the best opportunity to be an active agent and succeed in their school to work transition.

Beyer (2008) asserts that "[t]he sharing of information on the needs of people with learning disabilities between agencies needs to be more effective post-school" (p.11). Woolsey and Katz also believe that the best results for young people with disabilities looking to transition from high school into work environments can be achieved when organisations "[i]nvest the time and resources required to build partnerships across relevant services and systems in the community" (2008, p. 17).

### **3.9 Cost Effectiveness**

The principle of cost-effectiveness was not talked about in the literature sourced for this review.

### **3.10 Summary**

There is a very close correspondence between what the literature recommends as effective practice in career and transition initiatives for young people with disabilities, and the principles upon which the TTW program is founded.

A number of key ingredients of successful transition strategies recur in the

literature, including the importance of:

- Offering real work experience and work placements
- Individualised programs, planning and services
- Flexibility in service provision
- Instruction in life skills to support work skills, and
- Integrated support from a number of organisations/sectors.

Undoubtedly, the TTW program is a very well designed initiative. Therefore, any recommendations for improvement contained later in this report respond either to issues of implementation, or to areas where improvements could be made. There are no recommendations that relate to the underpinning, fundamental design features of the program.

## 4 DATA REVIEW

This chapter reviews the available outcome data against the Key Result Areas of the Transition to Work program, and against the research objectives of the project.

The data used in this analysis has been solely provided by ADHC.

### 4.1 Data Quality & Associated Caveats

There are a number of characteristics and properties of the dataset that must be taken into consideration when reading these findings.

The key issues relate to reporting of outcomes against the category of "Open Employment". It became apparent from the workshops and site visits that different providers apply different interpretations to this category. In the reporting period for which the data is available, TTW providers did not apply a uniform and clearly agreed and understood definition of the category "exit to open employment". Service providers offered the following understandings of the term:

- 1) Open Employment can be taken to mean moving into employment, without any enrolment or support in a DEN.
- 2) Open Employment can be taken to mean enrolling in a DEN, *without* actually holding a job. A number of providers reported that ADHC officers informally advised them that if a client exited to a DEN, the outcome was to be recorded as a move to Open Employment, but listing the DEN provider as the "employer".
- 3) Open Employment is assumed by some providers to mean obtaining a paid employment position, along with concurrent enlisting at a DEN.
- 4) There is no minimum number of employment hours required to record an "Open Employment" outcome. Hence employment on a very limited part time basis (which is unfortunately a common outcome, according to many workshop participants) could/would be recorded as moving to "Open Employment".

The official ADHC definition of Open Employment states: *"Open Employment Services assist job seekers with a disability to gain and maintain employment in the open employment market or to become self employed. They provide training, job placement, and on the job support"*<sup>2</sup>. The ADHC definition, therefore, would appear to encompass moving to an Open Employment service rather than actually moving to *employment*. While this is a

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<sup>2</sup> Source: TTW Program Guidelines (2008), p.61.

fundamental distinction, it is not a distinction that was clearly understood by providers.

This report nonetheless proceeds using the language of the TTW program, which will focus on “employment outcomes”. Under the provided dataset, an entry recorded as “Open Employment” is considered an “employment outcome”, when it could actually be inclusive of referral to a DEN provider in the absence of employment.

In response to this issue, ADHC has in recent times added “Exit to DENS” as an outcome category. However, the existing outcome data has not been gathered with this outcome category available. There are therefore two problems for this evaluation:

1. An outcome that is recorded as “Exit to Employment - Open” does not inform as to whether the client does, or does not, have employment.
2. Data gathered after the point at which ADHC made “Exit to DENS” available as an outcome category will no longer be comparable with data from the time prior to which this option was introduced.

It is possible, therefore, that the numbers listed as achieving open employment in the following data are an *over-representation* of the numbers of persons who actually exited to employment. Additionally, the data category “Exit to Employment – Other” is not clearly defined or well understood by TTW providers.

Given the confusion that has existed on these important definitional issues, it is important that ADHC ensure that the amended data categories are thoroughly understood by all service providers and that data returns are audited for accuracy from time to time.

#### 4.2 Data Fields

The data was provided in Excel format, and the data is structured as a database.

The outcome data includes the following fields for each record:

Field	Record Type	Notes
Cohort	Categorical: Ex-ATLAS, 2004, 2005, 2006.	Refers to school leaver cohort period of initial enrolment
Region	Categorical: Hunter, Metro North, Metro South, Northern, Southern, Western	Refers to the six ADHC regions
Person ID	Numeric	

Field	Record Type	Notes
Date of Birth	Date	
Gender	Categorical: Male/Female/Unknown	
Suburb	Text	
Postcode	Numeric	
Indigenous Status	Categorical: Not Stated/Inadequately Described, Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander Origin, Neither Aboriginal Nor Torres Strait Islander Origin, Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal Origin.	
Country of Birth	Text	
Language (other than English)	Text	25 different language types represented. Actual meaning is "Any language other than English commonly spoken at home".
Primary Disability	Categorical: Acquired Brain Injury, Asperger's Syndrome, Autism, Cerebral Palsy, Deaf Blind, Epilepsy, Hearing Impairment, Intellectual, Muscular Dystrophy, Neurofibromatosis, Physical, Psychiatric, Specific Learning/ADHD (note that this is one category), Speech, Spina Bifida, Spinal Cord Injury, Unknown, Visual Impairment	Obtained by ADHC from three different sources.  a) The School Leaver Masterlist, originally from the School Leaver Assessment.  b) For those for whom this information was not available from the SL process, this was obtained from the CIS database.  c) For early and late entrants, the information was gathered either from regional submission or from assessment results. The assessment was conducted by

Field	Record Type	Notes
		Assessment Australia.
Provider	Categorical: by provider name	
Outlet	Categorical: by Suburb of Service Delivery.	For service providers with more than one location, this describes the site location.
Outcome Status	Categorical: Exited, Other Outcomes, Not Available, Due October.	“Exited” refers to clients who have completed the TTW program to various destinations; “Other Outcomes” refers to a client that has been moved to CP, extended in TTW, or extended/deferred within TTW.
Outcome Type	Categorical: Deferred/Extended within TTW Exit to Employment – Open Exit to Employment – Other Exit to Employment – Supported Exited – Other/Unknown Exited to Education – Other Exited to Education – TAFE Exited to Education – University Extended in TTW Transfer to CP	Please refer to heading above on “Data Quality and Associated Caveats”
Exit Date	Date	

### 4.3 Summary Data

The available dataset was provided to Miles Morgan by ADHC. The dataset contains 2771 individual service user fields (2771 service users have entered the TTW program since the implementation of the program in 2005). However, outcome data is only available for the 1153 service users who have

completed their two year TTW program. These service users are drawn from the following cohorts:

- Ex-ATLAS service users: 289
- 2004 school leavers (commencing TTW in 2005): 462
- 2005 school leavers (commencing TTW in 2006): 402

The following analysis is conducted *solely* using the 1153 clients for which outcome data is known. It is therefore limited to those commencing in 2006 or before.

The following table provides a summary of outcomes for all TTW service users, as per the available dataset.

**Table 2: Summary of TTW outcomes**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Number of outcomes</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
Extended or Deferred within TTW	38	3%
Exit To Education	48	4%
Exit - Other/Unknown	214	19%
Transfer to CP	291	25%
Exit to Employment	562	49%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>100%</b>

The following figure displays the overall TTW outcome data as a pie chart.

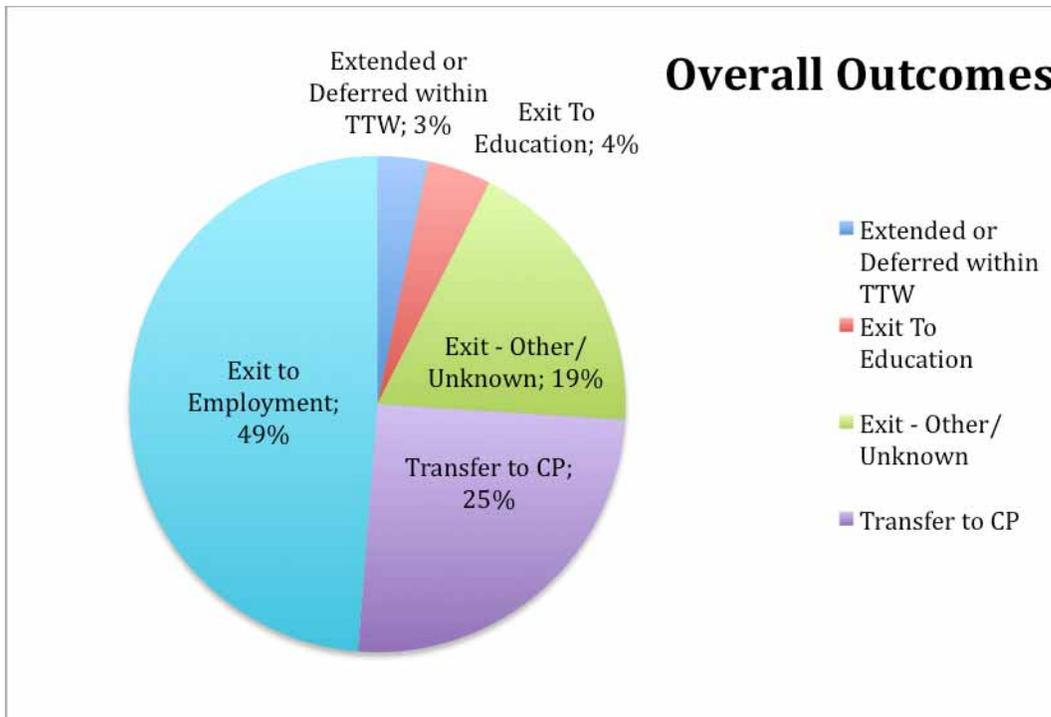


Figure 1 Overall TTW client outcomes

#### 4.4 Demographics

##### 4.4.1 Gender

The population is comprised of 649 Males (56.3%), 501 females (43.5%), and 3 unknown (0.3%).

##### 4.4.2 Disability type

The following table provides a breakdown of the primary disability types.

Table 3: Disability Types

Primary Disability	Total	%
Acquired brain injury	21	1.8%
Asperger's syndrome	2	0.2%
Autism	86	7.1%
Cerebral palsy	13	1.1%
Deaf blind	1	0.1%

<b>Primary Disability</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Epilepsy	18	1.6%
Hearing impairment	12	1.0%
Intellectual	729	63.2%
Muscular dystrophy	1	0.1%
Neurofibromatosis	1	0.1%
Physical	93	8.1%
Psychiatric	21	1.8%
Specific Learning/ADHD	12	1.0%
Speech	5	0.4%
Spina bifida	2	0.2%
Spinal Cord Injury	1	0.1%
Unknown	105	9.1%
Visual impairment	30	2.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>100%</b>

The most notable feature of the above table is the clear divergence between the report of service providers (see chapters 5 and 6) and the data above on the prevalence of mental health (or psychiatric) disabilities. The chart above identifies only 1.8% as having a (primary) Psychiatric Disorder, along with another 1% as having a category entitled “Specific Learning/ADHD”. In contrast, service providers frequently discussed the challenges inherent in servicing increasing numbers of clients with either a primary psychiatric disability, and/or a co-morbid (or dual diagnosis) mental health problem. This may represent issues of lag, with the data set in this report being limited to those starting no later than 2006.

Also of note is the high proportion (9.1%) of participants where the primary disability is not identified. In some ways, this could potentially represent the

prevailing intellectual culture in the sector, which would tend to often reject the notion of defining people in terms of a specific disability type.

#### 4.4.3 Indigenous status

The following table provides a summary of the Indigenous status of participants.

**Table 4: Indigenous Status**

<b>Indigenous Status</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>%</b>
Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander origin	52	4.51%
Neither Aboriginal nor Torres Strait Islander origin	749	62.0%
Not Stated/inadequately described	350	30.36%
Torres Strait Islander but not Aboriginal origin	2	0.17%
<b>Total</b>	<b>1153</b>	<b>100%</b>

Overall, 4.68% of the TTW service users (54) are of ATSI origin. The status of a further 350 service users is not stated or inadequately described, a number of sufficient size (30%) to be of concern when drawing conclusions. Of those TTW service users whose ATSI status is known (only 803), ATSI people comprise 6.72% of the TTW population.

The ABS does not provide precise data on the numbers of Indigenous people in the broader population in this age range in NSW as a whole. However, it can be extrapolated. In the age range of 15 to 19, there are 448,000 people aged 15-19 in total<sup>3</sup>. The NSW ATSI population is 148,178<sup>4</sup>. 10.5% of the NSW ATSI population is aged 15 to 19<sup>5</sup>. Therefore, there are 15,558 ATSI residents in NSW aged 15 to 19, indicating that 3.47% of the NSW population aged 15 to 19 is of ATSI origin.

Also relevant is the issue of prevalence of Indigenous people by disability type in each of the ADHC regions. The following information is sourced from National Disability Services, who, in turn, rely on excerpt and analysis from the 2006 census<sup>6</sup>. Note that this dataset also acknowledges the substantial

<sup>3</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.nsf/Products/1338.1~June+2009~Main+Features~Population?OpenDocument>

<sup>4</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/C65BBF89C086D247CA257418000E35DA?opendocument>

<sup>5</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/Lookup/9B1B31430097DEF1CA257418000E3699?opendocument>

<sup>6</sup> <http://www.nds.org.au/nsw/aboriginal/data.html>

issues of being able to adequately and accurately identify people of ATSI origin.

**Table 5: Percentage of Indigenous people aged 15-19 living with disability by ADHC region**

<b>ADHC Region</b>	<b>% Indigenous young people living with disability</b>	<b>Total Aboriginal Population</b>
Southern	5.03%	13,109
Metro South	5.52%	19,696
Metro North	3.62%	17,898
Hunter	7.63%	20,629
Northern	7.31%	20,557
Western	12.28%	32,641
<b>Total<sup>7</sup></b>	<b>7.61%</b>	<b>124,530</b>

The figure above indicate 7.61% of the population of young people with disabilities in NSW aged 15-19 as being Aboriginal, which is notable in its divergence from the overall population prevalence of ATSI people in NSW. It is widely acknowledged that young ATSI people are over-represented in terms of prevalence of disability for this age group in NSW.

ATSI people, therefore:

- Comprise 7.61% of the NSW population of people with a disability aged 15 to 19.
- Comprise 3.47% of the NSW population of people aged 15 to 19.
- Comprise 4.68% of the population of all TTW service users, although 30% of the TTW population has unknown ATSI status.
- Comprise 6.72% of the TTW population whose ATSI status is known.

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<sup>7</sup> This value was derived as total aggregate number of Indigenous persons aged 15-19 with disability in 6 identified regions divided by Total Aboriginal population.

There is a common belief amongst NSW service providers that ATSI young people with disability are under-represented in the TTW service user cohort in relation to their prevalence in the community. It is difficult to draw from the data firm conclusions on the accuracy of this claim.

It is important to acknowledge the issue of small sizes. There are 54 of 1153 people (4.68%) identified as ATSI, with a much larger group of 350 people (30.3%) whose ATSI-status, or otherwise, is undefined.

Given the inherent difficulties in measuring ATSI status, the seeming precision of each of the above figures is no doubt highly overstated. The TTW program appears to be comprised of 6.66% ATSI young people and therefore appears to be attracting Indigenous participants at a rate that is above their general population prevalence (3.47%), but is slightly below their prevalence in the population of young people aged 15 to 19 with disability (7.61%).

#### 4.4.4 CALD status

The Australian Bureau of Statistics acknowledges that it is extremely difficult to accurately measure CALD status. For the purposes of TTW, two variables are recorded that are of relevance to CALD status. These are:

- Country of Birth
- Language (other than English)

Each of these data fields serves as a rough approximation of CALD status, although each is far from conclusive. Such is the general nature of measuring CALD prevalence.

The following table describes the country of origin of TTW service users.

**Table 6: Country of Birth**

<b>Country of Birth (Other than Australia)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Afghanistan	1
Bosnia-Herzegovina	1
Chile	1
China (excluding Taiwan Province)	3

<b>Country of Birth (Other than Australia)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Cook Islands	1
Croatia	2
Egypt	2
El Salvador	1
England	1
Ethiopia	1
Fiji	2
Hong Kong	1
India	2
Indonesia	2
Iran	2
Iraq	3
Jordan	1
Malaysia	3
New Zealand	9
Philippines	5
Portugal	1
Singapore	1
South Africa	2
South America, nec	1
Sri Lanka	2

<b>Country of Birth (Other than Australia)</b>	<b>Total</b>
Taiwan	1
Turkey	1
United States of America	3
Vietnam	1
Yugoslavia, Federal Republic of	1
<b>Total</b>	<b>58</b>

In sum, 58 (5.03%) of service users were born in a country other than Australia. This provides only a very rough indication of the CALD status of service users, as typically, country of origin is not a definite indicator of determining an individual's cultural and linguistic background. We also note that "unknown" was recorded for 148 (12.83%) of the entire population of TTW service users, a factor that could potentially skew the distribution significantly.

The following table describes those who primarily speak a language other than English.

**Table 7: Number of service users who speak a language other than English**

<b>Language (other than English)</b>	<b>Total</b>	<b>% (of non-English)</b>
Arabic (including Lebanese)	28	30.8%
Assyrian [including Aramaic]	3	3.3%
Auslan	7	1.0%
Cantonese	5	5.5%
Chinese	1	0.1%
Croatian	4	4.4%
Greek	2	2.2%
Hindi	5	5.5%

Language (other than English)	Total	% (of non-English)
Indonesian	2	2.2%
Iranic, nec (includes Balochi, Ossetic, Tajik)	1	1.1%
Khmer	1	1.1%
Kurdish	1	1.1%
Lao	2	1.1%
Maltese	1	1.1%
Mandarin	3	3.3%
Oceanic Austronesian	1	1.1%
Other Southern European	3	3.3%
Polish	1	1.1%
Portuguese	2	2.2%
Samoan	1	1.1%
Spanish	3	3.3%
Tagalog (Filipino)	2	2.2%
Turkish	3	3.3%
Vietnamese	6	6.6%
<b>Total</b>	<b>91</b>	<b>100%</b>

Language is by all accounts a stronger measure of CALD status than country of birth, as it is a more concrete indicator of an individual's specific cultural background and heritage. However, it too may lead to an underestimation of the numbers of users from CALD backgrounds.

#### 4.5 KRA One: Open or supported employment

The first Key Result Area is that young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study.

There are three recorded outcomes in the dataset that are consistent with this goal. These are:

- Exit to Employment – Other
- Exit to Employment – Open
- Exit to Employment – Supported.

It is the case that just under 50% of TTW service users (48.74%) have achieved outcomes that meet Key Result Area one.

The data shows that almost half of TTW service users exited to an employment outcome; a quarter were transferred to the Community Participation (CP) Program; just under one fifth of participants have unknown destinations; and 4% exited to education or training.

The next issue, therefore, is one of benchmarking. TTW achieves a 49% employment rate (subject to the crucial caveats regarding misrepresentation in Open Employment, and of data quality, as discussed above).

This particular figure, of 49% achieving employment outcomes, is only a relevant number when compared to the outcomes that the TTW population might be expected to achieve, if the TTW intervention had not taken place.

An appropriate means for defining a benchmark measure such as this is unfortunately, less than clear. It is not possible to identify a precise comparison, or baseline group, in the community who share the characteristics of the TTW community, but who did not receive the TTW intervention.

It is, therefore, necessary to consider a 49% employment outcome rate in the context of what is known, more broadly, about rates of employment for people with a disability in the wider community.

The key primary data source on employment rates is the Australian Bureau of Statistics series “Labour Force Characteristics of People With A Disability”<sup>8</sup>. Some relevant excerpts from this dataset are as follows:

- Disability type has a profound impact on labour force participation
- Just over half of all people with a disability participate in the labour force, compared with 4 in 5 people without a disability
- Typically, labour force participation decreases as the severity of disability increases

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<sup>8</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.NSF/Previousproducts/1301.0FeatureArticle142006?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1301.0&issue=2006&num=&view=>

- People with a “profound or severe core activity limitation” (an ABS category) have a labour force participation rate of 33.7%, in contrast to 81% of people without a disability
- Just over 40% of people with an intellectual disability participate in the labour force
- Just under 50% of people with a physical disability participate in the labour force
- Those with a psychological disability have the lowest workforce participation rate (under 30%) of all people with a disability
- Increased severity of disability is accompanied by a greater propensity to work part time rather than full time.

The ABS series “Labour Force Characteristics of People With A Disability”<sup>9</sup> does not allow clear identification of comparable employment rates for young people with disability, such as would be necessary to categorically determine whether TTW is improving employment outcomes for young people with a disability.

However, TTW participants are a very specific subset of people with a disability. To re-iterate the entry criteria, a TTW participant must be:

- A year 12 school leaver with a disability recognised under the NSW Disability Services Act 1993
- A person with a disability with moderate to high support needs
- A person who is assessed as eligible for TTW by ADHC
- A person who is not undertaking employment, vocational education and training, or higher education (above certain per-week cut off thresholds).

It is therefore the case that TTW service users are a very specific group, and it is difficult to make meaningful comparisons between this group and the broader population of people with a disability for purposes of outcome measurement.

During the stakeholder consultations, a number of the more experienced participants noted that, historically, nearly all of the people enrolled in TTW are service users that would previously/typically have gone to the CP program or to supported employment. The workshop consultations also supported this perspective. Broadly, the workshop participants (service users, parents, service providers, and carers) believed that without TTW, nearly all of the participants in the program would have gone either to CP or to a supported employment position.

Indeed, this is conceptually consistent with the very notion of the TTW program – that the program is intended to assist people with moderate to high support needs who might otherwise not achieve employment, into an

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<sup>9</sup> <http://www.abs.gov.au/ausstats/abs@.NSF/Previousproducts/1301.0FeatureArticle142006?opendocument&tabname=Summary&prodno=1301.0&issue=2006&num=&view=>

employment role. Parents of TTW service users, in particular, tended to express a strong sense of relief that the TTW program was available, as they felt that without TTW, their son/daughter would have been unable to enter employment after school, and would have been assigned to the CP program or to supported employment.

*On this basis alone*, one might reasonably assume that TTW's performance at a 49% employment outcome rate is an outstanding result.

In summary, the authors would argue that on the balance of available evidence, it should be assumed that TTW service users are achieving employment outcomes at a materially higher rate than they would be, if TTW did not exist. TTW is, therefore, arguably meeting Key Result Area One.

#### *4.5.1 Outcomes by disability type*

The following table summarises outcomes by primary disability type. We would caution that small sample sizes for some disabilities means that detailed examination of outcomes by disability type may not be warranted in some instances.

**Table 8: Outcomes by primary disability type**

<b>Disability Type</b>	Extended or Deferred within TTW	Exit To Education	Exit - Other/ Unknown	Transfer to CP	Exit to Employment	N
Acquired Brain Injury	0.0%	0.0%	33.3%	23.8%	42.9%	21
Asperger's syndrome	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	50.0%	0.0%	2
Autism	2.3%	4.7%	18.6%	29.1%	45.3%	86
Cerebral palsy	0.0%	0.0%	7.7%	61.5%	30.8%	13
Deaf blind	100.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	1
Epilepsy	5.6%	11.1%	33.3%	16.7%	33.3%	18
Hearing Impairment	8.3%	8.3%	16.7%	0.0%	66.7%	12
Intellectual	3.8%	3.2%	18.5%	23.5%	51.0%	729
Muscular dystrophy	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	1
Neurofibromatosis	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	1
Physical	3.2%	12.9%	16.1%	28.0%	39.8%	93
Psychiatric	4.8%	9.5%	19.0%	19.0%	47.6%	21
Specific Learning/A.D.D.	0.0%	0.0%	41.7%	16.7%	41.7%	12
Speech	20.0%	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	80.0%	5
Spina bifida	0.0%	50.0%	0.0%	0.0%	50.0%	2
Spinal Cord Injury	0.0%	0.0%	0.0%	100.0%	0.0%	1
Unknown	0.0%	1.0%	18.1%	28.6%	52.4%	105
Visual Impairment	0.0%	6.7%	10.0%	46.7%	36.7%	30

The most predominant primary disability is intellectual disability (63% of all clients), which is no surprise given the history and heritage of the TTW program.

One surprise is the total number of young people with a primary disability of Asperger's Syndrome in the above data: merely 2 of 1153. Based on the discussions in the workshops and during case studies, it is probable that

current prevalence rates for Asperger's syndrome amongst TTW clients are far in excess of this. It may be that Aspergers is a secondary disability for other young people.

#### **4.6 KRA Two: Satisfying and Meaningful Work**

The second Key Result Area Two states that young people will perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals.

The existing outcome data does not allow any assessment of performance against this objective of satisfying and meaningful work. The reader is advised to refer to Chapters 5 and 6, for a discussion of the perceptions of stakeholders in regard to this goal.

An examination of the issue of "satisfying and meaningful" work would require some form of longitudinal follow-up measurement of the extent to which TTW service users subsequently found their employment to be satisfying and meaningful.

#### **4.7 KRA Three: Skills and Qualifications**

Key Result Area Three states that young people will develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment.

The data that pertains to KRA#1 is partially applicable to this objective. 49% of people who complete TTW exit to an employment outcome. They have, therefore, successfully developed the skills and qualifications for a transition to employment. However, it is not known to what extent they have the skills and qualifications required for "*sustainable*" employment.

An examination of "sustainability" (if we presume sustainability to mean retention in employment) would require longitudinal outcome data from TTW participants. Such data does not exist, and to our understanding, ADHC is aware that such data would be valuable, and has previously considered how this data might be obtained.

#### **4.8 KRA Four: Sustaining work and training commitments**

Key Result Area Four states that young people will sustain their work and training commitments.

Again, this KRA cannot be meaningfully examined from the existing data. The reader is advised to refer to Chapter 5, which discusses the workshop findings.

#### **4.9 KRA Five: CALD and ATSI clients.**

Key Result Area Five states that people from Aboriginal and culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds will have fair access to support and will achieve comparable outcomes. The issues of CALD and ATSI outcomes are addressed separately in the following sections.

#### 4.9.1 ATSI outcomes

It must be acknowledged that identification of service users as ATSI is problematic. Providers advised that in many cases they do not consider it appropriate to ask, and other providers advised that young people often do not want to be “officially”, or at times informally, identified as being of ATSI origin. This is not a new problem, and it applies across service areas.

Given this caveat, the outcome data reports that 54 (4.51%) of the clients with recorded outcomes were identified as ATSI. The following chart reports on the outcomes for these clients.

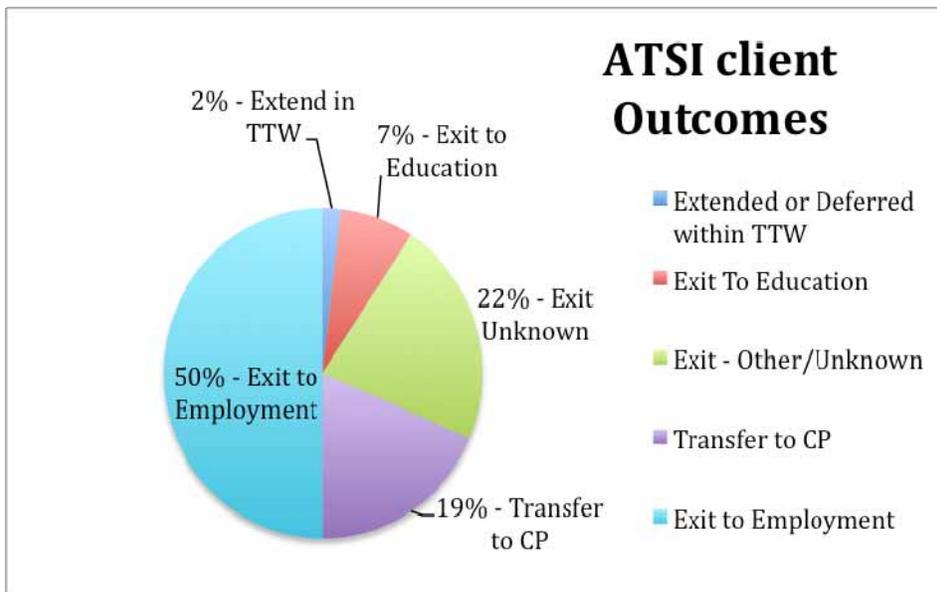


Figure 2 ATSI client outcomes

The similarities between the chart above and the earlier presentation of overall TTW outcome data are striking. Particularly, we highlight that 49% of all service users exit to an employment outcome, while 50% of ATSI service users achieve the same outcome.

The following table compares ATSI outcomes with outcomes for the TTW population as a whole.

**Table 9: ATSI outcome comparisons**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>All Persons</b>	<b>ATSI</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Extended or Deferred within TTW	3.30%	1.85%	-1.48%
Exit To Education	4.16%	7.41%	+3.25%
Exit - Other/Unknown	18.56%	22.22%	+3.66%
Transfer to CP	25.24%	18.52%	-6.72%
Exit to Employment	48.74%	50.00%	+1.26%

Based on the above information, the reasonable conclusion is that ATSI service users within TTW are indeed achieving *comparable* outcomes to TTW service users more broadly.

TTW is achieving comparable outcomes for its ATSI service users, which is a significant achievement. It is rare for any human services organisation to achieve equitable outcomes for Aboriginal service users, due to the entrenched impact of social disadvantage. Aboriginal people do not achieve equitable outcomes in regard to educational performance, employment performance, health status, nor community and individual wellbeing. That TTW *does* achieve equivalent outcomes is a considerable achievement worthy of recognition and celebration.

#### 4.9.2 CALD outcomes

The identification of young people of CALD background is also problematic. This issue has been discussed earlier. The two available variables are:

- Country of Birth
- Language (other than English).

Using country of birth, on its own, is not in any way a valid or meaningful indicator of CALD status. Language, on the other hand, can at times be a fairly good indicator of CALD status. However, it is still problematic. Of the 1153 available outcomes, 91 (7.9%) primarily speak a language other than English.

As these are the only available means of identifying CALD status in the data, the following table examines outcomes for the whole TTW population, for persons born outside of Australia, and persons speaking a language other than English.

**Table 10: CALD outcomes**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Whole of TTW (%)</b>	<b>Language other than English (%)</b>	<b>Birthplace other than Aus (%)</b>
Extended or Deferred within TTW	3.30%	3.4%	3.9%
Exit To Education	4.16%	8.4%	4.4%
Exit - Other/Unknown	18.56%	17.6%	19.9%
Transfer to CP	25.24%	25.2%	26.7%
Exit to Employment	48.74%	45.4%	45.1%

The criterion for KRA#5 is that outcomes for CALD clients are *comparable*. Noting the inherent imprecision in measuring CALD status, the above data would appear consistent with the notion that CALD users are achieving outcomes that are *comparable* to outcomes for other client groups.

#### 4.9.3 Summary: KRA Five

Our conclusion in regard to KRA#5 and ATSI and CALD clients is that this goal is being met to the extent that the question can be accurately answered using the current data. ATSI clients and CALD clients are both achieving outcomes comparable to other TTW clients. This is consistent with the findings from the workshops, as discussed in Chapter 5.

#### 4.10 Provider-level Outcomes

The dataset allows some general examination of outcomes achieved by individual providers.

Perhaps the most critical measure is the establishment of a baseline that demonstrates average program outcomes. This does allow some comparison of an individual provider's performance relative to the average performance levels achieved in the TTW program. This is a useful measure for examining any given individual provider's performance.

To the extent the dataset allows, the dispersion and distribution of outcomes across providers is illustrated in the following section.

The following table contains basic measures of central tendency and dispersion. It is measured on a by-provider basis, using that provider's outcome percentages.

**Table 11: Outcome distribution and dispersions**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>All clients</b>	<b>Mean provider</b>	<b>Median provider</b>	<b>Standard Deviation</b>
Extended or Deferred within TTW	3%	5%	0%	15%
Exit To Education	4%	4%	0%	8%
Exit - Other/Unknown	19%	24%	17%	27%
Transfer to CP	25%	29%	22%	27%
Exit to Employment	49%	38%	41%	30%
Number of clients		13.25	8	14.91

The following table provides outcome data at the level of individual providers.

**Table 12: Outcomes by individual provider**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employment</b>	<b>N*</b>
Ability Options Ltd	0%	4%	26%	11%	59%	27
Accommodation Network	10%	0%	70%	0%	20%	10
Australian Foundation for Disability (AFFORD)	21%	5%	32%	21%	21%	19
Blue Mountains Disability Services Ltd	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	1
Break Thru People Solutions	2%	3%	38%	15%	43%	61
Broken Hill City Council	0%	0%	50%	0%	50%	2
Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group Inc	100%	0%	0%	0%	0%	1
CareWest Inc	57%	0%	14%	14%	14%	7
Caringa Enterprises Inc	0%	0%	14%	14%	71%	7
Casino Neighbourhood Centre Inc	20%	0%	60%	20%	0%	5
Castle Personnel Services Inc	2%	0%	14%	42%	42%	50
CatholicCare	0%	0%	25%	8%	67%	12
Centacare - Archdiocese of Broken Bay	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	1
Centacare - Port Macquarie	0%	0%	50%	13%	38%	8
Central Coast Post School	0%	0%	36%	45%	18%	11

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/ Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employment</b>	<b>N*</b>
Options Inc						
Challenge Disability Services	0%	0%	20%	20%	60%	10
Civic Residential Services	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	1
Coffs Harbour Challenge Inc	0%	0%	33%	33%	33%	3
Community First Step	0%	10%	50%	10%	30%	10
Community Options Brokerage Service Inc	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	5
Community Programs Inc	14%	0%	0%	71%	14%	7
Cowra Special Needs Services Inc	0%	0%	50%	50%	0%	2
Crowle Foundation Ltd	0%	0%	0%	17%	83%	12
Currajong Disability Services Inc	0%	33%	33%	33%	0%	3
Disability Services Australia	0%	0%	29%	26%	45%	31
Endeavour Industries Ltd	0%	17%	17%	0%	67%	6
Essential Personnel Association Inc	0%	23%	28%	8%	41%	39
Eurella Community Services Inc	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	2
Flintwood Disability Services Inc	0%	0%	0%	50%	50%	6
Glenray Industries Ltd	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	2
Greenacres Disability Services	0%	4%	5%	15%	76%	55
Griffith Post School Options	17%	0%	25%	42%	17%	12
Hawkesbury City Council	33%	0%	0%	22%	44%	9
House With No Steps (BASS)	0%	0%	25%	13%	63%	8
House With No Steps (Forbes)	0%	0%	0%	33%	67%	3
House With No Steps Hunter Region	0%	0%	23%	23%	54%	13
House With No Steps Southern Region	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	1
Hume Employment Service Ltd	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	1

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/ Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employment</b>	<b>N*</b>
integratedliving Australia Ltd	0%	0%	0%	75%	25%	4
Interaction Disability Services Ltd	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	1
Inverell Council	0%	17%	17%	33%	33%	6
Job Centre Australia Ltd	3%	8%	27%	5%	57%	37
Job Support Community Work Options	3%	4%	3%	5%	85%	73
Kalianna Enterprises Inc	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	1
Kempsey Workpool Inc	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	1
Kurrajong Waratah	10%	0%	15%	15%	60%	20
Lambing Flat Enterprises Ltd	0%	0%	19%	31%	50%	16
Life Without Barriers	9%	0%	27%	59%	5%	22
Lifeskills Plus Inc	0%	29%	14%	57%	0%	7
Lifestyle Solutions (Aust) Ltd	0%	0%	23%	50%	27%	22
Lithgow Uniting Church	0%	0%	25%	50%	25%	4
Macarthur Disability Services Ltd	0%	0%	10%	39%	51%	49
Mai-Wel Ltd	0%	3%	19%	17%	61%	36
Mercy Centre Lavington Ltd	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	5
Miroma	0%	33%	0%	33%	33%	3
Nambucca Valley Phoenix Ltd	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	1
New IDAFE Inc	0%	0%	0%	100%	0%	1
Newtrain Inc	0%	0%	40%	40%	20%	5
Ningana Enterprises Inc	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	1
North West Disability Services	0%	3%	14%	39%	44%	36
Northside Enterprise Inc	8%	0%	0%	42%	50%	12
NOVA Employment & Training Program Inc	0%	6%	16%	6%	71%	31
On Q Human Resources	0%	0%	3%	7%	90%	30
On Track Community Programs Inc	0%	0%	50%	25%	25%	4

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/ Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employment</b>	<b>N*</b>
R E D Inc	0%	6%	19%	31%	44%	16
Response Services Inc	4%	0%	15%	58%	23%	26
St George & Sutherland Community College	0%	9%	0%	64%	27%	11
Studio Artes Northside Inc	0%	0%	13%	44%	44%	16
Sunnyfield	19%	0%	0%	6%	75%	16
Sylvanvale Foundation	7%	0%	27%	60%	7%	15
The Creativity Centre Inc (Operating as) Eastern Respite and Recreation	0%	25%	0%	25%	50%	4
The Housing Connection	20%	20%	40%	0%	20%	5
The Leisure Company Integrated Recreation Incorporated	0%	14%	0%	29%	57%	7
The Northcott Society	5%	15%	25%	10%	45%	20
The Spastic Centre of NSW	0%	21%	11%	21%	46%	28
The Uniting Church in Aust Property Trust (NSW) - Sydney South (Ella)	0%	0%	10%	40%	50%	10
The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) - Wesley	0%	0%	38%	63%	0%	8
Valley Industries Ltd	0%	0%	0%	0%	100%	4
Valmar Support Services Ltd	0%	0%	25%	0%	75%	4
Vision Australia Ltd	50%	0%	0%	0%	50%	2
Warrah Society	0%	0%	100%	0%	0%	1
Windgap Foundation Ltd	33%	0%	0%	33%	33%	9
Witmore Enterprises Inc	0%	0%	25%	75%	0%	4
Woodville Community Services Inc	0%	7%	20%	53%	20%	15
WorkAbility Personnel Inc	0%	0%	3%	7%	90%	29
Yarrabin Outreach Inc	0%	0%	67%	33%	0%	3
YOUTHCONNECTIONS.CO M.AU	0%	11%	56%	11%	22%	9

Note: \* Denotes number of outcomes

#### 4.10.1 Agency size and outcomes

An opinion constantly put forward in the workshops was that larger providers, for a range of reasons, provide a superior service to smaller providers. The following chart displays the correlation between provider size (as measured by N) and each of the key outcome variables.

**Table 13: Agency size and outcome correlations**

<b>Outcome Type</b>	<b>Correlation between outcome type and N</b>	<b>Correlation Size</b>
Extended or Deferred within TTW	-0.11	Small
Exit To Education	0.04	None
Exit - Other/Unknown	-0.18	Small
Transfer to CP	-0.12	Small
Exit to Employment	0.31	Medium

The above evidence therefore provides some, albeit slightly weak, evidence that there is a relationship between provider size and outcomes. There is a medium positive correlation between size and exits to employment, meaning that large providers are more likely to exit their clients to employment outcomes.

The following table presents % outcomes for three categories of provider: 1) providers with five or less recorded outcomes, 2) all providers, and 3) providers with 30 or more recorded outcomes.

**Table 14: Outcomes for small and large providers**

<b>Outcome</b>	<b>Providers with less than or equal to 5 outcomes</b>	<b>All providers</b>	<b>Providers with greater than or equal to 30 outcomes</b>
Extended or Deferred within TTW	4.40%	3.30%	0.95%
Exit To Education	4.40%	4.16%	4.36%
Exit - Other/Unknown	26.37%	18.56%	16.67%
Transfer to CP	36.26%	25.24%	18.56%

Exit to Employment	28.57%	48.74%	59.47%
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Some salient features of the above include:

- Larger providers have 9.7% (in absolute, not % terms) less exits to other/unknown destinations
- Larger providers have 17.7% (in absolute, not % terms) less exits to the CP program
- Most tellingly, while 28.6% of clients of smaller providers achieve employment outcomes, 59.47% of clients of larger providers achieve employment outcomes. This is a significant difference.

The following chart provides a further examination of the distribution of employment outcomes.

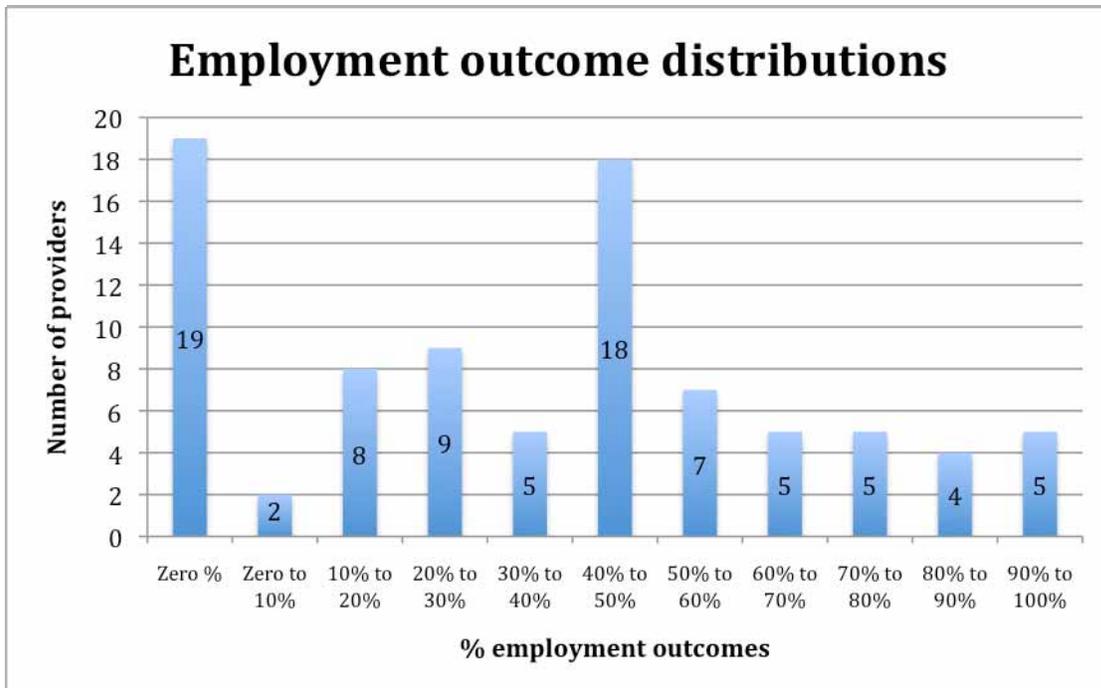


Figure 3 Employment outcome distribution histogram

The above histogram displays the frequency of outcome measures, for the clustered “exit to employment” category, for all providers. There are two noted peaks in the distribution; firstly, at 0% outcomes, where there are 19 individual TTW providers who failed to place a single service user into employment, and secondly, at the 40 to 50% category, where there are 18 providers who achieved an employment outcome rate of between 40% and 50% (the average outcome).

Of the 19 TTW services who achieved a 0% employment outcome rate, there were a total of 52 individual service users who did actually exit from these services. A relatively large number of service providers therefore appear to

be falling well short of the aims of the TTW program, and failing to achieve even one employment outcome.

In order to examine absolute outcomes, rather than percentage outcome rates, the following chart displays a cumulative outcome distribution by total employment outcomes. The absolute number of employment outcomes is depicted along the X-axis, and the number of service providers contributing to that outcome along the Y-axis.

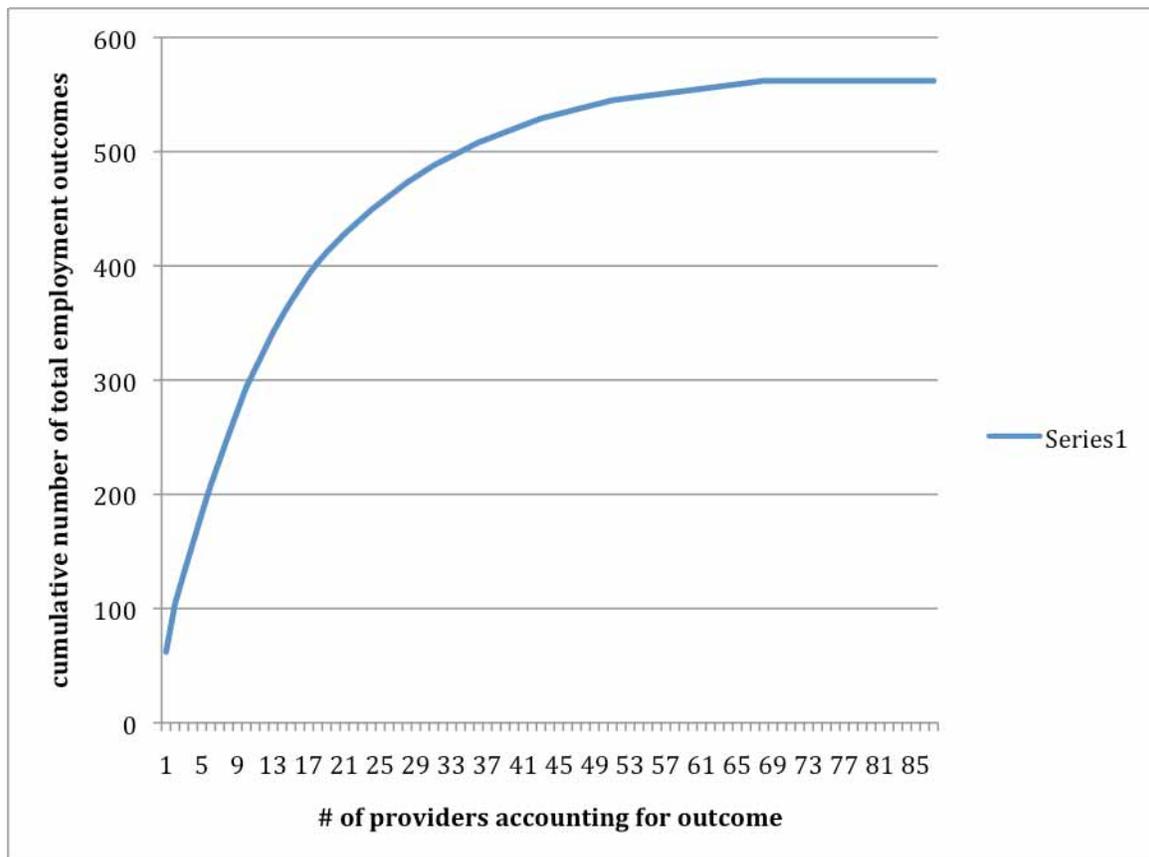


Figure 4 Cumulative frequency distribution of total employment outcomes

To emphasise some of the implications of the above dataset, the following points are highlighted for the reader:

- There are 87 providers in the dataset
- One provider accounts for 11% (62) of *all* employment outcomes
- Five providers account for 33% (183) of *all* employment outcomes
- Ten providers account for 52% (294) of *all* employment outcomes
- There are 19 providers who achieved *zero* employment outcomes
- There are 17 providers who achieved only *one* employment outcome (and notably, this was *despite* having an average of 5.17 recorded service user outcomes per service provider).

In short, a very small number of providers account for a large number of employment outcomes achieved by the TTW program, while a much higher

number of providers make very little contribution to achieving employment outcomes.

#### 4.10.2 Conclusions

The overall outcomes achieved by the TTW program are not, by any means, evenly achieved by all TTW providers. Indeed, it is the case that a small number of service providers (typically larger organisations, and, organisations achieving above average percentage outcome rates) are responsible for a disproportionate number of the employment outcomes achieved for TTW clients. Equally, there is a material number of service providers who contribute nothing (19, or 23%), and a considerable number who contribute very little, to TTW program employment outcomes.

Workshops and case studies generated the view that there is large disparity in service quality, and therefore in outcomes, between service providers. The information presented above supports this view.

Taking all these sources of evidence in this section in conjunction, the outcome data supports the view that larger providers provide higher quality service, are more likely to achieve employment outcomes for their clients, and are less likely to put clients into CP.

#### 4.11 Exits to Community Participation Program

Exits to the Community Participation Program are also of interest. As examined elsewhere in this report, while the TTW Program Guidelines are clear and explicit that TTW is a transition to work program, with vocational objectives, not all providers have the same ideology, and TTW can be seen as a form of extension of CP, which is not its intent.

Overall, 25.24% of all service users in TTW exit to community participation programs. This is approximately one in four of all TTW service users. While exiting to a CP program may be an appropriate outcome for some service users, it is not the intended outcome that the program is set up to achieve.

Once again, there are seemingly issues relating to the size of the provider and the probability of a CP outcome. For providers with 5 or less total client outcomes recorded, 36.26% of all clients receive a CP outcome (a below average outcome). For providers with 30 or more total client outcomes recorded, 18.56% of all clients go to CP (an above average outcome).

The following table ranks all providers by the percentage of total outcomes going to community participation, and shows the total number of clients that received (any) outcome.

**Table 15: Providers ranked by % of CP outcomes**

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>N (total)</b>
Community Options Brokerage Service Inc	100%	5

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>N (total)</b>
Mercy Centre Lavington Ltd	100%	5
Kalianna Enterprises Inc	100%	1
Nambucca Valley Phoenix Ltd	100%	1
New IDAFE Inc	100%	1
integratedliving Australia Ltd	75%	4
Witmore Enterprises Inc	75%	4
Community Programs Inc	71%	7
St George & Sutherland Community College	64%	11
The Uniting Church in Australia Property Trust (NSW) - Wesley	63%	8
Sylvanvale Foundation	60%	15
Life Without Barriers	59%	22
Response Services Inc	58%	26
Lifeskills Plus Inc	57%	7
Woodville Community Services Inc	53%	15
Flintwood Disability Services Inc	50%	6
Eurella Community Services Inc	50%	2
Lifestyle Solutions (Aust) Ltd	50%	22
Lithgow Uniting Church	50%	4
Cowra Special Needs Services Inc	50%	2
Central Coast Post School Options Inc	45%	11
Studio Artes Northside Inc	44%	16
Castle Personnel Services Inc	42%	50
Northside Enterprise Inc	42%	12
Griffith Post School Options	42%	12
The Uniting Church in Aust Property Trust (NSW) - Sydney South (Ella)	40%	10
Newtrain Inc	40%	5
North West Disability Services	39%	36
Macarthur Disability Services Ltd	39%	49

<b>Provider</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>N (total)</b>
House With No Steps (Forbes)	33%	3
Windgap Foundation Ltd	33%	9
Inverell Council	33%	6
Coffs Harbour Challenge Inc	33%	3
Miroma	33%	3
Currajong Disability Services Inc	33%	3
Yarrabin Outreach Inc	33%	3
Lambing Flat Enterprises Ltd	31%	16
R E D Inc	31%	16
The Leisure Company Integrated Recreation Incorporated	29%	7
Disability Services Australia	26%	31
The Creativity Centre Inc (Operating as) Eastern Respite and Recreation	25%	4
On Track Community Programs Inc	25%	4
House With No Steps Hunter Region	23%	13
Hawkesbury City Council	22%	9
The Spastic Centre of NSW	21%	28
Australian Foundation for Disability (AFFORD)	21%	19
Challenge Disability Services	20%	10
Casino Neighbourhood Centre Inc	20%	5
Crowle Foundation Ltd	17%	12
Mai-Wel Ltd	17%	36
Kurrajong Waratah	15%	20
Break Thru People Solutions	15%	61
Greenacres Disability Services	15%	55
Caringa Enterprises Inc	14%	7
CareWest Inc	14%	7
House With No Steps (BASS)	13%	8
Centacare - Port Macquarie	13%	8

<b>Provider</b>	<b><u>Transfer to CP</u></b>	<b><u>N (total)</u></b>
Ability Options Ltd	11%	27
YOUTHCONNECTIONS.COM.AU	11%	9
The Northcott Society	10%	20
Community First Step	10%	10
CatholicCare	8%	12
Essential Personnel Association Inc	8%	39
WorkAbility Personnel Inc	7%	29
On Q Human Resources	7%	30
NOVA Employment & Training Program Inc	6%	31
Sunnyfield	6%	16
Job Support Community Work Options	5%	73
Job Centre Australia Ltd	5%	37
Valley Industries Ltd	0%	4
Glenray Industries Ltd	0%	2
Civic Residential Services	0%	1
House With No Steps Southern Region	0%	1
Kempsey Workpool Inc	0%	1
Valmar Support Services Ltd	0%	4
Endeavour Industries Ltd	0%	6
Broken Hill City Council	0%	2
Vision Australia Ltd	0%	2
Accommodation Network	0%	10
The Housing Connection	0%	5
Blue Mountains Disability Services Ltd	0%	1
Bucketts Way Neighbourhood Group Inc	0%	1
Centacare - Archdiocese of Broken Bay	0%	1
Hume Employment Service Ltd	0%	1
Interaction Disability Services Ltd	0%	1
Ningana Enterprises Inc	0%	1

Provider	Transfer to CP	N (total)
Warrah Society	0%	1

The following chart maps the frequency distribution of individual outcome rates for CP by provider.

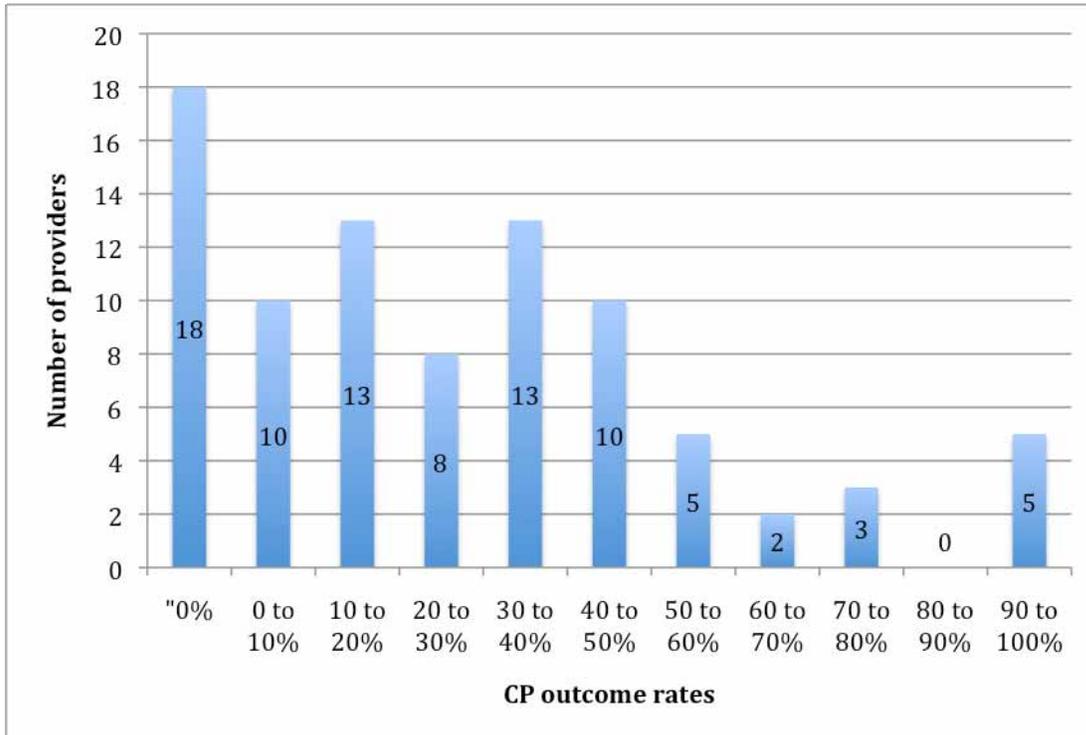


Figure 5 CP outcome distributions

The chart demonstrates that there is considerable variation in the rate at which service users have achieved CP outcomes by provider. It is of interest that there are five individual providers with 100% of their clients exiting to CP and that these 5 providers account for a total of 13 clients. Also of interest is the fact that there are 18 providers who demonstrated strong performance by not having any CP outcomes at all. These 18 providers accounted for 45 TTW clients.

#### 4.12 Outcomes by Region

It is readily apparent that the different regions involved in the TTW program each have their own unique set of circumstances, and differing client demographics.

The available dataset allows examination of data only by the 6 ADHC regions. These are:

- Hunter
- Metro North

- Metro South
- Northern
- Southern
- Western

The following chart presents a summary of TTW outcomes by region.

**Table 16: Overall outcomes by region**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/ Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employment</b>	<b>N</b>
Hunter	2.2%	2.7%	21.7%	32.3%	41.2%	226
Metro North	3.5%	6.5%	14.2%	19.6%	56.2%	260
Metro South	4.2%	3.0%	20.0%	26.4%	46.4%	265
Northern	3.6%	1.4%	23.0%	23.0%	48.9%	139
Southern	0.0%	7.4%	14.8%	14.8%	63.1%	149
Western	7.0%	3.5%	18.4%	37.7%	33.3%	114

The above chart shows there are some marked differences in outcome by regions. Accordingly, the following chart displays, for each region, the difference between that region's performance and the benchmark performance for the entire TTW program (see Table 11).

**Table 17: Comparison of region outcomes with overall TTW program benchmark for each category**

<b>Region</b>	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/ Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employment</b>
Hunter	-1.08%	-1.51%	3.12%	7.06%	-7.59%
Metro North	0.17%	2.38%	-4.33%	-5.62%	7.41%
Metro South	0.86%	-1.14%	1.44%	1.18%	-2.33%
Northern	0.30%	-2.72%	4.46%	-2.22%	0.18%
Southern	-3.30%	3.22%	-3.80%	-10.47%	14.34%
Western	3.72%	-0.65%	-0.14%	12.48%	-15.41%

To highlight some salient features of this table:

- The Hunter region achieves less employment outcomes, and more CP outcomes, than the benchmark
- The Metro North region achieves less CP outcomes, and more employment outcomes, than the benchmark
- The Metro South region's performance would seem broadly equivalent to the benchmark
- The Northern region's performance is broadly equivalent to the benchmark
- The Southern region achieves the best performance of all the regions, with 10% less CP outcomes, and 14% more employment outcomes
- The Western region seems to have underperformed substantially, with 12% more CP outcomes and 15% less employment outcomes.

Finally, the following table presents a simple summary of outcomes in metro areas in contrast to regional areas.

**Table 18 Comparison of outcome rates between metro and regional areas**

	<b>Extended or Deferred within TTW</b>	<b>Exit To Education</b>	<b>Exit - Other/ Unknown</b>	<b>Transfer to CP</b>	<b>Exit to Employ- ment</b>	<b>N</b>
Metro	3.8%	4.8%	17.1%	23.0%	51.2%	525
Regional	2.9%	3.7%	19.7%	27.1%	46.7%	628

As can be readily seen, while there are some differences in outcome rates overall between metro and regional areas, these differences are not large.

Regional circumstances are subject to considerable variation in local economic and employment conditions. Detailed examination of these issues is beyond the scope of this report. However, it possible that the differences in outcome rates between regional and metro areas are more likely to be a factor of regional economic and geographic circumstance than a function of TTW provider quality.

## **5 WORKSHOP FINDINGS**

A diverse range of service user and service provider perspectives on the TTW program was obtained from the workshops. Many service users and/or their parents were very satisfied and indeed unreserved in their praise of the program. A smaller number of parents were disappointed and disillusioned by their son/daughter's experience of the program. Even in cases where parents and service users were not satisfied with the program offered by the service provider they had selected, they nevertheless strongly supported the principles of the TTW program, and were in favour of its continuation.

A similar spectrum of opinion was obtained from the service provider workshops. While almost all staff working within TTW delivering organisations applauded TTW and the quality outcomes it achieved for many young people, they also highlighted areas where improvements could be made to strengthen a program that they were pleased to be able to offer young people.

### **5.1 Workshop Format**

The format of the workshop consultations was based on seven key topic areas, consisting of the five key result areas outlined in the monitoring and evaluation framework, as well as two additional broad topic areas "Strengths of the TTW program" and "Key areas for improvement," as follows:

1. Young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study
2. Young people perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals
3. Young people develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment
4. Young people sustain their training and work commitments
5. Young people from Aboriginal and CaLD backgrounds have fair access to support and achieve comparable outcomes
6. Strengths of the TTW program
7. Key areas for improvement.

See Appendix 3 for further details of the workshop format.

### **5.2 Findings from Service Users, Parents and Carer Workshops**

In consulting with service users and their families/carers, it was found that in many cases the program was delivering well on its intended outcomes. There was a strong belief on the part of those whose son/daughter had achieved good employment outcomes that this outcome would almost certainly not have been achieved without the strategic interventions of the TTW program. Many parents saw the role of TTW as centrally important to the development of their son/daughter, and were strong advocates of the important place of the TTW in facilitating the transition to work of young people with disability.

The majority of workshop attendees consider that the program is delivering good outcomes for many service users. It was seen by service users and their families as bridging an important gap for young people with disability who needed extra support, guidance and skills development in order to successfully make the transition from school to work (open or supported) and/or further study.

The key things that service users and families saw as the important benefits of the TTW program were that it gave young people with disability the extra time, support, skills and experience they needed to be able to become ready for work and to become active, contributing, mature members of the community.

In other cases, however, it seemed there was a mismatch between the expectations of service users and the services delivered by providers. In a workshop setting, it was difficult to establish whether this mismatch was due to misguided or unrealistic expectations of service users and/or their parents, or whether it was due to issues of misrepresentation of program capacity, or actual underperformance in program delivery, on the part of service providers. But it is clear that the establishment and maintenance of clear lines of communication, feedback and constructive dialogue between providers and service users and their families is of central importance to the delivery of satisfactory program outcomes, and this applies before, during and after the delivery of the program.

#### *5.2.1 Provider rapport and competence*

A central, and perhaps primary, factor of success identified by service users and families was having a sense of confidence, trust and rapport with their chosen TTW provider. This seems to be the fundamental bedrock upon which successful TTW outcomes are built: quality relationships and good communication between service users/families and providers.

One respondent noted the importance of having a “sense of partnership”; another spoke of the “parent-centric” nature of the program. Being included in the transition planning process made parents feel that their knowledge and appreciation of their son/daughter’s specific strengths and abilities was valued. Working together in pursuit of common goals seemed to enable service users to achieve to a level that often surprised and delighted their parents. In turn, this led to increased trust and confidence on the part of parents, creating a positive feedback loop that was reflected in a high level of satisfaction with services delivered.

Some of the aspects that contribute to effective service user-provider rapport, as articulated by program participants and their parents, include:

- Creation of an inclusive environment/atmosphere (open door policy)
- Emphasis upon service user safety
- The demonstration of professional integrity
- Commitment to act, and act quickly

- Respectfulness toward all service users
- Empowerment of all service users
- The pursuit of activities, which contribute to the maturation and growth of service users.

These attributes were all cited by workshop participants as contributing to the sense of trust and having a common goal which appears essential—from the service user/parent perspective at any rate—to achieving an effective program outcome (in particular KRA #1). Indeed, this sentiment was complemented by the insight of many service providers, who intimated that if parents were uncommitted or opposed to the intended goals of the program that providers were trying to accomplish, the likelihood of achieving a positive outcome was almost always put in jeopardy.

It was clear from the workshops that most parents brought strong expectations, aspirations and emotional investments to the program (this was also confirmed by the input of service providers). The way in which service providers engage with and manage these expectations/aspirations seems integral to the achievement of satisfactory outcomes, whether this is open or supported employment, or transference to another program or course of training/study.

For many school leavers and their parents, the end of compulsory schooling represents a considerable point of anxiety, in that they are aware that the natural or automatic transition of the young person to work or further study is not guaranteed or given. Many parents in the workshops spoke quite openly and candidly of this anxiety. Of course, such anxiety is often also the case for parents of young people without any form of disability, but who perhaps have no clear sense of vocational or academic directedness. However, the factors of disadvantage associated with disability exacerbate the sense of parental anxiety that accompanies post-school transition.

This is understandable, given that, as many workshop participants articulated, the cessation of compulsory schooling represents a relative loss of security and safety for the young person. For those for whom direct transition to employment, VET or higher education is not feasible due to their level of support needs, it is TTW or CP that offers them a community lifeline.

It is highly understandable, therefore, that a program such as TTW, which is designed to provide eligible school-leavers with the opportunity to develop the necessary skills and/or qualifications to transition to (open or supported) employment, would generate considerable interest and investment on the part of parents of young people with moderate to high disability support needs. This high level of emotional investment and expectation is certainly evident in the findings of the workshops with service users and their parents/carers, as is evident from the following statements:

- *We did a survey of different providers and chose one [a particular service provider] who gave great talks on the function of TTW and what were they going to do;*

- *Our expectation was that the program will lead to work for our son up to his level; that they will find work for him;*
- *We were hoping for some kind of pathway toward open employment;*
- *In our initial contact meetings, they indicated that they had access to a range of possible work experience opportunities;*
- *We went with [service provider] because they seemed focused on providing one-on-one vocationally focused assistance; they don't do centre-based group activity; just one on one and focus on finding real and genuine work experience.*

Accommodating and effectively responding to this intense and often high level of expectation amongst parents requires considerable sensitivity and tact on the part of providers, and an ability to reassure parents that the program will provide appropriate and responsive services that lead to the best possible outcome for their son/daughter.

It may be—as some providers suggest below—that parental expectations need to be modified during the course of the program. This can only be effectively achieved by providers if they are able to establish good, trusting relationships with both service users and parents, and keep them involved and informed as goals, plans and program expectations change.

As we shall see in the section outlining the findings of the service provider workshops, this was seen as an area of particular challenge and concern for many service providers. Indeed, the level of professional and interpersonal skill required to perform such a role is high. And indeed, the perception of parents as to level of qualification and competency of staff to undertake their role seemed to be integral to the extent to which they were able to place confidence and trust in them to facilitate a successful transition for their son/daughter:

- *The quality of trainers is very poor. We were never promised any particular outcomes of the program, but what the program was designed to do is strongly implied;*
- *[the client] didn't like the program at the start: it was not good and she didn't enjoy colouring in; [she] wanted to do work experience. Then a new TTW co-ordinator came on board and this changed everything; [the client] had work experience within 4 months of his appointment;*
- *Most of the staff were quite young, and it was unclear just how much training they had had in disability services and TTW.*

A key factor of program success would seem to be the ability to facilitate the active and positive engagement and the active support of parents for the program's activities. In order to achieve this, service users and parents need to have an implicit sense of trust and confidence in the professionalism and competence of their service provider.

This is borne out by the comments of those parents whose expectations had not been met:

- *I don't think they'd ever had kids as high-functioning, and didn't know what to do with them; first 9 months of the program was just like babysitting;*
- *We were never able to get serious commitment out of our service provider. We had a lot of problems with staff commitment;*
- *[service provider] promised that our daughter would obtain a [Certificate], but this did not happen – she hasn't been given any certificates;*
- *Some employers agreed to have [the client] for work experience, but the service provider didn't actually take them there, so [the client] got a bad reputation from employers;*
- *The case worker was too hands off – too slow in taking action in getting [the client] into meaningful employment;*
- *The provider had made extensive promises that it could not keep. It promised a lot, and delivered little. Particularly work placements - while a range were promised, none were actually obtained;*
- *We would be surprised if any clients of [service provider] have ever attained employment. Less than 20% of clients at [service provider] appear to be achieving anything;*
- *We have reached a point where we are not satisfied with [service provider];*
- *The person who runs TTW isn't motivated to find people jobs. TTW is a new part of their program provision and they seem more comfortable running the CP side of things. Many other parents feel the same way;*
- *We have been impressed with [the client's] progress over the last year in terms of travel, independence and maturity. But we need better communication, and a more staged approach to developing work readiness.*

Considerable space has been devoted here to the issue of provider rapport and competence, as it is one of the most critical factors in ensuring program satisfaction. Without it, the likelihood of securing positive program outcomes appears to be very low. The hallmark of successful service provision seems very much to reside in the ability to create and maintain positive, open, interactive and effective relationships with service users and their families. Skill and capacity building in this area may, therefore, contribute to improved outcomes for many service users.

As we shall see in the findings of the service provider workshops, this may be very challenging in some cases. But it is critical to the achievement of effective outcomes across all the key result areas.

### *5.2.2 Relationships with local schools*

Another key success factor, operating across all key result areas but KRA #1 in particular, is the development of effective relationships with schools as a key point of entry into the program.

Almost all of the service users and parents surveyed first became aware of TTW through information provided through school channels. This usually

occurred either through transition expos or transition options information evenings, or just informal exchanges between clients, parents and school transition officers. There seemed to be considerable variation in the way in which this information was provided, and when it was provided.

For some, the flow of information seemed to begin quite early and well in advance of program commencement (Year 10-11). Some service users even began attending their chosen TTW provider while still at school (say, for one day a week in Year 12). For others, the process seems to have been much more sudden, with assessment taking place toward the end of Year 12, and limited information being exchanged, until relatively close to the beginning of the TTW program.

Several parents reported having access to limited information about existing providers, and that the information provided was of limited usefulness. That the amount and quality of information about the TTW service could be improved was an opinion widely shared by most parents. Some reported a sense of limited choice - that there only seemed to be a choice of one or two providers that could potentially address their son/daughter's needs. This was particularly the case in regional areas, but was also reported in some metropolitan areas.

In some cases, schools would arrange for the young people and parents to visit a range of service providers so that they could get a sense of the options available. In other cases, it seems to have been left entirely up to the parents to locate and survey potential service providers for their son/daughter.

Where the process of transitioning from school to the TTW program has been carefully and sensitively managed, and service users and their parents have been kept well informed throughout the transition process (including the assessment process), the likelihood of better outcomes appears to be increased:

- *The school prepared us well, with lots of different meetings with service providers, and so forth. The school was always supportive and highly engaged. They took us around to all the different providers, and made sure we were engaged with the providers;*
- *We were very aware of the program well before it commenced;*
- *The TTW provider was closely involved with the school – they came along to show their wares. The school was open to feedback about the transition process [ . . . ] We took a lot of advice from the school as to how the assessment process worked.*

Careful management of the transition process from school to the TTW program appears to be critical to creating precisely the rapport and confidence between service users, parents and providers that vitally underpins sound program outcomes. This point is underlined by feedback from parents and service users who were dissatisfied with the program.

They tended to criticise the way in which the handover from school to TTW was handled:

- *There was limited information provided at school. This made it hard to get a handle on the difference between TTW and CP;*
- *The schools didn't seem to know the service providers all that well; we don't think the liaison officer was doing their job properly. A previous liaison officer who did PSO would take the kids on field trips out to providers;*
- *Not enough communication happens between school and TTW; and this created confusion about the purpose of the program, and duplicated activities that already happen at school [i.e. life skills and work readiness programs].*

The nature of information provision and managing the handover from schools to TTW providers was an area of concern for those parents who were dissatisfied. It seems also to have significant flow-on effects in terms of influencing the ongoing relationships between families and service providers, which in turn affects the likelihood of a successful transition from the TTW program to employment or further education and training.

A related sub-topic, of considerable concern to dissatisfied parents in particular, is the nature of the assessment process used to regulate/determine entry into the TTW program. It should be highlighted that the reporting of these views should not be read as criticising the assessment instrument itself. They are reported to indicate that despite ongoing communication by ADHC on the nature of the assessment process, some parents remain uninformed, and consider that they were not as fully involved in the process, as they would have liked.

Lack of understanding of the assessment process resulted in a number of parents at the workshops who felt that their son/daughter was not suited to the TTW program in the first place. The likelihood of an employment outcome, given the nature or severity of their son/daughter's disability, appeared to them remote and unlikely. They were, therefore, confused as to the purpose of the program in relation to their son/daughter, whom they saw as inevitably transitioning into CP.

There was another group of parents whose employment-oriented aspirations seem to have been raised by entry into the TTW program, only to be disappointed by a lack of delivery on program outcomes, which has then led them to conclude rightly or wrongly, in hindsight, that the assessment process was flawed which admitted them to the program in the first place.

As we shall see, some service providers also expressed views about the timing and the nature of the assessment. As mentioned previously, examining the assessment process is beyond the scope of this evaluation. However, it is worth noting that many parents and some staff of service providers do not fully understand the assessment process.

### 5.2.3 The role of work experience

In terms of the capacity of the program to reach its key objectives for clients (particularly KRAs #1, #2, #3 and #4), the role of work experience was seen as particularly crucial for many service users and their families. Having access to a range of work experience opportunities, enabling service users to sample a range of workplace environments and practices, was seen as critical to good program outcomes, and essential to the program delivering on its main premise of being focused upon a vocational, work-oriented outcome.

As a result, providers with strong links to networks of employers seem to create better relationships with parents and service users, and are seen by parents as delivering a more legitimate outcome than providers without strong or clear links to their local industries and employers.

The connection to employers and “real” workplaces seems to create confidence in parents that providers know what they are doing in terms of developing their child’s work readiness. The high value attributed by many parents and service users to work experience was evident in a range of statements made throughout the process of conducting the workshops:

- *The service has lots of guest speakers from different industries, along with lots of activities;*
- *[the client] had work-related outings to [fast food retailer], a hot water system manufacturer, and a mining company to learn about the kinds of jobs available with each of those employers;*
- *Right from the beginning [the client] was given a range of work experiences: a local library, an investment company, [a bookstore chain], a retirement village, a café, and a local health services provider, which we were very happy with.*

Conversely, a lack of work experience opportunities seems to consistently equate with the delivery of an unsatisfactory service and outcome, from the perspective of service users and parents:

- *[the service provider] clearly indicated in our initial contact meetings that they had access to a range of possible work experience opportunities for [the service user]. Their work experience liaison turned out to be hopeless, however, and it turned out they didn’t have nearly as many work placements as they promised;*
- *We have had to push hard for extra hours of quality work experience. We went in expecting open employment experience, but are not getting value for money with the current quality of work experience we are getting.*

Overall, there was widespread recognition amongst the service user and parent cohort consulted that exposure to a range of workplaces is a necessary component of effective service provision, and a promise that was not delivered in some instances.

#### 5.2.4 *The cultivation of life skills*

Another aspect of effective program delivery identified by service users and parents throughout the workshop consultations was the cultivation of certain key foundational life skills that clients need to become ready for work, skills which—for various reasons—it seems aren't always specifically taught or cultivated at home or in schools.

Important life skills mentioned by service user and families that the TTW program provided include:

- time management
- teamwork
- respecting boundaries
- appropriate dress sense
- how to understand and follow directions/use maps
- how to use public transport
- good communication skills
- anti-harassment strategies
- personal hygiene/grooming and other life skills.

Parents often cited these skills, in particular, as important elements of effective program delivery. They were seen as providing an important foundational framework upon which young people were able to build other, more vocationally oriented skills. Without this foundational skill development, it was argued that many service users would not have been able to become work-ready.

For many parents, the development of these foundational skills confirmed their aspirations that their son/daughter was capable of more than was generally attributed to them by society at large. Many parents felt that their son/daughter would be capable of performing in the workplace, but just needed some coaching in the elements that surround and support the ability to perform a work role, such as personal management, discipline and the ability to physically get to work.

The TTW program was able to provide support and coaching in these skills, without which, the ability to achieve an employment outcome was seen as remote and unlikely.

In some cases, however, it appeared that these skills were being taught regardless of whether they were identified as part of the service user's work readiness needs analysis. Some service users had already received life skills training at school, and this aspect of the program was, therefore, seen as superfluous and irrelevant to their vocational skills development. This underlines the importance of undertaking an effective service user needs analysis as part of the program planning and delivery, and not merely applying a prescriptive set of pre-programmed activities regardless of service user abilities.

On the other hand, in a few cases it was reported by parents that young people were being rushed into vocational development before they were seen as ready. Several examples arose in the workshop consultations of program participants whom parents thought were being pushed toward an open employment outcome without appropriate preparation in foundational and work-readiness skills.

Again, this underlines the importance of undertaking a thorough needs analysis, developing an individualised plan for skills development, which is clearly communicated to both parents and service users prior to undertaking a program of activities.

#### *5.2.5 Open vs. supported employment/definition of employment outcome*

This topic area of concern relates primarily to KRA #1 (“Young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study”), but relates also to issues of sustainability of employment (KRAs #3 and #4) and the performance of meaningful and satisfying work (KRA #2).

It relates specifically to the way in which preferred employment outcomes of the TTW program are defined by parents (and it is usually parents who seem to define this preferred or ideal outcome) as opposed to service providers or program administrators.

There was considerable variance across the service user/parent cohort as to the definition of a “preferred” employment outcome. For many, open employment was deemed to be an ideal endpoint, and the primary purpose of the TTW program. Others, due perhaps to the perceived limitations of their son/daughter’s ability, saw supported employment as the most appropriate and probable outcome. Some parents with young people in the TTW program—and this was confirmed by the observations of service providers—did not seem to preference an employment outcome at all, and seemed more comfortable with the idea of transitioning to CP. For them, the whole purpose of the program remained unclear (see section above on assessments, and below on the overlap between TTW and CP).

Some parents who preferred the supported employment pathway saw TTW, or the approach of service providers in delivering it, as primarily oriented toward open employment, and were not always comfortable with what they saw as the tendency of providers to push their son/daughter toward open employment, which they saw as unsuitable and inappropriate. The limited employment markets in regional areas, and the perceived impact of the economic downturn, which many saw as resulting in a lack of suitable available job opportunities, reinforced this sentiment.

As we shall see in relation to the reflections of service providers on this issue, it is difficult to ascertain whether in some cases this is due to an understandable protective instinct on the part of parents, or whether it is a realistic assessment based upon their understanding of their son/daughter’s abilities and limitations. It is an intractable grey area which, again, can really

only be addressed by improving the quality of communication, relationship and understanding between providers and young people and their families, so that all parties are in agreement as to the purpose of the program and the definition of a “preferred” outcome.

What constitutes an “employment” outcome remains an area of ambiguity for some parents. Many pointed out that, according to the definitions of the program, an “employment” outcome could be a whole range of things. It might be open employment; it might be supported employment in a disability enterprise; it might be only a few hours a week of highly part-time, casual work without any protections or entitlements; it might even be just being transferred to a DEN to look for open or supported employment.

The very definition of what “counts” as an employment outcome from the TTW program is thus highly variable and as can be seen from the range of possibilities outlined above, the different definitions of an outcome all have very different implications as to their “sustainability”, “meaningfulness” and level of work “satisfaction.”

While ADHC has amended the outcome categories for data collection purposes, it would certainly be beneficial to better assist parents to understand what is meant by an employment outcome, in order to firm up the perception, on the part of parents, of the ability of the program to deliver on prescribed program outcomes.

#### 5.2.6 Vocational/work-related skills

In addition to life skills development, another key developmental strand of the TTW program as identified by service users and parents is, of course, the development of vocational and work-related skills. This was seen as a central component of effective program delivery, and integral to the program’s vocational orientation (particularly the achievement of KRA # 3).

Many young people and their parents spoke of choosing their provider on the basis of their clear vocational orientation and focus upon the world of work:

- *We went with [service provider] because they seemed focused on providing one-on-one vocationally focused assistance; they don’t do centre-based group activity; just one-on-one, and they focus on finding real genuine work experience.*

On the other hand, providers who employed more centre-based and group activities were seen as having a less direct vocational focus, and less likely to deliver effectively on vocational skills development and employment outcomes.

- *While [service providers] have a centre-based approach and use more clustered/group work experience, [other service provider] is much more focused on finding employment.*

The use of a clear and systematic individual planning process was seen as key in this regard, as the extent to which providers adhered to an agreed and transparent planning process—setting goals with service users and providing options and activities designed to pursue those goals—appears to be critical to assuring parents of the vocational/career-directed nature of the TTW program.

Use of the individual planning process also ensured the responsiveness of the program to individual service user needs, allowing participants to have input into their preferred work experience activities:

- *It fits kids in, it works around them, it puts them where their strengths are, keeps them to a routine, and makes sure it's not all social;*
- *The transition plan was extensively used. We felt [the client's] wishes were totally taken into account.*

Important to the effective use of the planning process, however, was that it not be used too rigidly, and that it be subject to change and variation over time. Where service users and families had formed good opinions from the planning process, service providers were seen as very willing to change tack and be flexible in their use of a transition plan. Many service users and their families acknowledged the importance of flexibility in this regard, and the willingness of service providers to accommodate their changing needs over time, allowing clients to change goals, adjust foci, pursue different strategies, etc.

On the other hand, trust between providers and service users and their parents appeared to be lost when the planning process was not properly observed or honoured:

- *We did a short term and long term plan at the beginning of the TTW program, but the service provider merely used her previous year's plan and they weren't sticking to the plan – the plan changed without impetus from [the service user];*
- *There was no follow through on the lessons and activities that were on the plan. First year of funding was wasted because [the client] did not achieve anything for the whole year;*
- *The plan was reviewed after the first year. It specified a few things that what would happen initially: money skills training, literacy training; can't remember specifically what else it involved. The plan was initially appropriate but hasn't led to any tangible or foreseeable outcome;*
- *A year into the program and we still don't have a plan per se; there should be more in the plan about experiencing different workplaces, and matching these work experiences with [the client's] areas of interest.*

Parents who made these statements seemed to think that the varied and inconsistent use of individual plans—and this issue will be revisited in the subsequent section on service providers—appears to stem from a more

fundamental lack of clarity around what the program is meant to provide. Providers with a more strictly vocational interpretation of the program guidelines appear to apply a more systematic and transparent planning process. The use of transition planning processes is less evident in relation to providers who emphasise more of a social, recreational and broad “life skills” interpretation of the program guidelines.

The question that needs to be answered in relation to the varying vocational orientation of the program, and the variance in the use of and adherence to individual vocational/career planning process, is: how open to interpretation should the delivery of the program be?

Many service users and their parents who were dissatisfied with the service they had received had understood that after the 2 years of the program, their son/daughter would be equipped to be able to find a job. When this outcome was not achieved, or looked unlikely to be achieved, they began to question the nature of the program and the planning processes in place that were/are meant to bring about this outcome.

In order to avoid such discrepancies, the purpose of the program would need to be more clearly prescribed, and consistent and transparent planning processes implemented to make clear the intended outcomes for individuals, and the steps to be taken in order to achieve them.

#### *5.2.7 Overlapping delivery of TTW and CP programs*

A major issue arising out of the service user workshops—and we have touched upon it several times already—is the perception of an overlap between TTW and CP. Many service users, particularly those who received less than satisfactory outcomes from the program appeared to be uncertain as to the precise nature of the distinction between TTW and CP.

TTW and CP are designed for inherently different purposes: the former is a vocational program, while the latter is primarily a social/recreational program (although it does have a “life skills” focus as well). Because the purposes of both programs are so distinct, the specific function of each may suffer when they are merged and blurred in practice, a premise borne out by the fact that young people whose provider did not demonstrate a strong vocational focus, but more of a social participation/recreation focus, did not produce a desirable outcome from their perspective.

The TTW program is designed to be primarily a vocational program, providing people with workplace skills and attitudes, which lead to some form of open or supported paid employment.

In many ways, then, the TTW and CP programs are, to a considerable extent, programmatically incompatible. One is designed to provide service user’s with a specific set of competencies; the other has no such vocational or developmental imperative, being more focused upon social and recreational activities that may or may not have a vocational application.

It seems that when CP and TTW service users are combined in one group and undertake similar activities, confusion as to the purpose of the program is created for service users and parents alike.

### *5.2.8 Program duration*

A final issue often raised by young people and their families in the workshops concerned the duration of the program, and the time restrictions on delivery of the program.

The number of days a week (usually 3-4) was always an issue of concern, particularly for working families who preferred and needed the support of a program for their son/daughter while they themselves were at work.

The overall program duration was also occasionally criticised as being too short, and that there should be even more flexibility in the 2 years plus extension timeframe, to allow the specific developmental needs of each service user to be met.

As we shall see in the service provider workshops, a differentiated or tiered system of TTW funding—with corresponding flexible time-periods—was often proposed as a potential solution to the diversity of developmental needs presented by TTW service users.

The commencement of the program in January was also seen to create an awkward gap between the termination of school (usually around October for Year 12 students) and the start of the program. The possibility of starting the program earlier—perhaps even as part of a vocational program taught in partnership with schools in Year 11 and 12—was also a very popular idea.

## **5.3 Findings from the Service Provider Workshops**

It was almost universally acknowledged by workshop participants that without a program such as TTW, transitioning from school to open or supported employment would not be a viable option for many service users. Most service providers, therefore, saw the program as delivering an essential transitional service that supported young people whose chances of securing employment were previously thought to be extremely unlikely and remote.

Many of the reasons cited by service providers for the various successes of the program were similar to those cited by service users, parents and carers:

- its focus upon vocational outcomes
- its allowance of time and space for the maturation of service users
- its ability to customise, and be flexibly adapted around the service user and their aspirations
- its ability to effectively upskill service users over 2 years to an employable standard
- its raising of service users' self-confidence and self-esteem, and

- its ability to achieve sustainable and meaningful employment outcomes for service users.

Most service providers, therefore, expressed their certainty that the TTW program had filled an important service gap. It was seen to provide essential assistance for individuals that require additional support to become “work ready” and “life ready”.

However, there were a number of issues identified by service providers, which they saw as potential impediments to the achievement successful outcomes for particular service users and, in some cases, as hampering the achievement of optimal outcomes for the service user group as a whole.

Again, as with the service user workshops, the findings are grouped into thematic sections relating to “critical success factors” and/or “critical impediments to success.” Where pertinent, these thematic sections correspond to and are cross-referenced with thematic sections outlined in the client workshops section. These corresponding sections can therefore be read in conjunction and in dialogue with each other.

#### *5.3.1 Rapport/engagement with families/parents/carers*

Just as service users and their parents saw their rapport with service providers as crucial to good outcomes, service providers also identified the degree of rapport or engagement with service users and their families with the intended purpose of the program as critical.

In describing the picture of an “ideal” TTW service user, many service providers agreed that two central factors to optimal program success were having:

1. a motivated, focused, goal-driven service user, and
2. a supportive family context.

Indeed, service providers saw the motivation and goal-driven nature of service users as closely related to the influence of parents/carers/ family environments. Conversely, and in concurrence with conclusions drawn from the service user workshops, where the support/engagement of families/parents with the prescribed outcomes of the TTW program was not apparent (particularly in relation to KRA #1), successful completion of the program was not assured.

In most cases, service providers explicitly acknowledged the need to try and achieve a vocational outcome. But often they saw this intention as being in conflict with the wishes of parents, who reportedly opposed the vocational orientation of the program. Service providers spoke of ambivalence on the part of parents towards the vocational thrust of TTW, and the uncertain implications of sending their son/daughter out into the world on an independent basis, and exposing them to the vagaries of the labour market and the potentially “unsheltered” or “unprotected” environment of open employment:

- *Sometimes it can be difficult to get the support of parents, who want to protect their kids from the “big bad world.”*

Providers often spoke of parents being opposed to overtly vocational activities within the program. Indeed, many providers spoke of parents of TTW service users seeming more comfortable with a CP-type approach, which they saw as a “lifeline”. It was thought that some parents selected providers on the basis of their “mix” of TTW and CP services, which gave them the potential option of simply switching to CP in case the world of work became—or was perceived as becoming—too threatening or unfeasible for their son/daughter. Some providers spoke quite openly of the dilution of their program’s vocational orientation due to the influence of parents, who were uncomfortable with the program’s strict vocational orientation.

Some providers felt that some parents saw TTW as something of a babysitting service, rather than a career/job transition program:

- *The first six months is often about getting parents to understand that this is not a school. For some parents that’s difficult. Many parents think it’s all school, and really don’t understand, and don’t want to. Many parents focus on the respite access - 9 to 3, every day. Sometimes you really have to work hard to make them realise that’s not the point of the program.*

Providers saw the mismatch between parental expectations and the goals of the program as a huge challenge. There was a general consensus that parents need to be better informed of the specific vocational focus of TTW, in order to better engage their support in achieving this outcome. A renewed focus was recommended upon the nature of the information parents receive and the ways in which they are informed about the goals of the program.

By beginning this process of information provision early and in conjunction with schools, it was argued that it would be possible to create a better flow-on from school through to the TTW program, rather than the current approach whereby school finishes and TTW starts without any clear connection or continuity between the two:

- *We need to spell out the purpose of the program clearly to clients/parents;*
- *It helps when transition support teachers at school have clearly communicated the purpose of the program to parents;*
- *A good strategy to improve the engagement of parents would be to start preparing them earlier, ideally as early as Year 8.*

Overall, service providers generally described the relationship with parents as an area of utmost importance, and, in some cases, an area of difficulty. For some service providers, the involvement of parents in the program was seen as an obstacle to achieving good outcomes:

- *The input and influence of parents is a huge problem;*

- *You need to take parents out of the equation to get a more realistic response from clients on their expectations/aspirations;*
- *The time and effort spent on managing parents detracts from time you can spend supporting the young person.*

Some service providers saw parents as unwittingly standing in the way of the positive transitions of their son/daughter, due to their own assumptions about the nature of the young person's disability:

- *TTW parents usually tend to underestimate, rather than overestimate, their child's abilities;*
- *Many parents whose children are in TTW don't actually want them to work; there can be a lot of cultural issues that have built up with the experience of disability;*
- *Many clients don't actually want to work – and their parents don't want them to either – parents are often protective, still grieving, scared, fearful;*
- *Those clients with low independence often want to have a job, but parents don't want them to know how to catch a bus;*
- *Providers in some instances can end up being more of an advocate for the client – attempting to empower them more;*
- *It often takes just as long to coach parents as it does with clients in allowing clients to take risks.*

Typically, parents were seen as underestimating or under-selling their son/daughter's abilities and potential. On the other hand, some providers also mentioned a minority cohort of parents who have overly high expectations and try to extend their son/daughter beyond their capabilities. In these cases, service providers are in the position of having to sensitively modify and adjust unrealistic parental expectations. It was also suggested that parental expectations could differ depending on their own personal, socio-economic or cultural background, and that parents from higher socio-economic strata tended to expect more from the program than it could deliver, while those from lower socio-economic and CALD backgrounds tended to downplay the possibility of any upward mobility for their son/daughter as a result of the program:

- *Often parents don't want their children doing things that they themselves have trouble doing because of their cultural and language barriers;*
- *Some parents from particular CALD backgrounds may be worried about losing their own status in the family as carer if their child becomes independent;*
- *Female clients from particular backgrounds are usually not encouraged by their parents or families at all because in their culture women do not traditionally work.*

Although most providers that attended the workshops had limited or no experience in delivering services to Indigenous service users, it was felt and understood that engaging with families and the broader Indigenous

community was particularly important. Having a dedicated Indigenous liaison officer was seen as essential in this regard in order to access and engage with Aboriginal communities.

Many providers spoke of the sensitivity needed to manage parental expectations that may be at odds with the purpose or capacity of the program. Some service providers described their role as akin to that of a family counsellor, and the importance of building trust and alliance with parents in order to “win them over” to the purposes of the program. Such a role requires skills and training. The question of whether some providers were appropriately qualified to effectively deliver the TTW program was an issue broached by parents in the service user workshops. It was conspicuously absent from the service provider workshops.

One provider evocatively compared delivering the program to “walking a tightrope”:

- *Some families don't care what the program is about as long as their children are occupied. At the other end of spectrum there are parents who say, “they must, they must, they must”. Balancing the parents' wants with the client's needs is about quietly assisting the service user to build their confidence without inflaming the family or causing problems in a family context. It's about building confidence – that can cause conflict if the provider is not careful.*

This process of building trust, moreover, was seen as a very gradual, protracted and delicate process that could take years.

It was widely acknowledged, however, that parents have a central role to play in supporting a young person throughout their working life/career process, and that securing their informal support was crucial. It was generally felt that better outcomes were achieved when parents could be brought on board as partners in the process of delivering the TTW program:

- *You need to develop close relationships with clients and families; these need to be the drivers of the process;*
- *An ideal situation would be to be able to bring together clients, schools, parents, TTW staff and staff from DENs, and create some shared understanding of the goals to be achieved;*
- *A tripartite relationship between parents, clients and the service provider is particularly important;*
- *Parents have to be on board. This makes a big difference;*
- *Providers need strategies for dealing with parents at either end of the spectrum. They need to understand that parents are going through a grievance process. They need to be intuitive by getting to know families and their expectations, as well as working with them to match their expectations with the client's needs. As the relationship builds the provider gets an idea of the family's expectations and the service user's needs.*

A number of strategies for winning over parents were suggested by service providers. Including them in the design of the Transition Pathway Plans was one strategy. Others spoke of having to slowly 'wean' service users away from their parents, and this sometimes involved taking a less inclusive approach in terms of the parents' engagement in the program.

However, providers were also acutely aware of the need to be careful not to alienate parents from the program: generally it was acknowledged that parents merely want the best for their son/daughter. Telling them about the things that their son/daughter achieves through the program was identified as another important strategy for getting parents onside, and building their confidence and trust. Other providers spoke of having a code of conduct, which outlines the agreement between the provider, the service user and the family – part of this code is the importance of families being engaged and on the same pathway as their service provider.

The importance of positive parental engagement to good program outcomes cannot be overstated. One provider talked about the dignity of risk, which means giving the service users the dignity to decide for themselves what risks they want to take with their behaviours and their experiences. Enabling parents to recognise the positive consequences of allowing their son/daughter to experience the dignity of risk would seem to be key here.

### *5.3.2 Relationship between service providers and schools*

Some providers reported that they had not yet established close relationships with all schools in their area, and acknowledged that the school to work transitions of their service users could potentially be made smoother if closer relationships existed.

- *When ties between schools and providers are strong, the transition process can be seamless and creates a breathing space for young people; they don't have to worry about the pathway that will take them from school into employment.*

Service providers identified areas, where they believed that improvements could be made. For example, several providers recommended that a standardised system for the sharing and transfer of relevant TTW entrant information between schools and service providers would be helpful.

A large proportion of service providers were of the view that the school system was not adequately preparing students for life beyond the classroom. Their exposure to career development activities, including an exploration of work options and vocational learning, was seen to be limited.

Others reported that there is a wide variation in the role that transition teachers play in influencing service users and parental choices about service providers. While transition teachers may well see their role as an informative, advisory role, in some cases schools staff were seen to favour and/or promote certain providers over others.

Others were concerned that the long break between school ending and the beginning of the TTW program creates a disjointed rather than seamless transition for young people. Several providers had trialled early transitioning into TTW without necessarily knowing whether the service users would be assigned to TTW. In these instances the transition process worked well, and both the young person and service provider were happy with the outcomes. As a counterpoint to this argument however, it was mentioned that the gap between school and adult life, be it further education or training or entry to the workforce, is a normal part of life, and it would be unnatural for service users to miss out on that break.

Despite the provision of ongoing professional development activities for TTW staff, some confusion persists amongst service providers as to exactly what the assessment process involves and how it is undertaken. Differing opinions were offered about the content of the assessment tool, who was involved in its administration, and its predictive reliability.

While it is acknowledged that ADHC has provided comprehensive information to service providers, the misunderstanding that persists needs to be addressed. To overcome many of the difficulties that arise from a lack of understanding or misinformation about assessment processes, it is important that existing efforts to fully induct service providers into the assessment process are strengthened.

### *5.3.3 The role of work experience/vocational orientation of program*

As workshop participants described their services, it was apparent that the delivery models employed by service providers in delivering the TTW program were diverse. At one end of the continuum, some providers operate strictly on a one-to-one staff/service user basis, with a focus upon providing skills development through experience in actual workplaces and/or the community. At the other end, some providers operate on more of a group and centre-based model, with a greater emphasis upon classroom-style learning activities. In between these, many organisations employed a combination of these two approaches, blending one-to-one/group and experiential/academic-based delivery.

In keeping with this blend of approaches, there also appeared to be considerable variation in the extent to which activities with a directly vocational application were the primary focus of program delivery. There were many service providers for whom getting service users into work experience in real workplaces was a main priority:

- *Within the first 6-10 months we aim to give clients the opportunity to experience a range of different industries, ideally 4 or 5 different job sampling opportunities;*
- *By offering a broad range of work experience for clients we can identify whether they like a particular type of work – the emphasis is on giving them a range of experiences so that they can choose the kind of work they enjoy and wish to pursue;*

- *We attempt to find as many work placement options as possible, taking into account the areas they are personally interested in [ . . . ] the planning of work sampling activities is really a creative process;*
- *We will try and provide a range of work experiences [ . . . ] it needs to be sustainable for the individual which may mean supported or open work experience;*
- *Work-based training is an important part of the program [ . . . ] it's important to expose clients to work spaces so that they know what kind of behaviour is appropriate in a workplace;*
- *We begin with service planning meetings to see what jobs the participant would be interested in trialling during their 6 to 8 weeks of work experience. These meetings are repeated every six months as participants are always changing their minds. A staff member might be present during these placements to support for a while;*
- *We offer at least 50% of the program in the work place – at least. This balance seems to work as it includes having a bit of fun out in the community balanced with more structured stuff in the classroom. This is backed up with taking clients to career expos.*

This focus upon training in real workplaces is contrasted with the more generic aspects of the program's delivery, many of which activities have a less directly apparent vocational relevance. Many providers spoke of the necessity of cultivating the generic skills necessary to adapt to and perform in the workplace. These included social skills, communication skills, punctuality, time management, confidence training and management of self-esteem, task endurance, work appropriateness, rights and responsibilities at work, transport training and coping skills:

- *We provide courses on social skills, money skills and personal hygiene, for example. There has traditionally been a lot of writing worksheets and classroom work in these kinds of courses – this has recently developed into more role play and group interaction. These skills are then put into practice out in the community;*
- *We do offer work experience, but this is also combined with a lot of self-esteem building activities, exercises in adult responsibilities, team building, recreation, education, computers, short courses, qualifications, building career awareness, etc;*
- *TTW is not purely an employment program and needs to be delivered on a case-by-case basis; sometimes a blend of vocational and recreational activities is necessary to getting the balance right; the specific nature of individual disability needs to be understood in order to provide appropriate service;*
- *We focus upon providing a face-to-face, holistic service, not just work experience, but also community living skills and being able to access/draw upon what's available in the community; also time-management; money skills;*
- *There is an emphasis in our program on group skills – building things like social skills, budgeting, shopping, cooking – life skills. Most of these elements will end up as part of the service user's individual plan.*

There was a general consensus that the mix of vocational vs. non-vocational/generic/recreational activities should be determined by the specific needs of individual service users. It was also suggested, however, that it was necessary, in order to deliver on program objectives, to have a standard plan of core activities, from which one could extrapolate variations based upon individual needs and aspirations. A group of service providers at one workshop, estimated and agreed that the standard split of vocational vs. generic/non-vocational activities was approximately at a ratio of 70/30%, depending on time allocations (i.e. those who provide services 4-5 days a week will have a greater proportion of non-vocational activities).

Several service providers acknowledged that a key challenge for them was maintaining a range of work experience opportunities for service users in a labour market environment that has undergone a general contraction in the last 12 months. In addition to this, welfare to work legislation has meant there are currently more people looking for work, making competition for available work placements more difficult. Some providers noted a lack of resources and funds to enable extensive networking with employers and businesses. The difficulty of finding a range of work experience opportunities in regional and rural areas was also noted as a problem for providers, where sometimes there was excessive competition between providers for available positions.

Where providers can't tap into local employers for work experience opportunities, they often use their own disability enterprise businesses as work experience sites. These might offer a range of different work roles, including packaging, horticultural and landscaping roles, laundry or biscuit making.

By providing a broad base of vocational, work-based experiences in actual workplaces, service providers felt that they were effectively cultivating for their service users a sustainable grounding in workplace culture, and effectively cultivating their labour market awareness and work readiness in ways that would enable them the best chance possible of labour market success:

- *It's important to work closely with employers, ensure that linkages are made and the quality of your relationship with the client can be transferred to the workplace situation. That way those "natural supports" kick in and the client can become part of the work environment. Although this sometimes also involves a need to educate co-workers;*
- *The program has to involve a genuine attempt to actually get people into employment; some just get a bit of work experience or 7-hours a week and get rolled into CP. Those providers should be struck off the list [ . . . ] But there are no genuine incentives from the Department to get placements;*
- *The issue is not whether the client gets into a job and then keeps it forever. People change jobs – getting them to have the confidence to*

*change jobs successfully is more important than having them in the same job long term. Many who come into the program exit knowing how to look for a job and conduct an interview. Clients need to have the ability and right to change jobs if they want to.*

When asked to define what they saw as “sustainable” employment outcomes, most were striving to find lasting and ongoing work for service users; others spoke of the capacity to sustain employment once support is withdrawn. Providers seemed to refer here to a kind of durable, internalised disposition that would enable service users to continually access a range of work opportunities across their lifespan. If a particular job terminates, service users are still able to connect up with a DEN service and stay engaged with the labour market. Also key to the perceived sustainability of outcomes was the ability to secure employment that the service users actually *wants*, and which is connected in some way with their overall career aspirations and goals (KRA #2). Providers argued that employment that is actually desired by service users would ultimately be more sustainable than employment that simply keeps the service users busy.

Key to achieving this outcome of sustainable work readiness is adherence to the individual planning process, which guides the activities of the TTW program:

- *Part of what makes the process work is allowing it to develop organically through the individual planning process, which is central to success of the program; you also need to use task management structures and ongoing assessments of abilities and performance, which are also essential;*
- *Part of the individual planning process should be undertaken before commencement of service; a person-centred transition plan should be produced that assesses the client’s vocational capacity and also takes into account their wants and desires;*
- *Skills development provided should be determined by the planning process and communication with clients;*
- *You definitely get into trouble if you don’t deliver transition plans on time, and end up placing clients prior to having created plans. This can create issues in terms of involving the family in the process; you need to have formalised plans in place in order to all be on the same page, it creates transparency;*
- *Meaningful work can be achieved through career planning. IPPs are a critical part of this and the primary instrument for achieving it. When there’s a change or problem, it’s the thing the service providers refer back to because it has everyone’s consent—the family, client and service provider—so it’s easy to come back to as the basis for a client’s needs;*
- *The program is about providing bridges – it’s really important to have the plans to get people into work gradually. One service user moved from working at an op-shop to working at [large chain store]. This*

- happened over the course of the program, but was a positive move in the direction of open employment;*
- *Our IPPs place goals down one axis and time down the other so participants and families can see the progress that has been made. This visual representation of progress works especially well for clients who feel they're not going anywhere;*
  - *The individual plans should be living documents, with goals to be achieved in a measured timeframe; they should always be evolving, changing, developing; the Department says review every 12 months, but that's too long [ . . . ] we review all plans every 3 months (12 weeks), and are constantly adapting and modifying activities accordingly.*

A 12-month individual plan with a 6-month review period seemed to be the most common planning model used by providers, but there was considerable variation in how plans are applied/reviewed. Indeed, one larger provider that employs a significant amount of group activities suggested that individualised services are not feasible:

- *Although they are generally called individual plans, it's often impossible to do individual plans with all participants. This is partly because participants undertake the program in groups. Also, the way the funding is structured means that often it is not possible to undertake individual program plans. There's not enough time.*

Most providers, however, saw individual planning as central to achieving effective outcomes.

Connecting clients with meaningful work experience opportunities that gave them a glimpse of working life beyond the program, as a sustainable way of life, was seen by many providers as an essential ingredient to program success:

- *When young people decide that they want to work, and can see that there is life and opportunities beyond the program, and that they can be independent, they become motivated to adapt to a job.*

Other factors service providers cited as important to successful job placement and the cultivation of durable competency via work experience, included: a supportive employer, who was willing to be flexible; supportive co-workers; and a placement worker willing to perform the necessary follow-up work, and keep an eye on how the job evolves over time.

Through its facilitation of the development of generic and vocational skills, and its provision of work experience opportunities, most providers attested to the capacity of the TTW program to cultivate and foster clients' awareness of and engagement with the labour market. Due to their specific situations of disadvantage, TTW service users need more support to achieve the skills that all individuals need to manage their careers. TTW was often seen to provide

service users with generic, vocational competency and labour market awareness and/or realism to facilitate their engagement with work.

#### 5.3.4 *The cultivation of life skills*

It was almost universally acknowledged by service providers attending the workshops that one of the key strengths of the program is its ability to offer participants the chance to develop skills that, whilst not necessarily directly related to a particular vocational outcome, will nonetheless be valuable in their pursuit of a working adult life.

It was reported, with dismay, that a large proportion of young people enter the TTW program without functional life skills. It is, therefore, sometimes necessary for the TTW program to focus on

- *getting clients to the point where they are able to function socially, behaviourally and communication-wise in a work situation.*

Some of these skills are practical, everyday life skills that have direct, tangible benefits for the individual that may extend to and beyond working life, and may refer to situations that occur around or because of a working life. These include:

- Punctuality
- Budgeting and money handling skills
- Food preparation skills, diet and nutrition
- Personal hygiene
- The ability to arrange their own transport (public or otherwise)
- Time management
- The ability to drive and obtain their drivers' license.

Others are multifaceted skills or areas of knowledge that have direct implications for the participant's vocational development, such as:

- Literacy
- Numeracy
- Job search skills
- How to dress and present oneself for work
- The expectations of employers
- The ability to follow directions
- Workplace behaviours
- Job specific skills.

The third category is comprised of a number of more abstract skills and areas of thinking and behaviour that have implications for the individual's sense of self and ability to function socially. They include:

- Maturity
- Consistency
- Communication skills
- Personal responsibility

- The ability to make choices
- Discipline
- Etiquette
- Self management
- Relationship management.

Having a two-year time frame was often cited as crucial to the gains that individual service users had made. However, some providers emphasised that a number of service users struggle with the transitional periods of the program – specifically the period when they move from school into the program and from the program into work or outside life. It was believed that these participants are only really able to focus on working on the development of their skills for twelve months, as for the first and last six months they are adjusting to the transition to and from the program.

A small number of providers asserted that the most valuable skills obtained by service users in the TTW program are social skills, as these are the skills that they are able to use in all facets of their lives. Most providers believe that the provision of life skills goes hand in hand with work skills: in other words, you need life skills in order to hold down a job. The greatest variation seems to exist in people’s views about the best ways and the order in which one should acquire life, learning and work skills.

### 5.3.5 *Securing satisfying and sustainable outcomes*

As with the service user workshops, there was some debate in the service provider workshops as to what constituted an ideal outcome of the TTW program (KRAs #1 and #2), in terms of securing employment that is satisfying and meaningful to the service user.

Many providers spoke of open employment as the ideal outcome towards which providers of TTW should aspire for all service users.

- *The focus should be on open employment; we don't necessarily see supported as a lesser outcome, but we try to focus on open. Sometimes it's not achievable, but we usually try to go for that anyway;*
- *We have a culture of open employment at [service provider]; 90% of our clients that complete the program go to open employment. Post-placement support is important to making it sustainable, though, as is doing crossover work with the DEN (up to 3 months);*
- *We need to network together, to get more open employment opportunities happening somehow, as opposed to supported employment.*

Although many service providers saw open employment—“real” jobs, not “made up” jobs, and therefore more “meaningful” jobs (KRA #2)—as the ideal outcome towards which service provision should aspire, open employment was also seen as posing the greatest risks in terms of long term sustainability (KRA # 4):

- *Sustaining jobs in open employment is the biggest challenge.*

Placing someone in an open employment role may be considered to be an achievement of KRA #1, but if the service user cannot maintain the job, then the achievement of KRA #4 will not be achieved.

It was suggested by some providers that even where a service user technically moves into open employment at the end of the program—or is placed with a DEN (classed as equivalent to “open employment” under the monitoring framework up until recently)—the outcome might still be uncertain or unsustainable.

Providers themselves suggested that sometimes the employment obtained is not adequate to be “satisfying”, “meaningful” or “sustainable”. It was claimed that jobs offered by employers through DEN providers are often extremely part-time or casual. Some providers suggested that in many cases it was possible to obtain a greater per hour-outcome for participants involved in Assisted Disability Employment. In these instances, supported rather than open employment might be seen as a more favourable outcome than open employment that may be too volatile to be sustainable.

Social isolation was seen as a potential issue for people in open employment, as often service users don’t possess the social skills to form informal support networks at work. If issues of social isolation aren’t addressed, service users placed in open employment can become disengaged, or even depressed, and their job can be placed in jeopardy. For this reason, some providers were continuing to work with service users well after they had exited the program, running out-of-hours social participation activities to increase service user’s social skills/networks in order to ensure the maintenance of good long-term program outcomes.

Some providers noted that they had generally had more success in placing service users with small employers, who were generally able to provide a more supportive environment. One provider quoted a placement figure of as high as 90% with small employers. Finding open employment opportunities was also highlighted as a particular challenge for providers working in regional and rural areas:

- *Rural areas are limited in the open employment you can offer; you have to work extra hard to break down stigma on disability.*

Providers often saw supported employment as the next best option for many service users, and argued against the view that supported employment is a lesser outcome in many instances:

- *You can’t weigh those outcomes against each other because they need to be considered individually in terms of what’s best for the client; you also need to take into account the particular nature of the family situation;*
- *Some clients are more likely to move into supported employment and even then getting the level of support clients need can be difficult;*

*sometimes family networks/employer flexibility are important to securing this;*

- *Most success in moving participants into supported employment occurs when the role is designed around the job seeker. It is often about tailoring jobs for individuals, and how willing employers are to do that.*

Some service providers place service users in their own business-services arm. Some providers saw this as a completely acceptable outcome for some service users. Others saw this outcome as less than desirable, as it tended to reinforce the idea that service users shouldn't be integrated with the mainstream community, but should be kept separate from it. A small number of providers also argued that there are potential risks for providers to pervert the spirit of TTW:

- *It makes it easier to attain outcomes when your organisation has business services attached. It would be possible in this context not to place the participants in open employment, but to dump them in business services and run.*

A small number of providers also argued that there are differences in the business services options available to men and women, claiming that typically they are located in male-dominated industries such as horticulture, packaging and recycling.

With regard to the achievement of key result areas #1, #2 and #4, then, the definition of what could be considered program success was seen as highly variable between service providers, as well as being dependent on the individual situation of the service users, as it should be.

Greater definition around the ideal outcomes of the program, differentiated according to the level of service user support needs, could be helpful in creating more consistency across the sector in terms of what is considered a "good" outcome, and what is meant by "sustainable" and "meaningful" work.

### *5.3.6 Overlapping delivery of TTW and CP Programs*

In those cases where providers offer both the TTW and the CP Program, the relationship between the two varies from provider to provider. In some organisations the programs are run alongside each other, with service users of each sharing facilities and undertaking some activities jointly. In some cases, however, as in the case of higher functioning TTW participants, service users wish to have nothing to do with the service provider's CP program. Other service providers very deliberately keep the programs separate by situating them at different locations.

Providers generally asserted that there is a need to include vocational foci as the primary component of the TTW program, but also conceded that particular facets of the program may overlap with some of the skills that participants learn in CP programs, such as social and communication skills, confidence and self-advocacy. Other providers considered that whilst the

skills might be universally applicable for all people with disabilities, they should be delivered in significantly different ways in each program.

Some providers who mix clients between their TTW and CP programs emphasised that this is done primarily to achieve cost efficiencies. Other service providers are suspicious of this model, seeing it as a way to build an ongoing revenue stream, as service users are inappropriately transferred from TTW into CP. Some expressed the view that stronger assessment measures need to be put in place when people are transferred from TTW to CP.

A further confounding issue, however, is that a significant number of providers reported that many parents see day programs such as CP as a more secure, reliable option for their son/daughter, partly because of the ongoing funding, but also because it is less challenging, both for the young person and for them as a carer. In programs where the TTW and CP programs are mixed, providers claim that parents often like to see that mix because the CP program seems like a reliable fallback option for their son/daughter, if they do not make the transition from TTW into employment.

Some providers considered that a significant proportion of service users fluctuate between the need for a vocationally oriented program and more recreationally based activities. However, other providers felt that the lines between the two programs can be blurred in practice, and that there needs to be both more clarity or communication on the differences between the two programs, and more structured and transparent pathways for movement between the two.

### *5.3.7 Program flexibility*

A general consensus emerged out of the provider workshops that the program delivery and outcomes would benefit from greater flexibility. The single funding stream and program structure for young people with such a broad range of developmental and learning needs was often singled out by providers as an area of potential weakness in the program's capacity to meet the needs of all service users.

It was suggested that in some cases it could take much longer than two years for young people to transition to work. It was also argued that having more flexibility about the duration of the program would make program outcomes more sustainable in the long term.

Other isolated suggestions to increase the flexibility of the program were that:

- The assessment process be modified to incorporate an assessment of the time required to prepare service users for work, and to structure and fund the program accordingly, with different levels of funding available for different tiers of need (similar to what happens with CP funding arrangements currently)

- Funding be re-assessed every 6 months and funding levels adjusted as service user needs change. It was also argued that there shouldn't be a blanket cap on number of hours a week, but that these should be allocated flexibly depending upon the level of service user need
- Build in provisions for ongoing support to minimise the risk of service users floundering after they have been placed in employment because their support network has disappeared.

The program was also seen to exclude a number of potential service users. By being restricted to recent school leavers who have completed Year 12, some service providers felt that the program was excluding:

- At-risk young people who exit the school system prior to Year 12, including a significant number of Indigenous, CALD and underprivileged youth
- Unemployed youth above school-leaving age
- Mature age unemployed.

However, it should be noted that the TTW guidelines make provision on a case-by-case basis for both early and late entry. It should also be noted that any changes to the eligibility criteria or to funding formulae are likely to require the allocation of additional resources.

The hours of paid work that clients can undertake and still maintain their eligibility for TTW (8 hours per week) was considered to be restrictive and there was pressure for this to be lifted.

Many service providers identified a lack of transport assistance as a major issue, particularly for those in rural and remote communities, and for Indigenous service users. It should be noted, however, that Section 18 of the Program guidelines outline circumstances where such assistance might be made available.

### *5.3.8 Program administration*

Some organisations enjoy strong relationships with the ADHC's regional office staff, while others reported that their contact was limited, was almost always initiated by them, and was usually query-driven. It was considered that at the early stages of becoming a TTW provider, closer contact would be helpful. While regular forums for Post School Program service providers are currently held by ADHC regional staff, forums to deal specifically with TTW program issues were recommended by some.

A number of providers were critical of the service provision or lack thereof offered by other providers and they advocated for stronger accountability measures. For example, some service providers felt that stronger mechanisms need to be put in place to ensure that the learning that takes place is work-focused and that intended employment outcomes are achieved.

Economies of scale were raised quite frequently, particularly in regard to the apparent expansion of service providers due to take place in 2010 (although this is taking place to lesser or greater extent by region). It is often the case that providers face issues of achieving a sufficient size to provide a quality service. Service user numbers remain low in an absolute sense in any region. It was felt by some service providers that ADHC has a responsibility to ensure that whilst service users have a choice of service provider, that the market is not flooded with too many service providers for too few service users. It was suggested that instead of pushing for greater choice in terms of service providers, that ADHC might work towards assessing the need for particular types of service provision in specific areas to ensure the ongoing viability of providers in thin markets.

One of the most common suggestions for change to the way the program is funded was a tiered funding system, similar to that which exists in the CP program. Once raised by a respondent at a workshop, the suggestion was supported by most of those present. It was suggested that funding for individual service users could be adjusted depending on the young person's support needs, with higher functioning service users receiving lower levels of funding and young people with higher support needs receiving higher funding. It was also suggested that this assessment could be undertaken when young people's functional capacity was being assessed.

It was generally felt that longer-term follow-up support for young people would be desirable. As is the case with all young people who exit school or further education and training, it was considered desirable to track the progress of service users after they exit the TTW program several years into their adult lives, in order to accurately capture whether young people are in fact achieving meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes.

The limitation imposed on service users of being able to work only a maximum of eight hours per week was an area nominated for change. Whilst providers understand the need for measures that ensure service users don't exploit TTW funding, it was felt that some young people are disadvantaged by this restriction. People also noted that holding down a part-time job while studying is a normal developmental experience, and one that contributes to the development of career skills.

#### *5.3.9 Relationships between TTW and DEN providers*

Relationships between DEN and TTW providers ranged from little to none, through to those who had strongly developed relationships through to those who integrated their DEN and TTW services.

- *TTW is a stepping-stone into a DEN.*

Service providers displayed differing opinions as to whether the movement to a DEN at the end of the TTW program should constitute a viable TTW outcome. Some providers argue that TTW is more about providing service users with the skills that they need to get into work, while others emphasise

that the goal of the TTW is to facilitate an employment outcome. It was emphasised quite strongly, mostly by smaller service providers, that it is almost impossible for them to achieve outcomes without the support of a DEN provider. Some providers spoke of the need to monitor the handover of service users from TTW to DEN providers. Sometimes sustaining employment requires more ongoing support, greater than a DEN can provide, and this can require ongoing liaison between the DEN and the TTW provider, often beyond the prescribed 3-month period. The provision of funding for TTW providers to work collaboratively with the DEN for up to a year after the termination of the program was put forward as a desirable option.

Finally, there are those who argue that in order to deliver an effective TTW service, the same organisation must also operate a DEN. All those organisations that are joint DEN and TTW providers are strong advocates of the synergistic benefits to both programs of operating a DEN and a TTW program within the same organisation.

#### *5.3.10 Economies of scale*

Many providers—particularly those servicing regional and rural communities—felt that the current number of providers operating in particular communities was not sustainable given the fluctuating and modest level of community demand for services. Competition between these providers for service users and for employment placements was seen to have a negative impact upon the ability of staff to focus on effective service provision and to meet the needs of service users:

- *As a provider, we need to increase our client numbers if we are to be sustainable as an organisation. We would then have more resources, and be able to employ more staff to provide services properly. We currently suffer from constant attrition of staff due to lack of funding, and new staff constantly need to be trained;*
- *A major issue for our region is the oversupply of TTW providers, which is having a very harmful effect on quality of services and treating persons with disability as commodities. The spirit of TTW appears to be going out the window with issues of competition;*
- *We feel that with only a few TTW clients we are unable to provide the level of support needed;*
- *The ebbs and flows of users doesn't always equate with staffing supply. We often have to keep reinventing our processes, and constantly advertising for staff.*

This is one of the main reasons why TTW services are combined—in many cases—with the provision of CP and other disability/employment services, to manage workloads and keep organisations commercially viable:

- *Service providers could not survive as stand alone TTW providers. They are dependent on other services to enable them to keep their staff. They only need one year where the flow of clients drops off and they can lose good staff;*

- *The various programs run by providers often have to cross-subsidise each other. Because the level of funding for TTW participants is low, providers have to combine services and get their staff doing group activities with clients;*
- *Smaller organisations often need to poach their TTW staff from the staff who undertake day programs. It is impossible for organisations to be stand-alone TTW providers – they would sink financially if this were the case.*

It was suggested that ADHC should take a more active role in managing the design of the TTW provider market, by looking at how many consultants there are in particular regions, how many service users they have on their books, and making judgements about the appropriate number and mix of providers. Threatening the viability of effective service providers (by dramatically expanding the number of providers in a region) in a thin market was not considered to be a desirable outcome.



## **6 STAKEHOLDER CONSULTATIONS**

The project method also allowed for specified stakeholder consultations. These consultations were envisaged as filling two main roles:

1. Orientation and introduction to the project, and to the key strategic issues facing the TTW program
2. Addressing any particular gaps that remained following completion of the literature review, workshop consultations, and case study visits.

### **6.1 Orientation and Introduction**

In regard to point one above, initial individual consultations took place with:

- Emily Caska, of National Disability Services
- Denise Beckwith, of People with Disability Australia
- Mary Shalhoub and Libby Brack, of ADHC, Metro South Region

Given the issues of confidentiality associated with such a small group, we do not report directly on the information arising from this process. However, we note that all of the information obtained in these consultations was broadly consistent with the information later arising in workshops, literature review, and case study research.

The team also consulted with John Gilroy of National Disability Services with regard to Indigenous issues in the TTW, both in terms of his perspective on our analysis of the outcome data, and Indigenous issues more broadly.

## 7 EVALUATION FINDINGS

This chapter outlines our findings against the Key Result Areas and the key evaluation questions, based on all research materials examined in this evaluation of TTW. As outlined earlier in this report, the primary data sources include:

- A literature review
- A series of case studies
- An analysis of the outcome data provided by ADHC
- The views of service providers, as gathered through a series of workshops
- The views of service users, their parents and/or carers gathered through a series of workshops, and
- Interviews with other key informants.

### 7.1 Program Implementation

*To what extent has the program been implemented as intended?*

As outlined earlier in this report, there is a very close correspondence between what the literature identifies as effective practice in career and transition initiatives for young people with disabilities, and the principles upon which the TTW program was built.

A number of key ingredients of successful transition strategies recur in the the literature, including the importance of:

- Individualised programs, planning and services
- Flexibility in service provision
- A focus on offering real work experience and work placements
- Instruction in life skills to support work skills, and
- Integrated support from a number of organisations/sectors.

Undoubtedly, the TTW program is a very well designed initiative.

It is also clear that the TTW program plays a vital role in supporting young people with a disability to transition into employment. The TTW program is creating bridges that assist young people to move from school to employment or in some cases further education. Without the support of TTW, young people, parents and service providers report that the transitions being made by young people would be unlikely to occur.

As is the case with many state-wide or national initiatives, there is some variation in the extent to which the implementation is in strict alignment with the program principles, i.e. the extent to which different service models:

- focus on employment outcomes
- provide training in a work environment
- are person-centred

- are responsive to changing work needs
- build effective partnerships between all stakeholders in the transition process (schools, parents, employers, etc.)
- focus on building independence
- are culturally competent
- are responsive to the needs of people living in rural and remote areas
- are delivered in partnership, and
- are cost effective.

### *7.1.1 A variety of service models*

As workshop participants described their services and visits were made to the case study sites, it was apparent that the service delivery models used by service providers of the TTW program differed considerably from organisation to organisation.

On the one hand, some providers operated strictly on a one-to-one basis, with a focus upon providing skills development through experience. On the other hand, some providers utilised more group and centre-based activities, with a greater emphasis upon classroom-style learning. In between these two ends of the continuum, many organisations employed a combination of these two approaches, blending one-to-one and group activities and experiential and academic-based delivery.

The evaluation was not designed to comprehensively document the variations in the way in which service providers structured and delivered the program. However, there are a number of areas where points of difference could be observed.

Most of the variation occurred in the seven or eight components of service delivery, which are illustrated in the table below. In each of these service delivery components, providers sat in different positions along a continuum, the extremities of which are also summarised in the following table.

**Table 19: Components of Service Model**

Program Delivery Components	Program Delivery Continuum	
		To
<i>Extent of individualised learning</i>	Group-based learning activities	Highly individualised learning activities
<i>Learning Location</i>	Classroom-based learning activities	Workplace learning activities
	Preparatory skills development prior to entering the workplace Unstructured program Integrated delivery for CP and TTW service users	Experiential learning on the job Highly structured program Separation of CP and TTW service users
<i>Nature of skills development</i>	Generic life skills Informal, non-accredited training	Vocational skills Nationally-recognised accredited training
<i>Labour market linkages</i>	Limited or no working relationships with employers	Strong working relationships with employers
	From Limited or no work experience opportunities Work experience in supported employment settings or "simulated" employment	Ongoing workplace exposure Work experience in open employment settings
<i>Orientation of service provider</i>	TTW conceptualised as a disability support program	TTW conceptualised as an employment program for people

		with disability
<i>Duration of program</i>	3 days per week  Service users encouraged to stay for full 2 years	4-5 days per week  Service users encouraged to exit as soon as they are work-ready
<i>Relationships with schools sector</i>	No or limited relationships  No promotional activities	Ongoing active relationships  Ongoing active promotional activities
<i>Approach to Aboriginal service users and those from other CALD groups</i>	No distinction made between service users	Active measures to accommodate cultural differences

### *7.1.2 Focus on employment outcomes*

The program guidelines, the program principles, and the selection criteria for service providers make it explicit that the program's primary goal is to prepare and move young people to open or supported employment at the end of their program or their course of study.

Given the centrality of this objective to the TTW program, there was greater variation than might be expected in the ways in which this was demonstrated, or considered important, by service providers.

We interviewed service providers who were absolutely committed to achieving employment outcomes for young people. Their service models were outwardly focused and structured to provide young people with work-based, experiential learning opportunities, in both supported and open employment settings.

However, some providers considered that their remit within TTW was to prepare young people for independent lives, which might incorporate employment, but were not directly required to deliver service users up to employers. They considered that their responsibilities were met when a service user was ready to make the transition to a DEN service.

A small number of service providers, including some services that appeared less well equipped to facilitate work placements, were of the view that the expectation of an employment outcome was excessively prescriptive and potentially at odds with their organisational philosophy.

Overwhelmingly, the service users and parents who were most dissatisfied reported that they had been promised work-based learning that would lead to employment outcomes, but that this promise had not been delivered as a result of their TTW program.

### *7.1.3 Provision of training in a work environment*

The opportunity to learn and gain experience in a workplace is one of the elements of effective transition programs identified in the literature, and it is considered to be a crucial element of the TTW program by providers, service users and families alike.

The extent to which work placements were made available and the extent to which they were used actively for situated learning varied between service providers. Being able to offer work-based training for service users requires a specialist skill set and a set of relationships with employers that not all service providers possess in equal measure. Those service providers who were experienced DEN providers, or those providers who operated supported employment enterprises, seemed to experience less difficulties with offering training in a workplace environment.

While it is undoubtedly the case that in some situations it is difficult to secure work experience placements that enable training to take place in actual workplaces, it is also the case that where TTW provider staff understood the local labour market, were confident and proactive in approaching employers, and were able to tailor 'jobs' to suit the young person, young people had much greater exposure to carefully constructed work experiences.

From the perspective of service users and parents, a lack of work experience opportunities seemed to consistently equate with the delivery of an unsatisfactory service and outcome.

#### *7.1.4 Person centred services*

All service providers espoused the importance of person-centred, highly individualised service provision. The ways in which such services were delivered varied considerably, however, with service models ranging from seemingly unsustainable programs that offered 1:1 support as required for each service user's unique program, through to service providers that catered for the individual learning needs of service users primarily through classroom and work setting-based group activities.

Whilst the philosophy of person-centred service provision was broadly supported, the commitment, capability and capacity of organisations to deliver personalised services varied according to their location and the number of service users accessing their services, which in turn impacted upon staff/service user ratios.

The development of an individual transition plan for each service user was the most commonly used mechanism to give effect to this important principle of the TTW program.

#### *7.1.5 Services that are responsive to changing work needs*

Satisfied parents spoke highly of the responsiveness of service providers to their son/daughter's developmental needs. The primary mechanism for responding to the changing work needs of service users was, once again, through the transition planning process, and, to a lesser extent, through the design and redesign of work experience placements.

Providers spoke of the constantly changing preferences, rather than needs, of their service users, most often within the context of suggesting that to be truly responsive to the needs of service users, the current two years plus extension period did not allow sufficient time to respond to all service users. On the other hand, other providers were of the view that the program needed to be as sharp and short as possible, so that young people did not inadvertently acquire the baggage and difficulties associated with those who fall into the category of the long-term unemployed.

There was also wide variance in the extent to which service users were encouraged to actually transition to work if they were considered work-ready before the completion of their 2-year entitlement. Some providers had a

clearly structured program that young people proceeded through in a time-sequenced way, while others had a more variable menu of options and activities to accommodate the differential learning trajectories of individuals.

#### *7.1.6 Services that build independence*

Many young people and parents who attended workshops spoke of the importance of cultivating foundational life skills that aren't always specifically taught or cultivated at home or in schools. Independent living skills that were nominated as important included: travel training, money management and budgeting, time management, personal hygiene and presentation skills, and self-care activities such as shopping, cooking and exercise.

In some cases, however, these skills were being taught regardless of whether they were identified as part of the service user's work readiness needs analysis. It was reported that some service users had already received life skills training at school and this aspect of their TTW program was redundant.

Building the independence of young people accessing their service was definitely an objective espoused by all service providers consulted, but one that was given effect in quite different ways. Some had a careful, sequential, almost lock-step approach; others sought early wins to gain the trust of parents, by demonstrating to them the newfound independence of their young person.

Perhaps the greatest difference observed was between those providers who had a traditional educational approach that focused on the development of skills and knowledge in a classroom, usually in a group setting, before they were applied in a workplace setting. Other providers believed strongly in the value of developing independence through experience, and the skills associated with independent living were developed in the context of the workplace – i.e. young people were supported to learn on the job. These providers were of the view that confidence and independence can only be built through real and actual achievements.

The researchers observed that providers new to the provision of career development/labour market services tended to allocate more time, and attached greater importance to, the development of generic life skills. The integration of CP and TTW courses also appeared to be associated with a great focus on "life skills" as opposed to vocational preparation. Providers that were experienced in the provision of vocational education and training and employment placement services tended to dovetail the development of life skills with the development of vocational competency in actual or simulated workplaces. The latter approach was generally seen to be more commensurate with the achievement of Key Result Area # 1 ("Young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study").

### *7.1.7 Culturally competent service provision*

Once again, there was self-reported variation in the capacity of service providers to cater for cultural differences. Most considered that their person-centred approaches adequately catered for service users from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds. On the other hand, those who expressed concerns about the under representation of Indigenous youth attributed it to poor school retention rates, or their own inability to create effective connections with Aboriginal communities. It was not uncommon to hear that service providers had plans to engage an Indigenous worker.

On the other hand, the outcomes data did not provide any reason to be concerned about notions of cultural competence or culturally appropriate performance. Outcomes for both CALD and ATSI service users are in line with the broader TTW population, and there is no particular evidence that service to CALD or ATSI service users is any better or worse than that extended to all service users.

Indeed, many providers noted that ATSI and CALD service users value being treated the same as everyone else. However, observations gained from the service user workshops suggested that there were generally some communication issues relating to the way in which transition teachers and service providers represented the program to parents and families and the way in which this representation was understood by service users. In the case of the few CALD families who attended the workshops, it seems as though these communication issues were exacerbated, and that agreement or shared understanding as to the purpose of the program was not always reached.

### *7.1.8 Addressing barriers to the participation of young Aboriginal people and those from CALD backgrounds.*

Most service providers considered that they lived within diverse, multicultural communities, and that any issues of cultural difference could be addressed through the transition planning process that was individualised and included both the young person and their parents.

Many did express concerns about the confidence and capacity to meaningfully connect with Indigenous communities in order to secure their trust and engagement with TTW. To address perceived barriers to the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island youth, a number of strategies were posited, including:

- Creating better linkages between Aboriginal Education Officers and transition teachers in the schooling section and TTW providers
- Becoming embedded in local Indigenous Communities by participating in ongoing, rather than sporadic, ways

- Employing Indigenous staff to create inroads into Aboriginal communities and to enhance cultural awareness within TTW service agencies
- Ensuring that young people at risk of dropping out of school are identified and directed to TTW service providers, who invest in becoming part of the network of alternative education and training service providers that cater to at-risk youth.

#### *7.1.9 Responsiveness to rural and remote areas*

There are limited choices of service providers in some regional and remote areas. However, there are also concerns that the recent expansion of the number of service providers may have the unintended consequence of threatening the viability of existing service providers, many of whom are currently producing good outcomes for service users. While service providers are clearly responsible for the commercial decision to offer (or not offer) TTW services, thin markets in regional and remote areas are a cause for concern. With the increased number of service providers in 2010, it is important that the impact on all service providers be closely monitored.

Aside from the generic difficulties associated with the availability of transport, the other primary issues in regional and remote areas relate to the difficulty of finding both placements and jobs, given the narrower occupational and industry base, and the prevalence of micro businesses. In some locations, unsurprisingly, finding appropriately skilled staff was also an issue of concern.

The outcome data also demonstrated that there are minor variations in outcomes between metro and regional areas. Specifically, regional areas have 2% more exits to "unknown", 4% more exits to CP, and 5% less outcomes to employment.

#### *7.1.10 Delivered in partnership*

A design feature of TTW was its requirement that tripartite relationships be established between the service user, the parent/carer, and the provider. Providers unanimously confirmed the importance of engaging parents, although in some instances the issue of parental engagement was seen as an area of particular concern and difficulty for effective program delivery.

The literature also confirmed the importance of processes and frameworks that put young people at the centre, and foster family involvement that supports their transition and work goals. Where the process of transitioning from school to the TTW program had been carefully and sensitively managed, and service users and their parents had been kept well informed throughout the transition process (including the assessment process), the likelihood of better outcomes appeared to increase.

However, the issue of engagement with parents is complex and differing philosophies and perspectives were voiced on how best to manage this issue.

Some services struggle with issues of overprotective parents, and focus on building the young person's own 'voice' or independence. Others struggle with issues of managing unrealistically high parental expectations, and assisting parents through what was described as a 'grieving process' as they come to an accurate understanding of the restricted range of workplace options that are available to their son/daughter.

The extent to which providers are able to incorporate effective parental engagement strategies into their program delivery is a critical factor of success, and also, of service user/parent satisfaction.

#### *7.1.11 Individual transition planning*

The importance of individual transition planning to young people's career development is a recurrent theme in the literature covering the needs of all young people, as well as young people with disability. Indeed, individual transition planning is one of the elements of the career and transition framework for all young people endorsed in the mid-nineties by the Ministerial Council on Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, and this framework has closely shaped career and transition services in NSW schools.

Individual Transition Plans were examined during site visits, and were a prominent organising feature of most TTW services. Once again, there was wide variation in the extent to which the plans informed the developmental career and transition needs of each young person, and the extent to which they were designed to fit or were shaped by the 'tried and tested' service provision model of the provider.

The skill set required to assist young people to develop ITPs that contain career goals that are realistic, effective, and job-oriented was not an evident strength in all cases. This, however, is not an issue confined to the TTW program. It has widely been reported over the last decade in Australia that many schools do not have sufficient qualified career and transition staff who can help young people to plan and manage a pathway that leads them to enjoyable and sustainable work. The guidelines, however, could be strengthened to ensure that where such expertise does not exist within the organisation, providers are encouraged to source it from elsewhere.

#### *7.1.12 Cost effective services*

It was broadly recognised that TTW is relatively well funded when compared with government-funded programs for people with disabilities across the board. Provider organisations, however, demonstrated some concern regarding the current TTW administration and funding mechanisms in regard to cost effectiveness.

First, the way in which service users were assessed for TTW was perceived to be imprecise, despite ongoing efforts to improve the assessment tool. Many service users who undertook the program were considered by providers to be unsuitable candidates, unable to achieve an outcome, and likely to be

transferred into CP. Some saw this as a distinct waste of program funds. 25% of all service users currently taken into TTW do exit to CP.

Secondly, certain program inflexibilities, such as

- its fixed duration
- the inability for service users to access TTW services in a flexible and timely manner
- the restrictions on the number of hours that service users can spend in paid employment
- uncertainty about which program outcomes were valued

meant that in some cases providers perceived that optimal value could not be realised from the use of TTW funding. However, these arguments have a number of key weaknesses. Fixed duration programs, for example, are essential for timely management of staff costs, which is in turn the key driver of TTW costs. Equally, a number of other participants argued that the finite, time-driven nature of TTW was an essential component of creating the expectation that TTW is a pathway to an employment outcome.

It was difficult, even from the case studies undertaken, to obtain a clear picture of the administration of TTW funds within service provider organisations. Many TTW staff were not aware of the finer details of the funding mechanisms, nor were many staff aware of their own organisation's approaches to financial management.

There appeared within many organisations to be a financial logic to mixing their TTW and CP programs, which facilitated a number of cost-saving measures. However, as these cost efficiencies are premised on basically delivering the same services to TTW and CP service users, this approach may not always be in the best interest of TTW service users.

A key positive aspect of program funding structure cited by providers was the retention or block funding which enabled organisations to retain the annual funding allocation of service users who exited the program early. This gave providers a level of financial security that enabled them to plan their operational and staffing requirements with some degree of certainty. This in turn was seen to feed back into a more secure organisational culture that enabled the provision of more consistent and cost-effective services, due to a minimising of staff turnover and training costs.

Some organisations reported that they were running TTW at a loss, which is obviously an internal decision some provider organisations make as part of their community service philosophy and charter. Given the generous funding provided by ADHC, however, this does raise questions about such provider's approach to financial management. However, service users may be adversely affected where cutting the operating hours of the program offsets such losses.

#### *7.1.13 Consistency of service provision*

The program guidelines for the TTW program clearly need to allow sufficient flexibility for service providers to respond to the differing needs and capabilities of service users, and the geographical and labour market context in which their programs operate.

As detailed in Chapter 3 of this report, the principles that underpin the design of the TTW program align very closely with the features of best practice transition programs for young people with disability and it is important that the implementation of the program reflects these principles to the greatest extent possible.

The variations in service provision seem to arise as much from differing interpretations of the requirements of the program, beliefs about the legitimate place of employment in the lives of the people with disability, and the knowledge and skills of providers, as they do from responsiveness to individual need. A number of the recommendations of this report are designed, therefore, to strengthen service consistency across NSW.

#### *7.1.14 The quality of data*

Issues related to the data quality and the descriptors used in its collection are discussed in Chapter 4.

#### *7.1.15 Managing the market*

Many providers—particularly those servicing regional and rural communities—felt that the current number of providers operating in particular communities was not sustainable given the modest level of community demand for services. Competition between these providers for service users and for employers was seen to have a negative impact upon the ability of staff to focus on effective service provision, and fears about the impact on service user numbers for 2010 were evident.

This is one of the main reasons why TTW services are combined—in many cases—with the provision of CP and other services, to manage workloads and keep organisations commercially viable.

Several providers were of the view that ADHC should take a more interventionist role in designing and managing the provider market, to ensure the survival of effective service providers in years or locations where service user numbers were likely to be low. Such a role might include:

- Greater “protection” and support of established quality providers
- An increased effort to either remove, or actively manage and improve the performance of, the less successful providers
- Greater consideration of allocating TTW tenders in the context of the “market size”, or service user population, in any given region.

### 7.1.16 Unmet need

Young people who disengage from schooling before Year 12 are currently only captured on a by exception basis. This was of concern, particularly in the case of young Indigenous people with a disability.

There was discussion about whether young people who nominate an interest in the program and are assessed as being more appropriately serviced through the CP program, constitute a potential market of unmet demand. However, on the other hand, given that approximately a quarter of all TTW service users exit to CP at present, the notion that even more people currently going to CP should actually be admitted to TTW is highly contentious.

If an individual's motivation to work is one of the factors influencing the likelihood of achieving this outcome, it may be an entry criterion that should be appropriately weighted.

## 7.2 The Achievement of Results

*To what extent has the program been successful in getting results for young people with a disability across the Key Result Areas?*

There is a near-unanimous perception amongst service providers, service users and parents attending the workshops, that without the TTW program, the employment prospects for TTW service users would be extremely limited. There is also acknowledgment from those who had experience of the prior ATLAS program, that the separation of post-school options into two distinct streams (CP and TTW) has increased the chances of young people obtaining employment outcomes.

However, the issue of ongoing overlap and confusion between TTW and CP in practice has the consequence, in many cases, of potentially diluting the ability of the program to deliver on the Key Result Areas. This is underlined by what some service providers see as an assessment process that doesn't always accurately distinguish between TTW- and CP-suited service users, coupled with providers whose skill set is not oriented towards vocational preparation and placement. The result being that many service users are transitioned to CP rather than employment. As has been cited several times already in this report, the fact that approximately one quarter of service users exit TTW to CP rather than employment is an issue of some concern, and raises questions regarding the program's ability to deliver on its specified goals.

There is therefore a need to provide a clearer programmatic distinction between TTW and CP, and also to provide clearer guidelines on processes for transitioning between TTW and CP, to minimise the possibility of the programs becoming confused in practice.

### *7.2.1 Movement to open or supported employment*

The data shows that almost half (49%) of TTW users exited to employment; a quarter were transferred to CP; just under one fifth of participants have unknown destinations; and 4% exited to education or training.

While there are inherent challenges in assessing if a 49% transfer to employment rate is a greater level than would be achieved without TTW, the authors would argue that on the balance of available evidence, it should be assumed that TTW participants are achieving employment outcomes at a materially higher rate than they would be if TTW did not exist. ADHC is also of this perspective, based in part on their experience of managing service user outcomes in the days prior to the TTW's existence.

### *7.2.2 Finding satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals.*

It is difficult to meaningfully assess the extent to which this essentially subjectively defined goal is being achieved.

First, for many young people and their parents, it is the ability to find work that provides "meaning and satisfaction". Work is, in itself, a satisfying and meaningful outcome for a great many TTW serviced users, who might otherwise be denied the opportunity to participate in the workplace. But it would seem that for many service users and their families, and providers, the descriptors "satisfying and meaningful" relate to obtaining work that is in keeping with the young person's goals and aspirations, and is not merely busywork or drudgery. Many parents spoke disparagingly of the "packing warehouse" option, and perceived it as tokenistic and not "real" or "meaningful" employment. However, in contrast, it was apparent that many young people greatly value employment in roles that may not generally be viewed as meaningful, such as roles involving repetitious physical labour, for reasons of social and community inclusion, and from the inherent value of workforce participation.

To the extent that providers are employing effective individualised career planning, this key result area appears to be being met in a significant number of cases. However, it is not possible to measure in an objective way the extent to which this result area is being met.

### *7.2.3 Developing skills and qualifications to transition to sustainable employment*

As with service delivery models, there is great variation in the ways providers seek to cultivate employment-related skills and competencies in their service users.

Some providers nurture and preference personal management or life skills development in their curriculum. Others focus more strongly on generic work-readiness or employability skills, often developed in classroom settings. Those with a strong employment outcome focus more upon providing training that is essential to undertaking the tasks of particular job/work placement,

both in supported and open employment settings, including their own organisational workplace.

There is also considerable variation in whether service users who undertake courses in work-readiness or employability skills have the opportunity to have those skills assessed and recognised by a Registered Training Organisation.

However, almost half of all people completing TTW are exiting to employment. Almost 50% of participants, at least, have successfully developed the skills and qualifications for a transition to employment. However, it is not known to what extent they have the skills and qualifications required for "*sustainable*" employment.

There is no agreed definition of what constitutes "sustainable" employment, although for most consulted it had something to do with the "substance" of the job itself, or the ability for the job to be maintained over a significant period of time. For some, it had more to do with the ability not to hold down a *particular* job, but to be able to successfully negotiate the labour market more generally after support had been withdrawn. "Sustainable employability" may be a better way to characterise this aspect of good program outcomes.

#### *7.2.4 Sustaining work and training commitments*

While staff of some TTW services maintain contact with young people who have exited the program, there is no requirement for service providers to 'track' the post-service destinations of their service users. Any knowledge of the sustainability of their work or training commitments comes through informal contact, often through young people's ongoing involvement with recreational or social activities provided by the organisation.

There is no systematic way, therefore, to measure whether the program has equipped young people to sustain their work and training commitments. Many parents, however, reported their satisfaction with their son/daughter's ongoing commitment to their job.

We would highlight that the Commonwealth Department of Department of Education, Employment, and Workplace Relations keeps extensive outcome tracking data of relevance, as generated through the DEN network, including outcomes at 4 weeks, at 13 weeks, and at 26 weeks. It might be possible for ADHC to work with DEEWR to track the outcomes of TTW service users who transfer to a DEN using the existing DEN measurement system. This would allow assessment of the sustainability of post-TTW service user outcomes for the cohort of TTW service users that exit to a DEN service.

More broadly, if ADHC requires measurement of the long-term outcomes, a longitudinal data capture program will need to be created and implemented. Such programs need not be overly expensive, and can easily be achieved by a well-designed periodic telephone survey system.

### 7.2.5 Comparable job outcomes for Aboriginal and CALD youth

In short, the available evidence suggests that the TTW program is broadly achieving quality outcomes against KRA # 5.

While there are possibly some minor issues with the apparent under-representation of Indigenous youth, it is by no means certain that this is through any fault of the TTW program. It may simply reflect the fact that Aboriginal young people are dropping out of school before Year 12 at above average rates, and are therefore not likely to come through the TTW program.

Aside from the issues of proportional representation, ATSI and CALD young people are achieving outcomes *comparable* to the rest of the TTW program.

The outcome data reports that 51 (4.42%) of the service users with recorded employment and training outcomes were identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Island service users. This success rate of ATSI participants (50%) compares favourably with the success rate of the program as a whole (48.74%).

Taking in to account the inherent imprecision in measuring CALD status, the data would appear to support the notion that CALD service users are achieving outcomes *comparable* to outcomes for other service user groups.

### 7.2.6 Critical success factors in achieving an employment placement

Informants to this evaluation nominated a number of critical success factors, including the following factors that were most commonly tabled:

- Young people need extensive exposure to diverse workplace settings in order to expand their occupational horizons; to gain vocational experience; and to further develop vocational skills and aptitudes
- Providers need strong, professional links with employer networks in order to design work experience placements and to locate and/or create ongoing work roles. In some situations this can be achieved through partnering with a DEN provider. However, TTW staff will still require a strong awareness of the contemporary labour market and the needs of employers
- Employers need deep confidence in the capacity of the service provider to provide appropriate support to the employer, the young person and their colleagues
- A strong, balanced and inclusive relationship needs to exist between the young person, their parents/carers, and the service provider in order to achieve the goal of finding and keeping a job
- Partnership and close integration with a DEN has a *positive* impact on achieving employment outcomes

- Partnership and close integration with a CP program has a *negative* impact on achieving employment outcomes.

It was less commonly suggested that it was critical to have the skills to redesign and create jobs to fit the skills and dispositions of a young person seeking employment. The literature, however, stresses the importance of designing the job for the individual, rather than squeezing them into an existing vacancy. A small number of service providers do actively follow a “job design” approach, but this was a less common approach.

### **7.3 Areas for Improvement**

*How can the Program be improved to better meet the needs of the target group, within the available resources?*

Service users, their parents and service providers put forward a number of suggestions concerning ways in which the program could be improved. These have been taken into account in forming the recommendations that are contained in the following chapter.

## **8 RECOMMENDATIONS**

This chapter provides endorsements and recommendations for change that respond to the findings of the evaluation and specifically the research question:

*How can the program be improved to better meet the needs of the target group, within the available resources?*

### **8.1 Recognition, Celebration and Maintenance of the TTW program**

The transition from the "institutional learning" phase of an individual's development (whether or not they have a disability) to the "working life" phase represents a major milestone in the life pathway of an individual.

The difference for people with disabilities is that the systems, structures and processes that have been developed to enable that transition to work to happen smoothly for the "average" individual are not necessarily available, and in some cases, not appropriate for young people with disabilities.

The TTW program provides a much-needed opportunity for young people with disabilities to develop and apply work readiness skills in a supported environment that recognises their specific needs.

The block funding arrangements provide a valued level of certainty for service providers.

The program is achieving outcomes that often exceed the expectations of many people, particularly service users, families and employers, and even in those cases where young people or their parents were dissatisfied with the services received, they were in no doubt about the need for the program.

In principle, the TTW program provides an effective mechanism for young people with disabilities to move from the protective world of school to the productive adult world of work.

#### **Recommendation 1:**

*It is recommended that the strengths and achievements of the TTW program be recognised, celebrated, widely promoted and maintained.*

### **8.2 Tighter Specification of Desired Outcomes**

While Key Result Areas of the TTW program have been determined, some of the KRAs are difficult to define with exactitude. For example, it is difficult to determine what constitutes satisfying and meaningful work, or what constitutes sustainable employment. Greater definition around the ideal outcomes of the program, in terms of what is considered a "good" outcome, and what is meant by "sustainable" and "meaningful" work, could be helpful in creating more consistency across the sector. These areas of "greyness" result in individual service providers, service providers and their families

sometimes having differing perspectives on what constitutes a successful outcome.

ADHC has already tightened definitions and data categories since the program's inception. Further refinement or specification of what constitutes a sustainable employment outcome (for example, in terms of the number of hours worked; the rates of pay; and what constitutes satisfying and meaningful work; etc), would be a further important step towards eliminating any potential areas of ambiguity in terms of the expectations ADHC has of service providers and what outcomes service users and their parents might reasonably expect.

**Recommendation 2:**

*It is recommended that the required outcomes (and related definitions) of the TTW program are further clarified to ensure that ambiguities in defined outcomes are eliminated.*

**8.3 The Quality of Data**

Our analysis of existing data sets has shown that the current systems of data collection and monitoring could be further improved to enable a more systematic analysis and evaluation of the program's achievements. It is recommended that the current monitoring and data collection systems be reviewed and that periodic audits be conducted to assure the quality of the data being provided by service providers.

As part of this review, consideration should be given to the capacity of the existing system to generate meaningful data on the sustainability of employment outcomes. As is the case with all young people who exit school or further education and training, it is desirable to track the progress of service users after they exit the TTW program several years into their adult lives, in order to accurately represent whether TTW service users are in fact achieving meaningful and sustainable employment outcomes.

**Recommendation 3:**

*It is recommended that the current monitoring and data collection systems be continuously reviewed and that periodic audits be conducted to assure the quality of the data being provided by service providers. It is further recommended that these activities be brought together to create an effective TTW Management Information System (MIS) as part of an overall ADHC MIS.*

**8.4 A Strengthened Focus on Vocational Preparation and Evidence-Based Practice**

The principles and service guidelines developed by ADHC for TTW strongly correlate with the principal elements of best practice identified in the literature relating to effective transition systems for all young people, including those with disability.

However, our research has shown that there is considerable diversity among service providers and service users/families in their conceptualisation and understanding of what the TTW program is (and isn't). The vocational orientation of service providers and their sense of connectedness to the labour market were inconsistent, and for some providers, achieving employment outcomes is not as central an objective, and as central a measure of service quality, as it should be in an employment-driven program.

The views of service providers could be placed along a continuum that at one end comprises those who clearly see the TTW program as a transition to employment program for a particular service user group - young people with disability. Those at the other end of the continuum conceptualise the program, first and foremost as a 'disability' program, the outcomes of which may or may not include transition to employment.

We believe this distinction is significant, and one that has a profound effect on the expectations of all concerned, on the way the program is staffed and delivered, and on the outcomes it achieves. It is a particularly noticeable distinguishing feature of service providers, whose practices and ideologies place them at varying intervals along the service continuum marked by these ends.

Most significantly, we believe that those organisations with a strong vocational orientation are better placed to achieve outcomes in line with the objectives of the TTW program. These organisations generally have more productive relationships with employers, employ staff with job placement expertise, focus to a greater extent on work-based training and experience (and do so often from the commencement of the service user's program), focus on skills development directly related to work skills, and the development of these skills within real or simulated work environments. They tend to be more business-oriented in their approach, which is reflected, in part, in the systems and processes they implement to run their own businesses. They also tend to focus on the achievement of sustainable employment outcomes for all of their service users as the primary measure of their success. They recognise the significant role they are playing in the career and transition pathways of the young people they serve.

On the other hand, those organisations at the other end of the spectrum tend to be less well connected with employers, deliver a higher level of classroom-based training, conduct frequent social activities, employ staff with disability-support backgrounds (and often limited labour market and job placement experience), place a particularly strong emphasis on "life skills", intermingle TTW services extensively with CP services, and begin work experience well into the program (often commencing in the second year), if at all. These organisations tend to regard a broader range of outcomes, including improved confidence, increased social engagement, mere attendance, etc, as valid measures of success, and tend to downplay vocational outcomes as a relevant success measure.

It is evident that many young people with disabilities complete their schooling without developing the social and life skills that are required to achieve sustainable work outcomes, and most providers deliver training and support to enhance the skills of service users in these areas. However, our feedback from service users, families and service providers has led to the conclusion that some providers focus excessively on the development of personal management competencies, and also seem to lack expertise and experience in facilitating labour market transitions for young people.

We recognise that the notion of a "one size fits all" approach to the TTW program is not reflective of the diversity of human nature and the diversity of needs of individual TTW service users. However, we also believe that it is equally true that in some cases the service delivery models that were described or which we have observed reflect a lack of awareness, experience and/or competency on the part of the service provider to facilitate effective labour market transitions for their service users.

**Recommendation 4:**

*It is recommended that ADHC review its TTW communication strategy to further strengthen the message that the primary purpose of the TTW program is to achieve employment outcomes for young people with disabilities. It should not be acceptable for those accepting TTW funding to argue against the proposition that the primary purpose of TTW is to facilitate the transition of young people from school to sustainable employment.*

**Recommendation 5:**

*It is recommended that the TTW program encourage, nurture and assist service providers adopt service delivery models that strongly reflect the evidence-based best practice principles that informed the design of the program.*

**Recommendation 6:**

*It is recommended that the TTW program is conceptualised, not only within a disability framework, but within a career and transition framework. The program makes an important contribution to the State's broader Career and Transition Strategy. This should form part of the ongoing discussions between ADHC and the Department of Education and Training, with its responsibility for implementation in NSW of the National Partnership on Youth Attainment and Transitions.*

## **8.5 The Selection and Professional Development of TTW Providers**

As with most programs, a key factor in the significantly different outcomes achieved by different service providers relates to the internal capacity of the provider, particularly in relation to the skills of program staff members in the areas of program/business management, career development and job

placement. Other factors relate to the capacity of the organisation overall to deliver a well-managed, quality service.

We recommend that the following factors have a significant place in the criteria for any future assessment of TTW service provider status:

- The experience level and professional qualifications of TTW program staff in the areas of program management, career development, work placement, human resource management, and disability support in an employment context
- The capacity of, and the methodologies used by, the organisation to develop and maintain effective relationships with employers
- The organisation's conceptual approach to the TTW program (i.e. that its concept of the program is primarily a work-related versus disability-related program)
- Its proven track record (where appropriate) of successfully placing people with disabilities in meaningful, sustained employment
- Its ability to generate and take advantage of economies of scale.

**Recommendation 7:**

*It is recommended that the process of approving service providers include a weighting of selection criteria that reflect the need for appropriately skilled staff and an organisational culture that has a strong focus on achieving employment outcomes for young people with disability.*

**Recommendation 8:**

*It is recommended that any ADHC-sponsored professional development activities for 2010 focus strongly on building the labour market capacity of service providers, and their awareness of evidence based practice in transition to employment programs for persons with disability, in order to assist service users to secure and maintain work.*

**8.6 Publishing Outcomes/Results**

The outcomes currently being achieved by service users of the TTW program vary across service providers. While ADHC publishes outcome data for each service provider on the ADHC website, not all young people and their parents are aware that this facility exists, and many find it quite difficult to draw meaningful conclusions from the data in its current form.

There is a need for information that demonstrates clearly and simply and in a user-friendly manner, the baseline performance of TTW provision as a whole, alongside the individual achievements of specific service providers. This information should be added to each individual provider section in the current ADHC publication. This would:

5. give young people and their parents/families a clear yardstick to use in deciding on an appropriate service provider
6. provide renewed focus on the achievement of tangible outcomes rather than on process and methodology
7. make the system and those delivering the program more accountable
8. encourage providers to improve their outcomes as part of their promotional strategy for service users and their parents.

**Recommendation 9:**

*It is recommended that the outcomes achieved from the TTW program by service provider be highlighted and published in a "TTW Scorecard" for each service provider in the current ADHC publication "Transition to Work Information Books – Choosing a Service Provider". This scorecard must be simple, concise, and accessible to users. It is also recommended that this more accessible presentation of outcomes data be adapted for use on the ADHC website.*

**8.7 Design and Management of the Market**

It is apparent that in some regions, the number of approved providers exceeds the number of providers that can be sustained by the number of service users anticipated (in 2010) to require services in that region.

Furthermore, our analysis of the profiles of TTW service providers and the diverse models of delivery of the program adopted by them, matched (where possible) to the outcomes they achieve, has shown that a key success factor relates to the economies of scale of the organisation. A number of service providers are operating with a very small number of service users. This:

- limits the ability of service providers to utilise staff and other resources effectively for activities that could be conducted with reasonably large staff/service user ratios
- limits the ability of the organisation to undertake activities like employer relationship management, marketing, staff development, process improvement, etc
- increases the likelihood of overlap with CP-style activities
- means that the staff supporting service users are at best part-time, or at worse, that there are no dedicated TTW staff resources and service users, and
- can mean that service users enrolled in TTW are undertaking a restricted vocational preparation program.

It is our view that ADHC should develop and implement appropriate procedures for ensuring that the volume of approved service providers in any

area remains in proportion to the likely number of TTW service users in that area. Increasing “competition” is not likely to be of benefit *in those regions where providers are already demonstrating above average outcomes*. Nor is increasing competition likely to be of benefit when it results in oversupply of providers for a given region.

We recommend that ADHC give due consideration to implementing minimum size standards for service providers. While some exceptions may exist in regional areas and certain unique service providers, overall, very small service providers are not in the best interest of service users. We would suggest that after appropriate analysis of the underlying factors driving economies of scale, ADHC implement minimum service size guidelines. These standards should be implemented in such a way as to *considerably* reduce the number of small providers currently existing. Equally, in ongoing tender and funding arrangements, ADHC process should recognise that larger providers have considerable advantages, in terms of service user service standards and outcomes, and in terms of sustainability, over smaller providers. While this may prove difficult to achieve in some regional areas, and may be seen to reduce competition among service providers, we believe the benefits of this approach far outweigh any putative costs.

**Recommendation 10:**

*It is recommended that the number of service providers delivering the TTW program be reviewed to ensure that each provider has the capacity and economy of scale to deliver an effective program. This would necessarily lead to a considerable rationalisation of the number of existing service providers.*

**8.8 Separate CP and TTW Services**

Some providers that offer joint activities for TTW and CP service users emphasised that this is done primarily to achieve cost efficiencies. The integration of CP activities and TTW activities often occurs for logistical and structural reasons, for reasons of economy, and for reasons of convenience.

However, the integration of CP services and TTW services is often a source of distress to service users and parents alike and, it would seem, is not conducive to the implementation of best practice service delivery principles, or to the achievement of employment outcomes.

Providers that had clearly separated their delivery of CP and TTW programs also reported marked improvements in TTW outcomes, post-separation.

**Recommendation 11:**

*It is recommended that, to the greatest extent possible, TTW and CP programs should be operated and delivered as completely separate services, as the overlap of these services has a clear negative impact upon the ability to achieve an employment outcome as a result of TTW. We do note, however, that some exceptions may have to be made in marginal rural or regional areas.*

### **Recommendation 12:**

*It is recommended that, in the assessment of tender and funding applications, preference should be given to organisations whose TTW and CP activities are clearly distinguishable in terms of the nature of the activities, the sites at which they are delivered, and the service users who participate in them.*

### **8.9 More Active Performance Management**

It is the case that a small number of providers are not achieving expected performance standards in the form of employment outcomes for service users. It is our view that any substantially underperforming organisation should be required to improve its performance or ADHC give consideration to future contract renewal.

It is also the case that many providers indicated a preference for more proactive involvement of ADHC in its oversight of the TTW program. Many providers would welcome more extensive induction as a new service provider, as well as the provision of ongoing advice and professional development. However, they are aware that such improvements may not be able to be achieved within "available resources".

We suggest that ADHC should consider developing and implementing strengthened measures to ensure that

- Organisations are fully inducted into the requirements of being a TTW provider
- Underperforming organisations are promptly identified
- Underperforming organisations are required to rapidly implement appropriate remedial measures under a closely scrutinised performance improvement plan that takes into account relevant, contextual conditions. If no discernible improvements are achieved, their contracts should be terminated.

### **Recommendation 13:**

*It is recommended that induction, performance monitoring and remedial action processes for TTW service providers are materially strengthened.*

### **8.10 The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy**

The National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy makes a number of commitments related to improving access to education and training and career and transition arrangements for young people with disability. Specifically it suggests that to make the transition from school to employment as smooth as possible, eligible school leavers who directly register with a Disability Employment Service provider will be exempt from the Job Capacity Assessment process. This measure is designed to provide certainty for people with disability, their parents and carers and allows

providers to make solid commitments to early intervention partnerships with schools.

**Recommendation 14:**

*It is recommended that ADHC pursue their discussions with the Commonwealth to consider the full implications of initiatives associated with the National Mental Health and Disability Employment Strategy and to make any necessary adjustments to the post school programs policy framework.*

**8.11 The Professional Relationships Needed by TTW Providers**

One of the hallmarks of successful service provision seems very much to reside in the ability of service providers to create and maintain positive, open, interactive and effective relationships with service users and their families, with schools, with employers and with other education, training and labour market intermediaries.

However, it was apparent that the nature of these professional relationships varied in quality, intensity and utility.

**Recommendation 15:**

*It is recommended that organisations that are contracted to offer TTW services ensure that staff working on the TTW program are aware of the importance of, and equipped with the skills to develop and maintain, effective working relationships with:*

- *Service users and their families*
- *Schools*
- *Employers, and*
- *Other education, training and labour market intermediaries.*

**8.12 Funding Arrangements**

The model of having a single funding and program structure for a service user market with such a broad range of developmental and learning needs was often singled out by providers as a key challenge to the program's capacity to be flexible and meet the needs of service users.

A differentiated or tiered system of TTW funding—and corresponding flexible time-periods—was seen by some providers as a potential solution to the diversity of developmental needs presented by TTW service users.

It was suggested that funding for individual service users could be adjusted depending on the young person's support needs, with higher functioning service users receiving lower levels of funding and young people with higher support needs receiving higher funding. It was also suggested that this assessment could be undertaken when the young person's functional capacity was being assessed.

However, the validity, viability, and potential costs and benefits of this approach has not undergone sufficient investigation to warrant a conclusion

on the value, or potential lack thereof, of any such approach. Accordingly, this subject remains a matter for further investigation.

**Recommendation 16:**

*It is recommended that ADHC investigate the feasibility, and benefits of, funding TTW service users on the basis of their individual needs and the level of support required to prepare them for labour market entry.*

**8.13 Strengthened Understanding of the Assessment Process (Strengthened Communication Processes)**

Despite ongoing communication by ADHC on the nature of the assessment process, some parents and service providers reported that they lacked a full understanding of the assessment process and/or instrument.

As mentioned earlier in this report, examining the assessment process is beyond the scope of this evaluation, and to the best of our understanding the validity of the assessment process is not under question. However, it is worth noting that many parents and some staff of service providers do not fully understand the assessment process, and in particular, the grounds for making the distinction between TTW and CP.

**Recommendation 17:**

*It is recommended that ADHC consider all available avenues to ensure parents and service users are fully informed about the nature of the assessment process.*

**8.14 Restrictions on Paid Work Activities of TTW Service Users**

The limitation imposed on service users of being able to work a maximum of only eight hours per week is another area of the program's guidelines that was frequently singled out as a hindrance to good practice. Whilst measures need to be in place to ensure that TTW funding is not exploited, it was felt that some service users are disadvantaged by this restriction. It is a barrier both to developing employability outcomes and a barrier to the normal social and developmental experience of holding down a part time job whilst undergoing further studies.

**Recommendation 18:**

*It is recommended that the impact of the eight-hour paid work restriction be re-assessed and a more current and realistic upper limit be applied (if indeed an upper limit is required at all).*

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## APPENDIX 1: KEY EVALUATION QUESTIONS

1. To what extent has the program been implemented as intended – in particular:
  - Is the planning and delivery of support funded under the program in line with the stated program principles (focused on employment; provides training in a work environment; person centred; responsive to changing work needs; building independence; culturally competent; responsive to the needs of people living in rural and remote areas; delivered in partnership; cost effective)?
  - Describe what transition to work service delivery currently looks like, covering an examination of current administration needs, budget requirements and cost drivers; and what other assistance would maximise service user satisfaction with the Program.
  - Is the delivery of services consistent with the key requirements of the program (young people: move to employment; develop work related skills and qualifications; sustain their work and training commitments; and young Aboriginal people and people from diverse backgrounds have fair access and achieve equivalent results)?
  - What are the key contextual factors influencing the implementation of the program? What are the barriers to known outcomes in the Program, and what improvements could be made to data capture to achieve Statewide consistency?
2. To what extent has the program been successful in getting results for young people with a disability across the Key Result Areas?
  - Which young people in what contexts have been successfully assisted into employment (considering age, gender, location of services, cultural background, type of disability, and level of need)?
  - What are the critical success factors for achieving an employment placement?
  - What are the barriers or service gaps that limit the achievement of an employment placement?
  - What needs remain unmet?
  - How satisfied are young people with the assistance they receive from the Program?

- What barriers, if any, prevent the participation of young Aboriginal people and people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background from gaining access to the Program?
3. How can the Program be improved to better meet the needs of the target group within the available resources:
- Is the design of the program appropriate/does it match the identified needs of school leavers with a disability?
  - What are the different models for interventions and is there a difference in their success?
  - Have there been changes in service delivery since the introduction of Transition to Work to replace the Adult Training Learning and Support (ATLAS) Program?
  - How might barriers to the participation of young Aboriginal people and people from a culturally and linguistically diverse background be addressed?

## **APPENDIX 2: THE LITERATURE REVIEW**

In order to compile this review of best-practice literature we consulted a variety of sources, including academic literature, government reports on transition-related programs and studies, and publications by a range of international disability and human rights related organisations. The majority of the available best-practice literature comes from the United States, with some emerging from the United Kingdom and Australia. Nonetheless, it describes and recommends transition programs and principles that are universally applicable.

In collecting literature, we focussed on a number of specific criteria for inclusion. There was a focus on literature that deals specifically with the needs of people with disabilities. A range of literature also exists on catering for the needs of people with mental health problems, and although there is some overlap in thinking on the provision of services for both groups, we focused our literature review on physical and intellectual disability, as opposed to the provision of services to individuals who are suffering from mental illness. There was also a focus on the transition from school to work.

Other literature was available that tackled transitions from school to further (usually tertiary) education or from tertiary education to work, but was excluded as only school-to-work literature was referred to. There was also a focus on qualitative data, and primarily on literature that focuses on best practice by making generalised recommendations for transition programs. A number of studies referred to specific testing and offered quantitative data based on those specific results of those research projects. Whilst the quality and usefulness of this data is not questioned, for the purposes of this literature review it is not relevant to assemble disparate quantitative data that cannot be easily compiled and assimilated into recommendations for best practice in the field.

### **Defining Transition**

Although the overall definition of transition is uniformly agreed upon in the literature, there are a number of variations in the way in which the term may be used, or in the way in which it is thought about and supported through practice. Transition generally refers to “a change in status from behaving primarily as a service user to assuming emergent adult roles in the community” (deFur, Todd-Allen & Getzel 2001, p. 4), or more specifically as “the life changes, adjustments, and cumulative experiences that occur in the lives of young adults as they move from school environments to independent living and work environments.” (Wehman, 2006, p. 4). According to Rusch et. al. transition refers to “a coordinated set of activities that is focused on improving the academic and functional achievement of a student to facilitate his or her movement from school to post-school activities.” (2009, p. 54). In a paper entitled ‘The Transition of Youth With Disabilities to Adult Life’,

Halpern identifies a number of outcome dimensions of the transition process, including vocational pursuits, postsecondary education, relationships with others, and participation in the community (1994).

Transition may also encompass concepts that complement work or education. According to Wehman's definition, some of the primary topics or themes of transition include "changes in self-awareness, body, sexuality, work and financial needs, and the need for independence in travel and mobility." (2006, p. 4) In his paper prepared for an OECD workshop on pathways for students with disabilities to tertiary education and employment, Cocks refers to transition as existing in addition to the pursuit of employment, to "further education (not only tertiary, but also technical and other forms of adult education), work experience, apprenticeships, traineeships, living situations, relationships, leisure and recreation, and so on." (2007, p. 3) As such this definition extends into adult life, and refers to transition as a "*life-span* concept" (p. 3).

In addition to the various ways in which transition can be defined, there are a number of surrounding philosophies on what transition encompasses and how it should occur. An OECD report from 2003 made a recommendation that all people with disabilities should be entitled to an individualised "participation package" that is adapted to their specific needs and may contain "rehabilitation and vocational training, job search support, work elements from a wide range of forms of employment (regular, part-time, subsidised, sheltered) and benefits in cash or in kind." (OECD 2003 p. 11) It was also emphasised that such programs "contain activities that are not strictly considered as work, but contribute to the social integration" of the individual (p. 11). Halpern asserts that transition planning should begin no later than age 14, and should encourage the transitioning individual to assume maximum responsibility to the full extent of their abilities for their own planning (1994).

According to Macali, effective transitions should: empower individuals by building or maintaining their employment capacity; provide active support; establish a balance between central regulation and individual or local flexibility; and stimulate networks and co-operation (2005). In their book *Transition Methods for Youth with Disabilities*, Test, Aspel & Everson add student-informed choice making, student-directed transition planning, and student discovery of the skills needed for post-school environments to this list (2006). The elements of effective transition programs are developed further in this literature review, but the elements identified here form the basis for much thinking on effective transitions and help to frame transition as a concept.

## **Barriers to Participation**

Several transition theorists focus their discussion on the challenges faced by youth with disabilities and the ways in which they form barriers to effective participation in the transition process.

According to Wehman, Brooke and West in their study on vocational placements and careers, the barriers to employment competence can be broken into four distinct categories: societal, programmatic, attitudinal and physical (2006). Wehman has also identified a number of challenges affecting youth with disabilities, which can be placed into these categories. These include: violence & violent behaviour both institutionally and in the community, access to alcohol and other drugs, continual poverty and chronic unemployment, and peer pressure amongst others. Some of the issues that young people face include the search for employment, living arrangements and community participation, getting around in the community, financial independence, making friends, sexuality and self-esteem, and having fun (Wehman 2006).

In terms of actually obtaining employment, Wehman identified the reluctance of employers to hire people with disabilities as a major barrier. This reluctance is linked to concerns about the costs associated with hiring, additional supervision, loss of productivity, not being able to terminate employment, and concerns about incompetence. Some employers also feel reluctance around the ways in which the type and severity of a disability may affect inclusion in workforce. This is because they feel that in hiring people with a disability they may be sacrificing work performance for reliability and dependability, and there may be concerns surrounding the potential of some people with disabilities, based on myths or misconceptions.

Young people with disabilities may not always enjoy the freedoms to which they are entitled. Wehman identified a number of key issues or needs for young people with disabilities. These include the need for choice concerning employment, living arrangements & recreation; control over their situation and the ability to exert self-determination; career development opportunities in a variety of situations; full community inclusion in formal and informal business and social relationships; and long-term ongoing support from employers, service providers and the wider community (2006).

### **Assessment & Planning**

Before individuals actually start participating in a transition to work program, the most commonly identified preparatory step as identified by the literature is vocational assessment, which in Australia, would more commonly be referred to as a career assessment. A paper by the US National Information Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities recommended that "if it is available, comprehensive, formal vocational assessment should begin approximately one year prior to placement in vocational education (National Information Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities 1990, p. 5). In addition, eight topics for vocational assessments were identified. These include:

- Interests
- Aptitudes (abilities and capabilities)
- Temperaments (Worker Style Preference)
- Learning preferences and styles
- Developmental background (background information)
- Worker characteristics
- Vocational/occupational skills
- Functional/life skills

In their article 'Preparing Students With Disabilities for School-to-Work Transition and Postschool Life', Levinson and Palmer view the assessment process from a more practical, day-to-day perspective, recommending that assessments should address the participant's abilities in the following areas, with both strengths and weaknesses to be identified:

- Academic skills
- Daily living skills
- Personal and social skills
- Occupational and vocational skills
- Career maturity
- Vocational interests, and
- Vocational aptitudes (Levinson & Palmer 2005, p. 12)

Vocational assessment can help both young people with disabilities, their parents, and service providers to think strategically about the young person's vocational future, and to make decisions that are based upon their interests, abilities, and potential (National Information Centre for Children and Youth with Disabilities 1990, p. 11).

Levinson and Palmer recommend that the assessment process needs to be comprehensive and trans-disciplinary, and emphasise that it should also integrate the input of a number of school and community agency personnel such as "teachers, counsellors, and psychologists – as well as representatives from community mental health/mental retardation, vocational rehabilitation, and social services agencies" (2005, p. 12) working together in an attempt to develop appropriate services that appropriately cater to the transition needs of each individual participant. "Parents, state agencies, employers, business organisations, and students must also be involved in the vocational assessment to some extent" (Levinson & Palmer 2005, p. 12).

### **Parental Involvement**

The involvement of parents in their children's transition process is universally encouraged in all academic and governmental literature reviewed. According to Grigal and Neubert, parental involvement in the transition process "is perhaps the most significant factor in the transition outcomes for students from youth into adulthood" (2004). Family involvement has been recognised as essential in ensuring desired transition outcomes for students with disabilities (Landmark, Zhang & Montoya 2007, p. 68).

In addition to the challenges faced by their children, parents from culturally and linguistically diverse cultures also face barriers when becoming involved in their children's transition. Landmark, Zhang and Montoya (2007) identify these barriers as:

- limited minority leadership representation in schools
- a lack of knowledge about special education and transition
- anxiety due to previous negative interactions with educational professionals, and
- language barriers (p. 69)

### **Individualised Transitions**

One of the strongest themes to come from the literature review was the need for individualised services that cater to the specific needs, skills and interests of each service user.

#### *Involving Participants in Planning and Development*

There is a very strong recommendation that the individuals whose transitions and vocational futures are being planned should be involved to the fullest extent in the planning and development of their transition process.

Lehman et. al. suggest that one of the keys to "planning and implementing individualised transition support is to empower youth to determine their futures by providing the types of information and support that match the strengths, needs, and life circumstances of each youth" (2002, p. 135). A study by Shaddock et al suggests that the most effective preparation for working life emphasises learning frameworks that are student-directed, and "strategies that give students some control over educational curriculum and decisions" (2004, p.15). This study also promotes the benefits of integrated education, training and work and the capacity to adapt these to the needs of the individual in an effort to engage the participant in life-long learning.

Developing the literacy of participants through the transition planning process is also advocated as an effective strategy. When students are equipped with the skills and terminology needed to participate in transition planning meetings, and are provided with the opportunity to become meaningfully involved in educational planning, they actively participate in and may even direct their own development (Martin et al. 2007, p. 15).

Cobb and Alwel also support student-focused planning, as it appears to hold the promise of delivering "important outcomes for students (or their parents) who are shaping their skills to participate in their own planning for their future after school" (Cobb & Alwel 2009, p. 77). Woolsey and Katz-Leavy take this a step further, by recommending the incorporation of "youth voices into the development and implementation of program services and policies" (Woolsey & Katz-Leavy 2008, p. 17).

#### *Individual Transition Planning*

The importance of individual transition plans is emphasised in most 'best-practice' literature on school to work transitions. In many instances individual transition plans (and individual employment plans) are seen as the basis from which an individualised transition program operates. Transition planning is primarily about identifying goals and the steps necessary to achieve them. In terms of education and training planning, "service providers should help students identify and access appropriate postsecondary education options. This includes not only taking steps to ensure students are academically prepared, but also helping to facilitate the admissions process and identifying necessary supports." (Chambers, Rabren & Dunn 2009, p. 51)

However, transition need not only refer to educational outcomes. Finn and Kohler define a well-executed, transition plan as capable of preparing students for their adult lives and having the potential to significantly "improve the post-school outcomes for students with disabilities" (2009, p. 18).

Wehman identifies a number of goals for individual transition plans and individual employment plans. These are:

- Learning about self
- Developing statements of future goals
- Negotiating with others to develop objectives and activities to meet these goals
- Identifying the outcomes desired and expected by students and their families, and
- Identifying the services and supports desired and needed to achieve outcomes (2006).

The importance of individual transition and employment plans, and individualised service provision is one of the key themes that emerged in the literature, and certainly continues as a dominant aspect of this literature review in the later section "0 Goal Setting", which covers elements of effective transition programs in general.

The literature also stresses the importance of individualised service provision. Lewis and Robertson (2008) list individualised support, matching of jobs to people and making the effort to know the whole person as key employment service strategies which benefit people with disabilities. Cobb and Alwell mention "the need for flexibility in creating and providing individualised supports to youth with disabilities, rather than simply fitting them into existing service continuum options" (2009, p. 79). Woolsey & Katz-Leavy advise the development of a "process that identifies individual strengths or 'gifts' as the stepping stone to the development of education, career, and life goals, and the gateway to discovery and hope", as well as recommending programs that "individualise exposure to the world of work and to incorporate activities that meet youth and young adults 'where they're at'" (2008, p. 17).

Schwartz, Holbun and Jacobson identify the hallmarks of person-centred planning:

- Activities, services and supports are based on dreams, interests, preferences, strengths and capacities
- People important to the service user are included in lifestyle planning and have the opportunity to exercise control and make informed decisions
- The service user has meaningful choices with decisions based on their experiences
- The service user uses, when possible, natural and community supports
- Activities, supports and services foster skills to achieve personal relationships, community inclusion, dignity and respect
- The service user's opportunities and experiences are maximised and flexibility is enhanced within existing regulatory and funding constraints
- Planning is collaborative and recurring and involves an ongoing commitment to the service user, and
- The service user is satisfied with their relationships, home and daily routine (2000, p. 238).

Everson and Reid (1999) similarly offer guidelines for developing person-centred, individualised education programs. The first step is in identifying members of the service user's personal network. With support from members of each student's network, personal profiles are created, and a map of each student's goals is then drawn up. These maps provide a way for participants and their families to articulate their goals and needs. Discussion of goals is encouraged both within and across family and social networks. It is also important to identify transition outcome areas in connection to each student's goals, and to identify what programs, places, experiences, services, and supports are in place to support them, as well as what gaps exist and what supports the participant wants and needs in order to fulfil future dreams. Once this has been achieved, the individual transition or employment plan can be developed, with a view to ensuring that their articulated strategies will move the participant toward their desired goals, and that mastery of these goals will assist the student in leading a more community-inclusive adult life.

### **Community Support**

As Cocks (2007) asserts, the availability of social support mechanisms can help to alleviate the stress that results from the adjustments that people with disabilities are forced to make during the transition from school to work. Cocks also recommends the involvement of family and friends in career planning activities, job development and employment support.

Shaddock et al mirror this perspective. They assert that "[t]he fact that, even within areas of high unemployment there are labour shortages in specific industries, suggests that 'one size fits all' policies are unlikely to be

successful." This leads them to the conclusion that "irrespective of national trends and employment patterns, those involved in assisting young people for the transition to post school life should actively network with their local communities in order to assist them to take advantage of local employment opportunities." (2004, p. 8)

### **Elements of Effective Transition Programs**

A significant proportion of the literature reviewed makes recommendations as to what effective transition programs should do and how they are characterised. Much of this writing touches on similar themes, and there is significant overlap between perspectives, but because their foci are disparate, and in order to accurately represent the specific focus of each piece of research, these studies are represented separately.

Roessler, Hennessey and Rumrill (2007) identify five key points around which transition programs should be based. These are information, research, services and curriculum, the development of self-advocacy and self-determination, and the involvement of key stakeholders.

Woolsey and Katz-Leavy also identify a number of employment-related activities that are important in transitioning participants into meaningful employment. These include identifying and building on the participant's strengths and interests; exposing them to a number of jobs and career paths; teaching the participants about career goal planning, which can be supported by designing step-by-step processes to get them to these goals, and; providing opportunities for temporary work experiences that provide immediate income to those clients who are ready. (2008, p. 17)

Lewis and Robertson identify a number of employment service strategies that benefit people with disabilities. These are:

- Maintaining a focus on employment
- Maintaining a focus on integration
- Knowing the whole person
- Making consumer (employer) interests pre-eminent
- Matching jobs to people
- Building partnerships
- Providing individualised support
- Providing flexible support
- Using natural supports in the workplace
- Applying powerful training techniques
- Displaying persistence and commitment
- Instilling great expectations in consumers (employers), and
- Celebrating success. (2008, p. 6)

Benz characterises the most successful transition programs as including learning in work environments, relating classroom education to real life experiences, linking educational activities with related programs and services, and connecting students and their families to necessary community

resources and supports (Benz 2001, p. 1). In addition, Benz also identifies some features of effective transition programs. These are:

- Longitudinal Planning
- Emphasising Careers, Not Labels
- Work-Based Learning
- Connection to Community Resources
- Sustained Involvement of Employers. (2001)

Wehman also makes a number of recommendations for transition programs in general. These are ensuring continuous quality improvement for processes, products offered by service providers and service provision itself; the use of assistive technology and ensuring access to this technology for the purposes of communication and mobility, and optimising the intellectual and physical capabilities of participants; and person-centred planning that builds support groups around individuals to better enable them to reach their goals (Wehman 2006).

Luecking and Wittenbeger identify the characteristics of a flexible Youth Transition Demonstration project, as implemented by the US National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition, as:

- Individualised work-based experiences
- Youth empowerment
- Family supports
- System linkages between coursework and work-based experiences, and between a network of ancillary and post-secondary services
- Social and health services
- Work incentive waivers, and
- Benefits counselling (Luecking & Wittenbeger 2009, p. 245).

The US National Information Center for Children and Youth with Disabilities advise that in planning for employment, youth with disabilities may require any of the following:

- Assessment that identifies current strengths, needs, interests, and preferences for post-school employment, independent living, and postsecondary training and/or education
- Development of job and job placement options and awareness of skills needed
- Matching of student and job
- School and work-based training and preparation, and
- Job placement and follow-up support (1999, p. 9-11).

The US National Alliance for Secondary Education and Transition has developed a list of areas of intervention that are important in promoting desirable school-to-work transition outcomes. These are:

- Support in receiving academic instruction and curriculum that targets academic achievement

- Career preparatory experiences, including vocational training and work experiences
- Youth development and youth leadership, especially as it relates to self-determined transition planning
- Family involvement that supports youth transition and work goals, and
- Connecting activities, that is, those activities that enable youth to be linked with organisations and services that complement their transition services and/or provide necessary post-secondary supports (Luecking & Wittenburger 2009, p. 243-244).

Shaddock et al identify the keys to effective transitions for people with disabilities as:

- Central support in terms of both policy and funding
- Person-centred individual transition plans, with regular reviews of the ITP system, training of teachers and a flexible approach
- Appropriate school curricula
- Appropriate adult services including vocational training
- Linking students to post-school options prior to leaving school
- Ongoing professional development
- Community development, and
- Interagency co-operation (Shaddock, Kilham, Spinks & Williams 2004, p. 14).

Mithaug (1994) focuses on equity in transitions for youth with disabilities, and proposes a number of criteria for guiding the development of school-to-work transition programs, and in particular school-to-work apprenticeships, that are both equitable and excellent. These are:

- Access to school-to-work apprenticeships for all youth 16 years and older, regardless of the conditions of their disability or whether they have goals for tertiary education
- Transitions (and apprenticeships) that are individualised according to the needs, interests, and abilities of each student
- Instructional content in school-to-work apprenticeships that prepare all students to meet the generic problem solving demands of college or work.
- A combination of classroom, community, and work environments that enable participants to become mature, responsible, and motivated.
- Guaranteed Benefits. Successful completion of school-to-work transitions should lead to:
  1. recognised and accepted credentials authorising entry into career opportunities or postsecondary education programs;
  2. placement or acceptance in postsecondary vocational and educational programs;
  3. placement in competitive or supported employment; or
  4. participation in continuing and adult education, adult services, and independent living in community settings.

Benz (2001) identifies a number of strategies employed by disability service practitioners in the development of school-to-work transition services for youth with disabilities:

- Partnerships with schools
- Clearly defined roles for all individuals and organisations
- Fostering communications between all partners
- The expertise of transition specialists
- Development of student self-determination
- Setting goals for long-term outcomes
- Setting high standards for service delivery, and the
- Development of social and interpersonal skills.

Lewis, Drenen and Tarzia's (2000) study identifies effective training strategies for VET students with disabilities. These are:

- Lecturer support
- Relevant work experience
- Individualised training and assessment
- Peer support
- Appropriate training equipment
- Employment agency support
- Self-motivation and self-sufficiency
- Appropriate course selection, and
- Parental support (p. 21).

Lewis et al also included success elements as reported by service providers, including:

- Flexible training
- Integrated & holistic approach to training
- Flexible curriculum
- Develop the person's social and personal competencies
- Goal setting & career planning
- Flexible assessment
- Linking a student to other training or employment
- Work-based learning/work experience
- Mentoring students throughout training, and
- Advocating for the student (p. 22).

In addition, they suggested strategies that were reported by graduates, which were:

- Access to relevant work during training
- Ongoing guidance with courses & careers
- Job search skills training
- Information about employment agencies
- Access to technology
- Individualised training
- Access to job search officers at TAFE, and

- Marketing people with disabilities (p. 22).

Luecking and Certo's (2003) study of the processes of integrating service systems during transition led them to focus in particular on the Transition Service Integration Model. The features of this model are:

- An organised class, completely community based, of 8-10 youth with severe and/or multiple disabilities who are in their last year of school
- Employment in integrated settings where they are hired directly by the employer
- Non-work activities in integrated, community settings
- Individualised schedules and individual choice of employment options
- Adult agency employment specialists working in conjunction with school personnel
- Blended funding resources of the school system, state vocational rehabilitation services, and state developmental disabilities agency, and
- An outcome of paid work with post-school support in place *before* school exit.

In addition, a number of other characteristics of functional, effective and successful transition programs were also identified across a range of literature.

#### *Active Programs*

The OECD's 2003 report entitled *Transforming Disability into Ability: Policies to Promote Work and Income Security for Disabled People* made a recommendation that disability programs should be designed as active programs:

*Often disability benefit systems function as early retirement programmes, providing a route for quasi-permanent exit from the labour market. Emphasising activation and the mutual obligations of both society and the disabled person moves disability policy closer to the underlying logic of unemployment programmes, which expect an active contribution and effort from beneficiaries. Unreformed disability programmes are likely to attract applicants who may find it difficult to comply with the stricter obligations of unemployment schemes. There is a need for a consistent strategy in disability and unemployment policy that extends the culture of mutual obligations to all labour market programmes (OECD 2003, p. 12).*

#### *Holistic Approaches*

Wehman identified a need for instruction both in life skills, as well as in more formalised academic skills. "Students' need for instruction in functional, life skills has not disappeared just because of the new focus on academics." As a result it was recognised that "[t]he best way to address these two priorities for instruction may be to find ways to incorporate the two where possible.

Academic skills will often be learned more readily when they relate to real life activities" (Wehman 2006, p. 20).

### *Career Development*

In their article 'Preparing students with disabilities for school-to-work transition and postschool life', Levinson and Palmer assert the benefits of a career development focus in transitions:

*Knowledge of career development theory goes hand-in-hand with transition planning because career development theory provides stakeholders with a timeline to gauge where a child is developmentally in relation to typical students: helps professionals interpret assessment data by knowing what should and should not be expected of a child at a certain age; and helps guard against setting unrealistic expectations for students (2005, p.14).*

### *The Role of Technology*

The internet and other forms of technology "have the potential to act as equalisers for people with disabilities by empowering and enabling them to communicate and engage with other aspects of society" (Wehman 2006, p. 21). Information technology has also been identified by Lewis, Drenen and Tarzia (2000), and by the US Division of Career Development and Transition (2009) as an important tool in enabling transitioning youth to develop skills.

### *Skills Development*

Test et. al. (2009) identify a range of skills that transition programs often focus on. Although not all participants in transition programs will require development in all of these areas, they give an indication of some of the skill sets which transition programs may be able to help students to develop.

Life skills was one area identified, as were a number of other skills that might fit into the grouping of life skills. These include purchasing skills, banking skills, the ability to complete a job application, and employment skills using community-based instruction. It was also identified that these skills could be learned using either computer-based instruction, community-based instruction, or through self-management. In addition to these, a number of specific purchasing skills were also identified, including restaurant purchasing skills, purchasing using the "one more than" strategy and grocery shopping skills. Another identified area was domestic skills, which included cooking skills, food preparation skills, leisure skills and home maintenance skills. Employment-focused skills included functional maths skills, functional reading skills, job-specific employment skills, safety skills and job-related social communication skills. Finally, the self-improvement skills identified included self-advocacy skills, self-determination skills, self-management for employment skills, and social skills (Test et. al. 2009).

A number of key ingredients of successful transition strategies recur in the

works described above, and in the literature more generally. They include:

- Individualised programs, planning and services
- Flexibility in service provision
- A focus on offering real work experience and work placements
- Instruction in life skills to support work skills, and
- Integrated support from a number of organisations/sectors.

### **Collaboration Between Organisations**

Inter-organisational collaboration was a consistent theme in the literature that describes best practice. It is generally felt that the support offered by schools, disability service providers, employment agencies, government departments and other sections of the community needs to be harnessed in unison in order for individuals to be given the best opportunity both to be an active agent and to succeed in their school to work transition.

Beyer (2008) asserts that “[t]he sharing of information on the needs of people with learning disabilities between agencies needs to be more effective post-school” (p.11). He insists that a single transition plan that carries through into post-school activities is the best way to achieve this because it unites disparate organisations through a single focus. A report by the Australian Human Rights Commission also asserted that “[s]tructural linkages need to be created between post-secondary and tertiary education or Commonwealth employment programs and other supports for people with disability, particularly with respect to Commonwealth and State joint planning responsibilities under the Commonwealth State and Territory Disability Agreement” (2005, p. 13). Woolsey and Katz also believe that the best results for young people with disabilities looking to transition from high school into work environments can be achieved when organisations “[i]nvest the time and resources required to build partnerships across relevant services and systems in the community” (2008, p. 17).

### **Goal Setting**

Wehman suggests “[s]etting goals is a critical and inherent aspect of the transition process. Essentially, transition planning is planning for the future, and, in order to plan for the future, one must have some sense of what goals do or do not make sense (2006, p. 10). He goes on to identify a number of key goals that may be appropriate for youth in transition. These are personal responsibility, self-determination and self-advocacy, social competence, vocational competence and postsecondary education (p.10). Levinson and Palmer maintain that the most important goals for youth in transition “are to gain an understanding of themselves and their abilities, interests, and values; gain an understanding of the world of work; and acquire effective decision-making skills” (2005, p. 13). Alwell and Cobb also mention social and communication skills as representing “critical student development skills in a transition-focussed education” (2009, p. 95), and state that “[c]ommunicative competence is critical for youth with disabilities because it is fundamental to most activities in human lives” (p. 95). They focus on

communication goals as the primary key to “promoting the acquisition, performance, and generalisation of pro-social behaviours; reducing the incidence of problem behaviours and enhancing interpersonal relationships with peers and adults, and thus ultimately improving transition outcomes and overall quality of life for youth with disabilities” (p. 105).

In their study on goal setting for people with intellectual disabilities, Copeland and Hughes assert that instructing young people with disabilities can be broken down into five stages. These are:

- a) select an appropriate behaviour to target
- b) set a desired level of performance for that behaviour
- c) develop a plan to meet the performance standard
- d) monitor performance by evaluating it in relation to the preset standard, and
- e) adapt behaviour if needed, to accomplish the goal (2002, p. 40).

### **Building Self-Efficacy, Self-Advocacy and Self-Esteem**

The development of a positive self-concept by young people with a disability was a common element of much of the best-practice literature, and an element of the transition process that is supported and endorsed wholly. As Hergenrather et al state, “[p]ersons with positive perception of self-efficacy are likely to engage in activities that facilitate the development of new competencies; whereas persons with low levels of self-efficacy are likely to create self-limiting avoidance behaviours that create obstacles that block opportunity for new experiences” (2008, p. 34). They add that “[a]mong persons with disabilities, level of self-efficacy correlates with one’s ability to perform job-seeking skills leading to successful job-seeking behaviour” (p. 35).

The results of their study suggest that gauging the client’s self-efficacy in job-seeking skills can be used to identify “areas of perceived confidence with respect to specific job-seeking skills; reinforce existing perceived self-efficacy; and facilitate communication about specific skills to enhance employment outcomes” (p. 41).

Greene and Kochhar-Bryant promote a self-efficacy model that starts before the client has begun their transition to work. They assert that the transition process needs to empower clients to answer five questions:

1. What are my school, work, and community living interests and skills?
2. Where do I want to go to school, live, or work after leaving high school?
3. What courses do I take to prepare for the future?
4. What are my strengths and what do I need to improve?

5. What do I need to learn to make my post-high school goals happen? (Greene & Kochhar-Bryant 2003).

Pierson et al suggest that “[t]he extent to which youth with disabilities acquire the skills and opportunities that promote self-determination can play a role in shaping their in-school and post-school outcomes” (2008, p. 120). They add that “efforts to enhance self-determination should be woven throughout multiple transition domains, promoted in diverse settings, and addressed in conjunction with other related skill deficits” (p. 121). They emphasise that in order to maximise its effectiveness and likelihood of success, instruction around social skills “should be characterised by thorough assessment of relevant deficit areas, identification of critical social or behavioural skills related to success in a school or community context, and systematic and focused instruction that addresses those targeted skill areas” (p. 122). Transition programs that focus on the individual must direct part of their efforts towards “ensuring that youth with disabilities acquire the skills and experiences that enhance their self-determination. For many youth with disabilities, social skills instruction should compose one component of comprehensive transition efforts to increase self-determination” (p. 123).

Chambers, Rabren and Dunne concur, adding that “high-school transition programs must include education and training that develops self-determination skills such as self-advocacy and goal setting and prepares students with disabilities for the academic rigour of post-secondary education” (2009, p. 51).

### **Practical Work Placements and Experience**

Significant emphasis is placed on the benefits offered by the provisions of practical work experience and exposure of young people with disabilities to actual work environments. “[E]mployment experience can be influential in the success that youth with disabilities ultimately achieve in the labour market. Further, early experiences can influence work-related behaviours that may stay with people throughout their working lives” (Blackorby & Wagner 1996, p. 400). Beyer emphasises the need for practical work experience to be considered: “training by another means, a means that suits many people with learning disabilities better than longer periods of less experientially based learning” (2008, p. 10).

Lewis, Goff and Tarzia focus on the provision of on-site training support for people with disabilities to successfully complete traineeships and apprenticeships. However, the findings of their research can arguably be applied to any work placement. They advise that one of the key methods of enabling training support is “to replace certain tasks in the duty statement that may prove difficult for the person to perform (due to the disability) with other more suitable tasks” (2002, p. 50-51). It was emphasised that this should be a priority for a range of staff: “Job Co-ordinators and other company training personnel need to be more innovative in developing cues and aids that assist the disabled New Apprentice to perform at the requisite

level of competency and autonomy” (p. 51). It was also emphasised that modifications may be need to be made to the workplace in order to facilitate the needs of the client. “Depending on the nature of the disability, there may be a greater demand for workplace modifications and assistive equipment to enable the apprentice to perform the full range of duties competently, efficiently, safely and independently” (p. 51). Collaboration was another key element of their study, which found that “[t]he collaborative support of a competent disability employment agency, with the additional funding that it receives for post-placement employment support of people with disabilities” (p. 51) is a crucial resource in the successful participation of transitioning youth in practical work placements and experience.

Cobb and Alwell stress the importance of job placements in real jobs that have some grounding in the wider community. In particular, they emphasise “that vocational training include work experiences in real jobs, particularly work experiences that focus on socialisation with coworkers, and access to adult role models and mentors in meaningful work roles” (2009, p. 78).

### **Effective Workplace Supports**

A range of key literature focuses on the need in youth transitions for practical work placements and experience. More specifically, some of this literature focuses on the effective supports that can be implemented in the workplace for young people with disabilities. Wehman found that employers may recognise the employment of people with disabilities as a way of enhancing their standing in the community and strengthening their commitment to social responsibility (2006). Nonetheless, a commitment by employers to hiring young people with disabilities is strongly supported by a number of key texts.

In a chapter entitled ‘Supporting Youth in the Workplace’, Luecking and Tilson (2009) have identified a number of key elements that make up the provision of effective workplace supports. These elements are:

- Clarification of the employers’ requirements and expectations of the work experience
- Identification of specific challenges, barriers and support needs
- Determining the type, level and amount of support required
- Development of an individual support plan
- Regular opportunities for employers to offer feedback to participants, and
- Ongoing evaluation and adjustment of support.

Luecking and Tilson also identify a number of areas in which participants may require assistance. These include learning new skills, in particular job specific skills. Other areas include following directions, making judgments, communicating with co-workers and fitting in socially. They also identified a number of facets of the work experience process that may also potentially require support. These are the setting up of specific goals, determining timelines and other logistics orienting the participant to the worksite (and

vice versa), teaching new skills and providing opportunities for applying these new skills, encouraging the development of social skills and enabling participants to fit into the culture of the workplace, teaching employability skills and the provision of regular feedback and evaluation of performance.

Wehman, Brooke and West also identify a number of supports for the workplace. They break them into the following:

- *environmental supports*, which are the physical structures of a workplace, its surroundings, or the objects in or around it that make it more accessible for employees;
- *procedural supports*, which are actions, activities or processes that exist in order to assist employees to perform their jobs; and
- *natural supports*, which are informal supports available to all employees and include assistance from other staff.

Wehman, Brooke and West also identify employers or supervisors as potential training mentors for people with disabilities. This strategy enables the employer or supervisor to feel additionally empowered to handle any difficulties, and offers a sense of consistency for the participant. Co-worker assistance is also mentioned as a viable strategy for workplace support and job retention. "The co-worker's roles include trainer, observer, and advocate for the individual within the workplace, including the education of other staff about a person's specific cognitive assets and impairments" (p. 339).

Lewis and Robertson (2008) emphasise the necessity for workplace inclusion. They comment that "in addition to displaying good work skills, the workers long term prospects in the job will be facilitated by successful workplace inclusion and acceptance" (p. 98) and add that "[e]ncouraging inclusion from day one prevents the worker from feeling abandoned when the job co-ordinator starts to withdraw support" (p. 98). They assert that in gradually withdrawing support in order to enable independence, it is nonetheless important to keep communication open, and that maintaining contact with the client on an ongoing basis is vital (p. 100).

### **Relationships with Employers**

Generating and maintaining mutually beneficial relationships with employers is a facet of best practice that is supported by a number of writings. Woolsey and Katz-Leavy emphasise the importance of cultivating relationships with employers that "assist them in seeing the benefits of hiring program clients, and create open lines of communication between program staff, clients, and employers that can be accessed on an ongoing basis" (2008, p. 17).

Luecking has identified a number of strategies for retaining effective employer participation. He stresses that "[w]hen employers are treated like customers of transition programs, opportunities for work experiences can be plentiful" and adds that "getting employers interested and willing to host youth in the workplace is only half the battle. Keeping them interested is just as important" (2009, p. 120). He emphasises that revisiting employer

expectations is an effective way to keep employers on side, and suggests that “strategies that show respect for employers’ needs and interests are necessary to convince them to enter into and maintain partnerships with transition programs that represent youth with disabilities” (p. 120).

Some of the expectations that employers may have include: assistance in receiving referrals that are convenient to them and will result in competent work; matching the skills and interests of young people to job tasks; and support in training and monitoring youth at the worksite (p. 120).

Luecking also identifies a number of strategies for consulting with employers. These include: presenting them with a plan for tasks that might be performed by the participant in the workplace; outlining how these tasks might be assigned and how the tasks match the participant’s circumstances; presenting the possible benefits of assigning a job or task to the participant, clearly describing the role of the program in supporting participants; ensuring that the program is going to work for the employer, and reiterating the potential benefits to the employer (p. 107-108).

A number of strategies for maintaining positive relationships with employers were also identified. These include:

- Competent and convenient assistance in receiving youth referrals
- Matching of youth skills and interests to job tasks
- Support in training and monitoring at the worksite
- Agreed follow-up procedures
- Responsiveness to workplace problems
- Support and service adjusted according to employer feedback
- Information about specific accommodations required by participants
- Disability awareness information supplied according to employer requests
- Interaction and support appropriate for individual participants, and
- Periodic guidance and information provided as necessary (Luecking 2009).

### **Transition Programs in Other States**

Although transition support is available in some form for young people with disabilities in all Australian states and territories, the Transition to Work program is the only one of its kind nationally. Most other states and territories run individualised funding programs that offer support to individuals for specific training or vocational skills development, but the Transition to Work program is the only comprehensive, state-wide, employment-focused, vocational preparation post-school program for young people with disabilities.

#### *Australian Capital Territory – Post-School Options*

The Post-School Options program is an individual funding program run by the ACT Department of Disability, Housing and Community Services, that is

designed to support young people with a disability who are leaving school and cannot participate in full time employment. The program offers access to transitional support services and ongoing community access services from universities, registered training organisations, job network providers, the disability employment network, business services, community access, advocacy and support agencies. Funds are allocated through a formal application and assessment process, and Disability ACT advertises the availability of funds through local media, and directly notifies schools, disability agencies, and individuals via email. This funding may be used for individuals to obtain transition planning, career pathway education, employment services and options, further education and training, advocacy and information, employability skills and life skills and community access services.

#### *Northern Territory – Transition from School*

The Transition from School program is a school-based transition program run by the Northern Territory Department of Education and Training. It assists the transition of students with disabilities from mainstream and special education settings into further education, employment and adult life. The transition process can begin from Year 8. Support made available through the program is usually delivered by school-based special education teachers, and may include individual transition planning meetings to explore pathways to adult life, the capacity to connect families, students and schools with available services and agencies within the community, organisation and liaison with local employers to offer work experience, and provision of information and support assistance for students and families throughout the transition process. The transition process as delivered by the program is broken into five areas:

- Administration, comprised of teacher meetings and the distribution of enrolment packages
- Social and personal activities, such as transition evenings, student panels, and the assignment of transition buddies
- Curriculum activities, like establishing joint teacher teams, conducting enrichment lessons
- Pedagogical activities, which involve organising and observing lessons and dialogue exchanges around pedagogy and sharing resources, and
- Management of Learning, which involves the creation of 'home room' classes, establishing peer tutor groups, and organising sustained professional learning for teachers

The Transition from School program also offers funding to help remote schools develop work experience and enterprise programs for students with a disability.

#### *Queensland – Post-School Services*

The Post-School Services program is an individual funding program run by the Queensland Department of Disability, Home and Community Care, that

assists young people with a disability who are 18 years of age to transition from school in the absence of other support options such as pre-vocational training or employment. Funding is allocated to a nominated service provider on behalf of the client to enable them to provide direct support in areas such as the development of life, communication and work skills that allow participants to build their independence. There is one funding round per year for the program, which occurs prior to the end of the school year.

#### *South Australia – Disability Transition Program*

The Disability Transition Program is a vocational education program for students with disabilities funded by the South Australian Department of Education and Children's Services. The program takes place in the last year of school and offers students the opportunity to obtain a Certificate I in Introductory Vocational Education, with the opportunity to then undertake VET Certificate courses in a range of areas, and to participate in supported work placements to help prepare them for the open employment market. The program links with employers, training organisations and Disability Employment Networks to ensure that young people with disabilities have the opportunity to transition into employment, further education and training and apprenticeships.

#### *Tasmania – Supporting Individual Pathways Program*

The Supporting Individual Pathways program is an individual funding program run by Disability Services Tasmania that provides assistance to young adults with disabilities who have left school and are making the transition to adult life. The program focuses on the specific needs of individuals by providing assistance to help individuals meet disability-related support costs. The program enables the development of personalised pathway plans and provides the opportunity for young adults to access their chosen pathway as independently as possible. The program can be utilised to fund voluntary work, work placement as part of an accredited course, vocational education and training, further education, transport training, specialist equipment not accessed through other sources, and other disability related support costs such as personal care. Funding usually runs for one year, but in the case of courses that run longer, funding can be provided for the duration of the course.

#### *Victoria – Futures for Young Adults*

Futures for Young Adults is an individual three-year funding program run by the Victorian Department of Human Services. The program provides support to students with a disability to make the transition to post-school options, and is available to students from the time they complete their schooling until they turn 21. Young people who are eligible for Futures for Young Adults may be provided with assistance from a transition planner to explore a range of post school options, information about generic, community and specialist supports, or information and support to access disability supports. The

program functions through the development of an individual pathway plan created in consultation with the transition planner, and the program funds participants to undertake training, develop skills, become more involved in the community, or seek employment.

#### *Western Australia – Post School Options*

The Post School Options program provides information and support to school leavers who are eligible for Alternatives to Employment support. Alternatives to Employment is an individual funding program run by the Western Australian Disability Services Commission that offers support to people with disabilities who require an alternative to paid employment, and who are unable to undertake twenty hours of paid work per week. The program ensures that these individuals have access to opportunities that incorporate skills development, and enable the participant to attain valued social roles and to undertake positive experiences. The program also stresses the need for participants to have a choice of service provider. Funding for the program is usually ongoing until the participant is assessed as no longer requiring support.

#### **Conclusions**

In 2003 the OECD released a report entitled *From Initial Education to Working Life: Making Transition Work*, which sought to address school to work transitions across all OECD countries. The report identified a number of elements of effective transition programs. These are:

*Well-organised pathways that allow participants greater opportunities to make informed career choices.*

This point emphasises the need for transition services to ensure the smooth movement of clients from school to workplace, a sentiment that is certainly echoed in the literature surrounding transitions for young people with disabilities. This point aligns with best-practice literature that emphasises personalised service provision which caters to the needs of participants and enables them to make informed choices about their work and future goals based on their individual interests and skills. The focus of much of the literature on streamlining connections between support organisations also feeds into the report's emphasis on pathways that are well-organised and enable smooth transitions.

#### *Workplace experience combined with education*

This is an element reflected in much of the best-practice literature about transitions for young people with disabilities. There is a strong argument offered by a number of resources for the provision of practical work experience that takes place in real work places, but also for educational support that offers career development-type services and the opportunity for participants to build both their practical work skills as well as social, communication and wider life skills.

### *Tightly woven safety nets*

This refers primarily to the capacity for transition programs to ensure that no students fall through the cracks, by providing intensive assistance for those students who either exit early or are in danger of exiting from transition programs to unknown destinations. The literature on transitions for people with disability outlines this element through its emphasis on the needs for cross-sectoral support, with a range of organisations all working towards common goals for each individual involved in a transition program. This includes families, service providers, community organisations, employers and members of the individual's extended network. Other elements such as follow-up support for job placements and the facilitation of activities that enable young people to become connected to organisations also realise this aspect.

### *Good information and guidance*

Roessler, Hennessey and Rumrill (2007) identify information and research as two of the five main elements of a successful transition program for young people with disabilities. Additionally, there is a strong focus across best-practice literature on providing participants with the information and guidance that they require in order to make informed choices and develop realistic work goals.

### *Effective institutions and processes*

Much of the best-practice literature emphasises the need for a range of types of organisations--service providers, state agencies, employers, business and community organisations—to be involved in the transition process, and that the effectiveness of programs can be enhanced by enabling communication between these organisations.

In conclusion, while the level of support may be more intense for people with disabilities, there is a strong alignment between what works for people with disabilities and the OECD's identification of the key elements of effective transition systems and support for all young people.

## APPENDIX 3: WORKSHOP INFORMATION

### Method

ADHC selected the workshop locations on the basis of an internal analysis of service user demographics and the locations of service providers. ADHC determined that 14 locations were required to adequately and fairly provide suitable opportunities for all TTW providers, service users and their families to attend a workshop, and to achieve proportionate representation and opportunities in regard to the distribution of program participants.

### Invitees and Attendance

Letters were sent by ADHC to all service users and providers in the selected regions and suburbs, inviting them to participate in the workshops. Separate workshops for providers and clients were held in each location. ADHC and National Disability Services followed up with phone contact to all providers, encouraging them to send staff, and to remind service users and their families to attend.

#### *Workshops for service users, families and carers*

A total of 55 individuals, either TTW service users or their family members/carers, were consulted in the course of the schedule of service user workshops. Generally, attendance at individual sessions was quite modest (ranging from one to six service users/families), apart from at Wollongong, where there were 27 attendees present.

#### *Service Provider Workshops*

A total of 112 individuals representing service provider organisations attended the service provider workshops. All of the provider workshop locations garnered attendees, although numbers ranged from 2 to 16 individuals at different locations.

### Workshop Locations and Attendees

Location	Attendees (Service Providers)	Attendees (Service Users, Parents, and Carers)
Tamworth	2	0
Parramatta	13	10

<b>Location</b>	<b>Attendees (Service Providers)</b>	<b>Attendees (Service Users, Parents, and Carers)</b>
Lismore	9	0
Chatswood	10	4
Queanbeyan	2	2
Wagga Wagga	7	0
Campbelltown	3	3
Liverpool	7	0
Port Macquarie	16	8
Newcastle	13	0
Gosford	10	1
Bathurst:	7	0
Dubbo	6	0
Wollongong	7	27
<b>Total</b>	<b>112</b>	<b>55</b>

Parents and service users who were unable to attend a workshop, but wanted to express their views were offered the opportunity of a telephone interview. One parent was interviewed.

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS FOR TTW SERVICE PROVIDER WORKSHOPS**

Discussion topic: KRA #1:

Young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study

- 1) How specifically does the TTW program assist young people in their move to open or supported employment?
- 2) Tell me about the relationship between transition plans/planning and the move to open or supported employment?
- 3) What kinds of activities or strategies do you believe are most helpful in facilitating the move to open or supported employment? Why?
- 4) Are some participants more or less likely to move to open or supported employment than others? Why?
- 5) Is the client's potential to move to either open or supported employment a factor in determining the structure of their individual program?
- 6) Are there any further support structures you needed for participants who were at risk of not moving to open or supported employment?

Discussion topic: KRA # 2:

Young people perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals

- 1) How are participants assisted to develop their employment goals?
- 2) Do their employment goals generally change over the course of the program?
- 3) How do you ensure that all reasonable accommodations are made by employers in consideration of the physical/behavioural needs of participants?
- 4) Has discrimination or exclusion from the workplace ever been an issue for any of your clients?
- 5) How are participants encouraged to negotiate work choices in order to develop realistic expectations of employment?

Discussion topic: KRA # 3:

Young people develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment

- 1) How do you define 'sustainable' employment?
- 2) What do you view as the skills that are necessary to make the transition to sustainable employment?
- 3) How does your organisation seek to develop these skills in participants?
- 4) What are the factors that enable participants to best develop their skills?
- 5) What factors inhibit participants from developing their skills?
- 6) How have the qualifications that your participants have obtained helped them in their transition to sustainable employment?
- 7) Do service providers have the resources (staff knowledge, funds, equipment) to teach the skills that are really needed?
- 8) Who do you partner with?
- 9) How do you know that the skills you develop are the ones that are needed? Do employers tell you? How do you find out?
- 10) Do you change the skills that are taught in response to employer feedback?

Discussion topic: KRA # 4:

Young people sustain their work and training commitments

- 1) What kinds of skills are required in order for your clients to sustain their work commitments?
- 2) Describe the processes involved in supporting your clients to sustain the commitments that they make.
- 3) What are some of the barriers that your clients may face in sustaining their work and training commitments?
- 4) How is your organisation able to assist your clients to overcome these barriers?
- 5) In what ways can the program help young people to sustain their work commitments?
- 6) In what ways do you assist employers to support participants to sustain their work and training commitments?

Discussion topic: KRA # 5:

Young Indigenous people and young people from culturally & linguistically diverse backgrounds have fair access to support and achieve comparable outcomes

- 1) What has been your experience of working with CaLD/Indigenous participants
- 2) Did their support needs differ from those of other participants and if so, how?
- 3) Did CaLD/Indigenous participants face any additional barriers in reaching their employment goals compared to other participants?
- 4) How can the TTW program best cater for the needs of CaLD/Indigenous participants?
- 5) How can the TTW program ensure that all young people receive comparable outcomes?

Discussion Topic: Strengths and benefits of the TTW

- 1) What are the best features of the TTW program? Why do they work?
- 2) What are the things that the program does well? How does it do them well?
- 3) What do you see as the major benefits for young people from the program?
- 4) What benefits does engaging in work offer to young people?
- 5) Which elements of the TTW do you think are responsible for the positive outcomes you have seen?
- 6) What can we learn from the successes of the TTW?
- 7) What makes a successful provider?
- 8) Could students, parents or carers do anything differently?
- 9) Discussion Topic: Strengths and benefits of the TTW

Discussion Topic: Areas for Improvement

- 1) Where does the TTW have room for improvement?

- 2) What does it not do well?  
Are there any flaws in the model?  
What could be changed to improve outcomes?
- 3) What are the most common criticisms of the TTW?
- 4) Are there any barriers to participation in the TTW?

## **INTERVIEW QUESTIONS AND PROMPTS FOR TTW SERVICE USERS, PARENTS AND CARERS WORKSHOPS**

Discussion topic: KRA #1:

Young people move to open or supported employment at the end of their program or course of study

- 1) Tell me about the ways in which TTW helps prepare you for work?
- 2) What helps you most?
- 3) Tell me about developing your plan? Did you find it helpful? Have you stuck to it? Has it changed much?
- 4) Did your parents help you with your plan?
- 5) What did you find difficult about preparing for work/ getting a job? Did TTW staff help you to overcome these problems? Is there anything else they could have done?
- 6) Are there any additional services or forms of support you would have liked to be offered to help your child transition into work?  
OR
- 7) What do you do now that you've finished TTW?
- 8) Has TTW helped you to do that?
- 9) What's it like? What's your job?
- 10) What skills do you use at work? Are these skills that you learnt at TTW?

Discussion topic: KRA # 2:

Young people perform satisfying and meaningful work consistent with their employment goals

- 1) What sort of work are you looking for? What do you think you will enjoy most about that job?
- 2) Tell me about what has helped you decide?
- 3) Has the program helped you to get clear about what sort of work you want to do?
- 4) Did you change your mind about the work that you want to do over the course of the program?
- 5) What caused you to change your mind?
- 6) Tell me about the sort of work practice you have had while at TTW?  
OR
- 7) What are your goals?
- 8) Are you doing a job that you like?
- 9) What do you like about work?
- 10) Has TTW helped you to find a suitable job?

Discussion topic: KRA # 3:

Young people develop the skills and qualifications necessary for the transition to sustainable employment

- 1) Tell me about what you've learnt since being at TTW? How has TTW helped you gain skills?
- 2) Tell me about the teaching? Was it like being at school? How did it differ?
- 3) Have you obtained any qualifications during the TTW program?
- 4) How have these helped you to find a job? Do you think they will help you find a job?
- 5) Are there any ways in which the TTW program could have helped you to learn things that would help you at work?

Discussion topic: KRA # 4:

Young people sustain their work and training commitments

- 1) What makes you want to keep going to work or to training?
- 2) Did you find it hard to keep going to work each day? What was difficult? What would have made it easier?
- 3) Did you find it hard to finish your training? If so what were these problems?
- 4) Were the staff at TTW aware of these problems?
- 5) How did they help you to deal with these problems?
- 6) What were the things that kept you going?
- 7) Could anything else have been done to help you?

Discussion topic: KRA # 5:

Young Indigenous people and young people from culturally & linguistically diverse backgrounds have fair access to support and achieve comparable outcomes

Questions for (CaLD/Indigenous) Participants

- 1) What's TTTW been like for you? Was TTW appropriate to your background?
- 2) Do you feel as though you have been provided with all the support you needed in order to transition successfully into employment?
- 3) What could be done better to cater to people from your background?
- 4) How were these cultural barriers dealt with or overcome? What did your service provider do? Were you required to do anything?
- 5) Can you make any suggestions on how TTW programs could improve transition experiences for CaLD/Indigenous participants?

Discussion Topic: Strengths and benefits of the TTW

- 1) What are the best things about the TTW program? Why? Tell me more.
- 3) What do you and your friends enjoy most about the program?
- 4) What are the benefits of being able to work?

Discussion Topic: Areas for Improvement

- 1) What don't you like so much?
- 2) What could be changed to make TTW better?