

## Appendices

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A: South Australia

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### Introduction

As the literature reviewed in a previous section illustrates; while vast inroads and significant improvements have been made to the participation and enrolment of girls and young women in VET, we still continue to find disturbing patterns of inequalities directed to them. Polesel *et al* (2004) report that boys are still more likely to participate in VET in schools (VIS) programmes than girls. Furthermore, rates of enrolment for boys in subjects like technical drawing, technology, maths and computing are still twelve times those of girls. Meanwhile, the enrolment of girls in feminised work areas (for instance secretarial studies) is five times more than that of boys (Lamb, Long and Malley, 1999, cited by Polesel *et al*, 2004 p. 17). It is not surprising therefore, that concerned parties in the education and VET sectors have instigated research to understand the issues facing girls and young women in VET. The present project is one such example that aims to investigate the role of VET in young girls' futures.

This section of this report is based on questionnaire responses from girls enrolled in a VET course in schools or at a TAFE institute in South Australia. It presents an analysis of the girls' perceptions of VET: its relevance to (and the extent to which it supports) their future goals, their perceptions of (structured) work experience programs, and also how the girls talk about their future careers. The last section outlines some recommendations for policy. It needs to be pointed out that while it may not be possible to generalise the findings of this research to all girls involved in VET in South Australia because of the sample size and the fact that it was urban-specific, it is nevertheless important in that it provides an insight into the perceptions (and concerns) of young girls in relation to VET and its relevance to their futures. In turn, this can inform policy and implements for gender-specific policies and strategies relevant to the needs and experiences of young girls.

### A Brief Overview of VET/ VIS in Australia and South Australia

Research published by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) noted that VET in schools (VIS) is possibly the most substantial change which has occurred in post-compulsory education schooling in the past decade (Polesel *et al*, 2004 p. 14). VIS emerged in the early 1990s as a major piece of curriculum reform, with the aim of providing greater breadth of choice to the more diverse populations making use of senior secondary schooling (Polesel *et al*, 2004 p.14). In South Australia, VET in schools (VIS) was introduced in 1995. Hospitality and tourism were the major pushers of VET in schools, with hospitality being the first area to have VIS.

There are various ways for VIS to be delivered in South Australia:

- Access a VET course directly in the school with the teaching done by a qualified VET teacher
- Through TAFE (or another outsource agency) either as a "topping-up", for instance where there are a few places remaining in a VET class at that institution, or where a class is set up at the institute specifically for a group of secondary school students, (e.g. a hospitality class at TAFE). The emphasis is usually on access to resources especially where the school lacks the resources for effective delivery. Delivery of VIS by outsourcing is not only through TAFE but also various private organizations. As one VET Coordinator explained, while there various issues considered in choosing a private organization to deliver VIS such as who the students can access easily at a reasonable price, the issue of price isn't a major factor. Rather, it is what the organization can deliver for the students - the schools assess which provider can offer the best product, including assessment of how providers deliver the learning opportunities pedagogically.
- School-based new apprenticeship, where students do a traineeship half time and mainstream schooling the other half-time, therefore taking twice as long to complete the apprenticeship.

Polesel *et al* (2004, p.14) have also noted that since the introduction of VIS in the 1990s, the enrolments in year 11 and 12 have increased from 13% to 38% between 1996 and 2004. The number of schools offering VET programmes has also increased nation-wide from 70% of secondary schools in 1997 to 85% of all secondary schools in 1999. Furthermore, even though government schools have dominated VIS since its introduction, independent schools are now increasing their share of VIS provision substantially.

## A: South Australia

Generally, government schools' share of VET provision has dropped slightly from 82% to 74% between 1997 and 2000, while in the same period, independent schools' provision increased from 5% to 9% and Catholic Education schools' share increased slightly from 13% to 17%. (Ministerial Council on Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs, 2001 cited by Polesel *et al*, 2004 p.14)

### Methodology

In order to collect the information, and to ensure consistency, the questionnaire (see Appendix 4) designed specifically for the national research project was used as the instrument for collection of primary data.

The sample for the South Australian research used the snowballing technique, building on initial contact with a small number of educators and managers at various TAFE institutions in Adelaide. There were no limitations to geographic or sectoral location of the schools.

A total of nine randomly selected government and non-government (Catholic and Independent) schools involved in VIS in metropolitan South Australia were contacted with requests to survey girls taking a VET course. Five of the nine schools agreed to participate in the research. Two TAFE institutions were also contacted and both agreed to be involved in the research.

Subsequent meetings with the VET coordinators of the participating schools and TAFE institutions explained the nature and purpose of the research and also ethical, consent and privacy protocols. Questionnaires were administered by the coordinators in their respective schools and/or VET sites, with girls engaged in VET in school activities.

One focus group discussion was also held. The questionnaire was used as a guide in the focus group discussion.

In total 75 girls participated in the South Australian research.

Analysis of the completed questionnaires was undertaken by centralised (national) analysis of the demographic (quantitative) data, and categorisation of the written comments according to the conceptual sections of the standard questionnaire, for insights and trends. These conceptual categories included:

Demographic details and background information (age, place of residence, year level)

Future Working Life (career choices, information about careers, further study and work experience)

Access to Information (VET courses currently being undertaken, information sources for course selection, the reasons for the choice of VET courses and information about the particular VET and the availability, conditions and other information regarding jobs in the area of study), and

Education Aspirations, Career Paths and Relevance of VET

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Sample Characteristics: A Demographic Background

Demographics of the South Australian participants obtained from Section A of the questionnaire are summarised below.

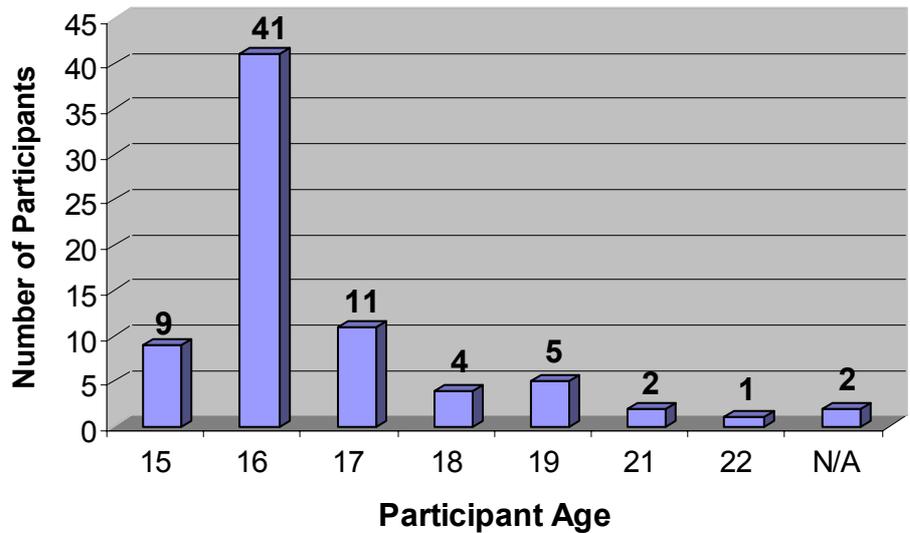


Figure A1. Age of VET Participants in SA

As shown in Figure A1 above the majority of participants were aged between 15 and 17 years. 2 girls did not specify their age and the remaining girls' ages ranged between 15 and 22 years.

9 girls were in their final year of schooling, 25 were in year 10 and 26 were in year 11. 15 of the girls were studying directly through TAFE. Therefore, as can be seen in Figure A2 below, 80% of the girls were currently a student at school while 20% were enrolled in TAFE.

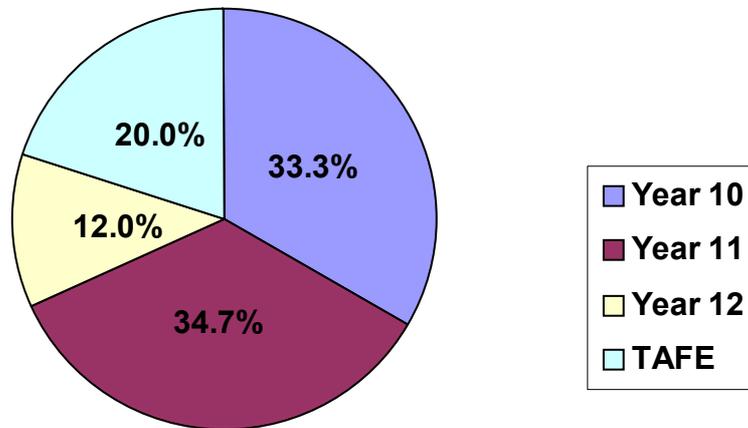


Figure A2. Percent of Participants per Year of Schooling

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93.4% of the girls were Australian born, and of the 6.5% born elsewhere: 1 was born in South Africa, 1 in South Korea, 1 in Malaysia, and 1 in Hong Kong.

All the girls lived in metropolitan South Australia, but not all girls were permanent Australian residents (96.7% were permanent residents).

Only 1 girl was of Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander origin.

As shown in Figure 3 below most of the girls (68) spoke English at home, while the remainder spoke Vietnamese (3), Cantonese (2), and Chinese and Greek (1 each).

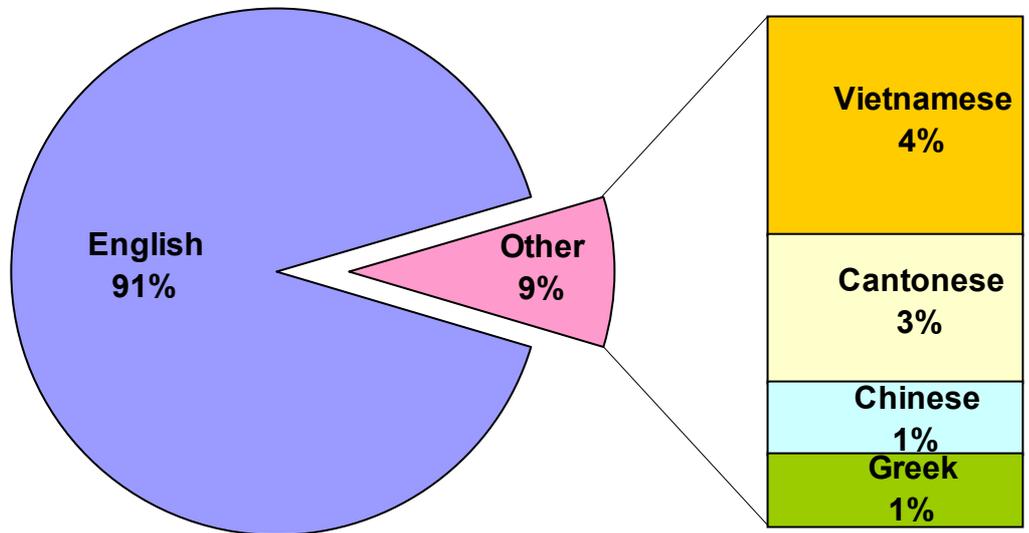


Figure A3. Percent of Languages Spoken at Home (SA)

7 of the girls considered themselves to have a disability of some sort: 2 girls had a mental illness, 2 girls had vision disability, 1 girl was deaf and 1 had an intellectual disability.

52.5% of the girls had paid work, and all worked as part time/ casual workers, working an average of 11.8 hours per week.

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Figure A4 below gives a breakdown of the areas of VET study of the participants in this research and the numbers of girls who were undertaking studies in each area.

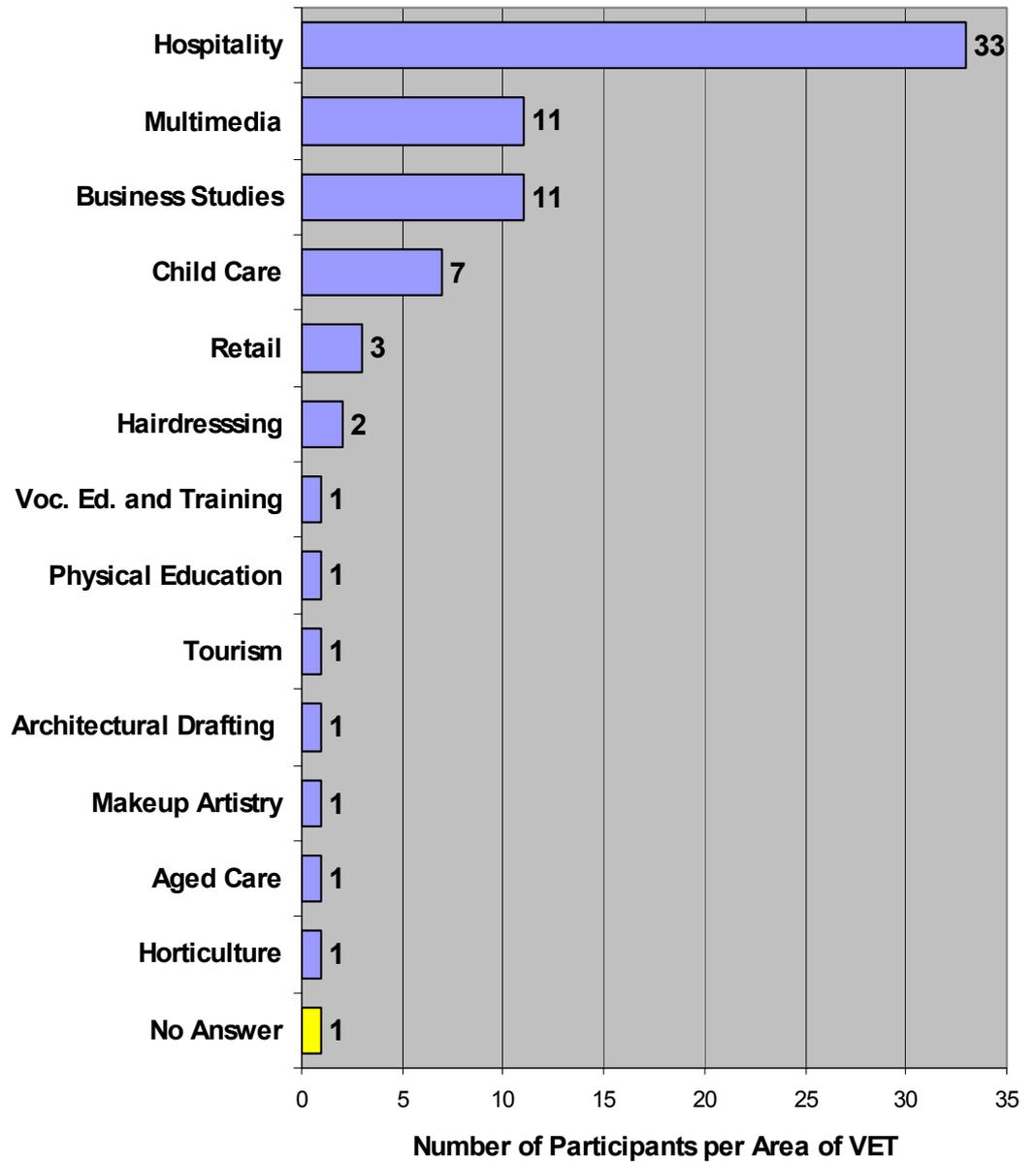


Figure A4. Participants Area of VET Study (SA)

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### Data Presentation and Analysis

The discussion that follows is a result of the findings from the research and has been divided into the following 4 broad issue area categories:

- Girls talk about their future educational and career aspirations
- People/Things influencing Girls' Career Selection
- Role/ Importance of Career guidance
- Relevance of VET

These themes will now be explored in detail.

#### Girls talk about their future

With respect to their future careers, most of the girls indicated having either a definite or at least some idea of what they wanted to do in future. Their career interests ranged from the more "caring" professions like nursing, teaching, and child care to the "non-traditional" jobs for women in areas such as science, medicine (being a doctor), security guard, and property developer.

Overall, 43.5% of the girls had some career aspirations in the non-traditional fields. Therefore, while indicating the trend for girls and women to still make career and curriculum choices within a limited number of occupational positions and societal roles regarded as suitable for women, the research also reflects a move away from this trend amongst this cohort of girls.

93.4% of the girls indicated that they knew about the type of work involved in their future career choice and that 65.6% of this information was obtained from their schools. This indicates that there may be some improvement in the availability of information about non-traditional jobs/ options for girls.

Girls have been found to "typically explore careers from a narrower set of careers than do boys" (Gottfredson, 1981, cited in Farmer, 2004). based on occupational sex role socialisation. Recent efforts by educators and counsellors have attempted to reduce this stereotyping in various ways, including exposure to a variety of work experiences and work environments. Furthermore, when asked whether or not they intended to further their studies in their chosen careers, 94.9% of the participants said they intended to do so. Of those intending to further their studies, 62.1% indicated a preference to do so at university, while 44.8% wanted to study at TAFE. This further indicates that these girls have fairly definite ideas about what they want to do in the future.

#### People/factors influencing girls' career selection

In giving the reasons for choosing their particular career pathways, 51.3% of the girls indicated interest in that particular career; 11.5% indicated influence from other people (including family members who were interested in that career); 9% cited enjoyment; 5.1% indicated that previous work experience had influenced them and 2.6% explained that they were influenced by family, or that they were 'good at it'. Only 1.3% of the participants cited attractive pay, easier qualifications, job availability, or even religious influence (e.g. God) as influencing their choices. Two of these factors (work experience and family influence) will be explored in detail.

#### Work Experience

According to this research 74.1% of the girls had participated in a work experience program, and of that percentage, only 7% indicated that they did not learn much from the work experience. Thus unlike the 2004 NCVET national VIS survey, the majority of the girls involved in this research reported a predominantly positive view of work experience. These positive views included: having the opportunity to acquire skills for a specific job, general workplace and industry experience, improving people skills, customer service and also its helpfulness to them in terms of identifying career interests. Figure A5 illustrates what the participants learned from work experience.

This research therefore clearly indicates that work experience was of value for the majority of the students. Attention should therefore be focused on those activities that the girls perceive to be most helpful to them in identifying career interests. For the majority of girls, work experience is a situation in which they "learn more than at school" (Polesel *et al*, 2004, p.50). They perceived work experience as providing benefits which their schools could not, that is, they learnt things that they could not learn at school.

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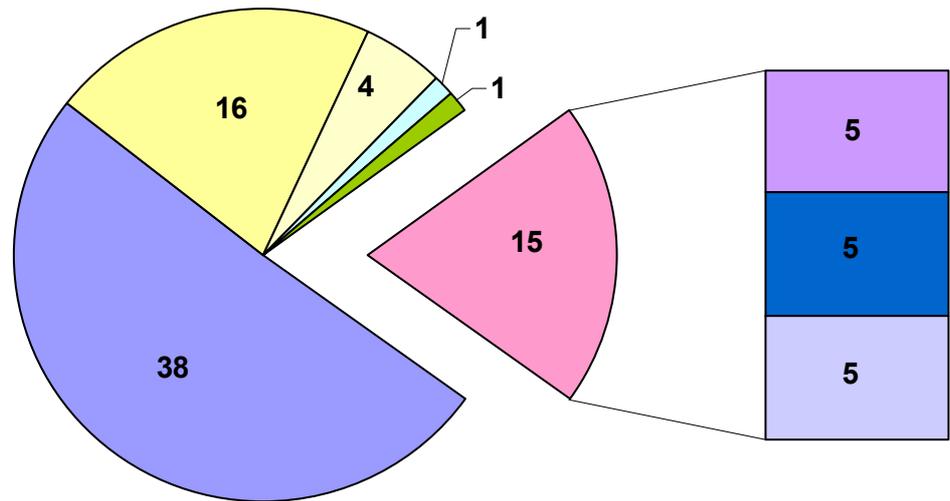


Figure A5. Participants Learning from Work Experience (SA)

Family Influence

Some of the girls involved in this research indicated that family influence was an important factor, not only in the choices about their future careers, but in some cases about the VET course they enrolled in. Focus group discussions with a group of girls from one of the schools involved in the project showed that far from being coerced by their parents into particular occupations, what the girls received from their family was in fact a constant source of motivation and encouragement. Many parents appreciated the importance of letting their daughters make their own decisions about their future careers.

It is too easily assumed that girls and young women will choose the career that their parents have “chosen” for them, usually as “an extension of their socialisation as carers for families and community” (Fogelman, 1983; Wallace 1987 cited in Basit, 1996). However, evidence from this research in South Australia shows that girls do not unthinkingly follow their parents’ “dreams” for them, and that negotiation and persuasion plays an important role in the career development of young girls. The support and encouragement provided by parents to their daughters’ future careers indicate their interest in their daughters’ future. This makes it important for parents to be educated in the types of training and jobs that are available to their daughters, in order to support their daughters who want to pursue non-traditional career choices.

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**Role and Importance of Career Guidance**

89.7% of all the girls involved in this research reported having career guidance at school, and of that number, only 7.1% reported not receiving any help at all from the career guidance. 48.2% acknowledged receiving general career advice and/or guidance, while 26.8% indicated that they received specific help and/or guidance about particular careers. Some of the girls indicated in a focus group discussion, that they obtained less encouragement and guidance from their parents about their career aspirations than they did from their teachers or career guidance counsellors. This makes the provision of career guidance programs that meet the specific educational and vocational needs of girls and young women of critical importance.

**Relevance of VET**

Polesel *et al* in their NCVET Report (2004) indicate that previous research shows that when VET was introduced, it was initially viewed in a negative light. While such negative perspectives have not disappeared completely, an acceptance of VET as “an important tool in the management of diversity and as a means of improving learning” has diminished some of these objections (p. 24). As shown in Figure A6 below, 93.4% of the girls in this research felt the knowledge and /or skills they had gained from the VET course they were taking would be relevant or useful in their future, and only 6.6% thought it would not be relevant. Even though the majority of the girls (51.7%) did not plan to pursue a career in the area of their VET course, they still felt the knowledge would be useful to their future.

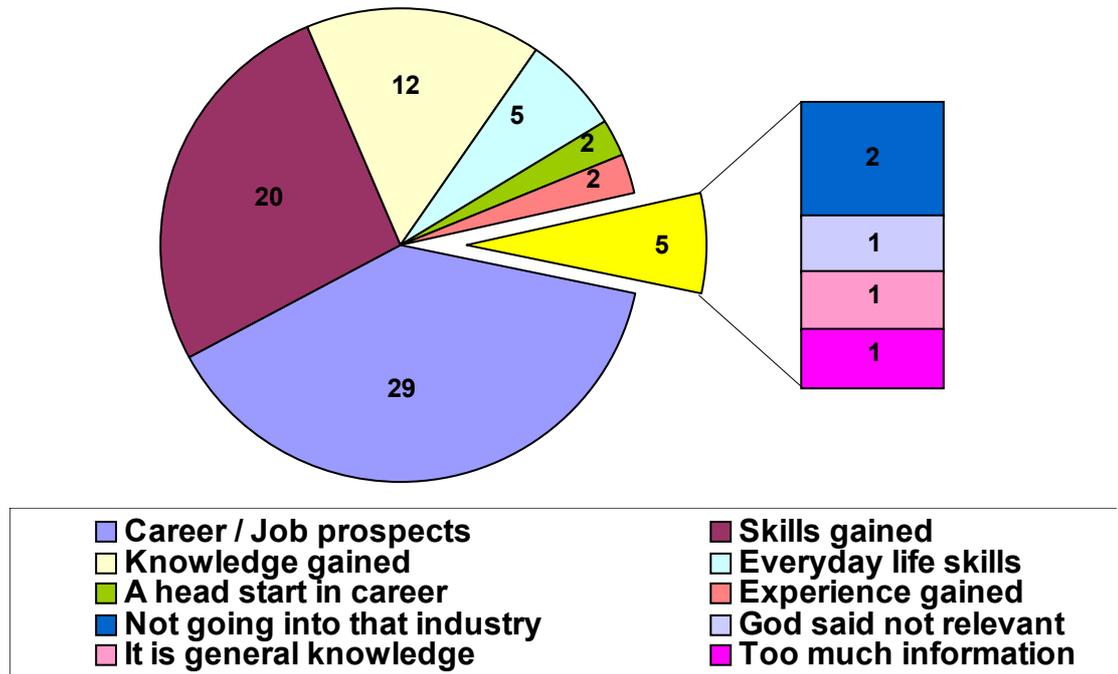


Figure A6. Relevance and Usefulness of Participants' VET Experience (SA)

## A: South Australia

While in those schools with a more traditional focus on an academic curriculum, VET is less likely to be seen as a necessary curriculum option, the girls in this research acknowledged VET as widening their career and job prospects (39%) due to the skills gained (27.3%). 6.5% of the girls also found the skills useful in their everyday life situations. Some girls also indicated in a focus group discussion that the skills gained from their VET course enabled them to find a job in which they could be employed while studying at university for their future career. VET could therefore be perceived as a means to an end. Another 1.3% of the girls noted that VET gave them a head start for future study at university or TAFE, or for work experience. Polesel *et al* also note that VIS graduates are more likely than their non-VIS peers to enter TAFE at Certificate III or Certificate IV, diploma or advanced diploma level, which suggests that they are building on their VET experiences at school (2004, p.57).

### Implications for Practice and Recommendations

This section discusses some of the strategies that government and other relevant organisations can implement to develop and put in place policies that are more relevant to and support the needs and circumstances of girls and young women in relation to VET and their careers.

#### Framing Gender

The key to positive school to work transition of young girls is support at home, in the community and most importantly in their schools. Therefore, Teachers, counsellors and administrators need to undertake gender-focused professional development or training programs to enhance understanding not only the gender-based assumptions of the wider society especially the persistent sex-role stereotyping of occupations that continue to circumscribe girls and young women's employment choices, but also the diversity of girls' self expression and development. VET design and delivery needs to be improved so it can proactively inform and support girls as they seek to develop skills in identifying sexism and discrimination, in effective coping strategies for dealing with such discrimination and in identifying social barriers that can limit their careers and educational development and participation in VET (Hackett and Byars, 1996, cited in Weiler, 1997 p. 4)

#### More Critical Gender Inclusive Research and Implementation of Research Findings

More research is needed that goes beyond the one-dimensional portrayal of VET as gender-neutral unproblematic training, to provide deeper understanding of the career choices, needs and potential of girls; how they perceive and construct themselves as future (paid) workers and how such constructions can be extended. Information is also needed on the economic implications of their choices, including how socioeconomic factors impact girls' career options and decisions. Strategies to address these factors need to be informed by research. Such research must not only be carried out and published, but findings and recommendations must be addressed and implemented.

#### Public Policy

As the present research has pointed out, the majority of the girls involved in this research acknowledge that VET plays an essential role in making the curriculum inclusive of a broader range of needs, and so has the potential to widen their career options. Policy discussions and formation should focus on reducing barriers to girls' choices for enrolment in VET subjects, through the provision of relevant career information that includes industrial and economic information, areas of future job growth, as well as a gender perspective on the nature of work in particular industries, along with strategies to support girls' success in 'non traditional areas.

Public policy discussions need also to be directed toward improved vocational preparation that trains girls in skills transferable immediately to the workforce especially given the trend many small area businesses are following in hiring students with vocational training. Therefore, there needs to be collaboration between institutions like schools, agencies, industry and business, and higher education to develop programs that are especially designed to encourage girls to examine careers from a broad societal perspective and their specific implications for girls / young women.

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### Access to career information

As indicated above, 89.7% of the girls involved in this research had career guidance at school. Interventions should therefore include current and accurate information about the nature of different careers and occupations. Young girls need to be taught to critically examine how gender role socialization impacts on their career goals (Weiler, 1997 p. 4) and be helped to explore “non-traditional” careers for women. Critical help needs to be given to girls to enhance their understanding of issues in this area as well as strategies to help diminish the effects of perceived barriers and negative outcomes on their own beliefs about their career abilities.

### Summary and Conclusion

The findings of this South Australian research indicate that most girls in their last 3 years of secondary schooling already have a good idea of what careers they would like to pursue upon completion of their studies. For these girls, VET is a positive learning experience compared to most academically oriented subjects. Despite “the belief among some (*teachers*) in the more academically inclined subject departments that VET is disruptive and that it does not fit easily into the normal timetable” (Polesel *et al*, 2004 p.66), the majority of the girls surveyed regarded VET as somewhat more relevant to their future than the other more academically inclined school subjects (21.2% found it more relevant, 14% very relevant, 14% relevant and 3.5% “quite” relevant). VET is also perceived by the girls as providing opportunities for widening their career options, and even those who do not wish to pursue a career in the area of VET still acknowledge its relevance to their everyday skills.

This research provides a baseline from which to measure the effects of efforts made so far (Smyth *et al*, 2000; Beavis *et al*, 2004) to address gender issues in relation to VET delivery. Much more needs to be done in the area of VET in schools. The research also suggests the capacity for VET to foster more positive views of TAFE and VET as an alternative to university learning. Given that 44.6% the girls indicated that they intended to do further studies at TAFE, this illustrates the girls’ ability to see how VET makes it possible for them to explore more career options while keeping their option of going to university open.

Sufficient vocational training will leave young women prepared to keep pace with occupational skills training and/or entry-level employment in non-traditional occupations as well. It is necessary therefore for in-service training for vocational counsellors and instructors to include information about non-traditional jobs for women, and instruction on how to present non-traditional career options to young women (Watkins and Milgram, 1994 p. 17).

### References

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Responses by the girls therefore indicate their opinions that VET has the potential to satisfy their need for work-related skill development.

One of the girls commented:  
“Finishing school isn’t just about the studying, it’s about learning and experiences in whatever you want, to fulfil a dream. VET can help you do that”

B: New South Wales

Kimberley Zeller Turner and Robyn Woolley

### Introduction

The growth of vocational education in schools has been rapid, including the delivery of vocational education in schools, by schools or TAFE or by private providers. During this process it has been observed that the gendered pattern of course selection, or field of study has been repeated with school students mirroring those patterns well entrenched in the wider VET system and Australian working lives. The results of this segregation have been of little benefit to women and are of particular relevance to a study examining linkages between education and economic security.

Dwyer & Wyn (2001) are amongst those researchers who warn of the gender blind approach currently informing VET in schools and school to work transitions. In addition a recently published report (Long & DSF, 2004) looking into the lives of Australia's young people found that female school leavers continue to face greater disadvantage than males during this period of transition from school to work, with an increasing number of girls not in school, or work. This points to the differing outcomes from education based on gender, which can have serious life consequences.

This concern is not new and is supported by numerous earlier reports identifying the gendered constructions of cultural, social and domestic barriers to equality of access and outcomes. Collins *et al* (1996) documented the ways in which actions can impact differently on boys and girls because of gendered constructions, in their investigation into gendered behaviours in schools. Here young women's career choices and priorities were identified as being important areas for further examination and research (Collins *et al*, 1996:95). Again, concern over career choices and the concerns regarding the transition period from school to training or work were described as 'a critical juncture for girls and young women' (Quay Connection, 2003:53).

The case study explored future work aspirations, information patterns of career guidance, and the linkages girls are making with training and life plans across three states - South Australia, Queensland and New South Wales.

In NSW WAVE partnered with Northern Sydney Institute to survey girls and gather data on their thoughts about their future working lives, their educational aspirations and the significance of Vocational Education and Training for their futures.

### Methodology

The girls who contributed to this research attended Meadowbank College, Northern Sydney Institute and were undertaking a TAFE delivered VET course (TVET) as part of their units/subjects for their final years at school. They were given questionnaires during their TVET class at Meadowbank College in the week beginning September 4<sup>th</sup> 2004, and 109 questionnaires were completed. In addition, during the following week, 2 focus groups were run with a total of 30 girls who had completed questionnaires involved. While the content of the focus groups mirrored the questionnaires the open discussion format allowed girls to expand on any aspects covered by the questionnaires.

The TVET course areas the students were attending included Hairdressing, Accounting, Beauty, Business Services, Sport and Recreation, Child Studies, Real Estate, Information Technology and News Media - Journalism. The focus groups however only included girls from Beauty, Hairdressing, IT and News Media.

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To put the questionnaire responses in context - girls make up approximately 60% of the student TVET population of Northern Sydney Institute, and over 2000 students are undertaking a TAFE delivered course in Years 11, and/or 12 as part of their schooling through Northern Sydney Institute. Of the 31 courses offered there are 5 course areas with no female students enrolled in the classes (Hardware servicing, Electro-technology, Metals, Primary Industries and Plumbing). Males, however, are spread across all course areas except for Beauty, including Nursing, Aged Nursing, Hairdressing, and Child Studies. Small numbers of girls are in construction, aviation and automotive courses, but are highly disproportionate in numbers to the numbers of male students. The 2 courses with the highest overall numbers of students enrolled are hospitality (37% female) and tourism (85% female). Accounting and Child Studies were the next highest, (71% and 97% female respectively). Still, the overall pattern of course selection is highly segregated upon historical gendered lines. This participation pattern indicates slightly narrower subject choices by girls which will lead them into occupations that are female dominated - a pattern consistent with a recent Australian study (Quay Connection, 2001).

### Demographic/Background Information

#### Who are the girls?

The girls who participated in the research either live in the northern area of Sydney or are accessing education there. In our sample over half of the girls were aged 17 at the time of the research, slightly more than one third were aged 16, 12% were 18 and 1 student was 20 years old (see Figure B1 below).

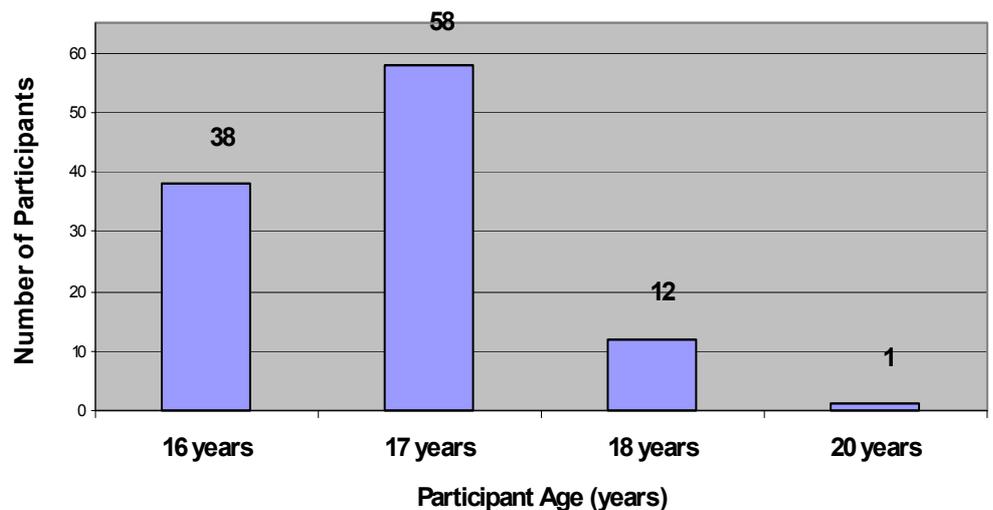


Figure B1. Age of TVET Participants (NSW)

As students can reduce the number of Units they complete in Year 12 for the Higher School Certificate the majority of the girls in the sample (64%) were in Year 11, and the remainder (36%) were in Year 12. It is a common pattern for a significant percentage of students to elect to discontinue their TVET course when selecting a Unit to discontinue for the HSC. If a university route is their objective then courses that count towards their UAI are essential (framework courses) and many TVET courses do not have this standing (non framework courses).

The majority of the girls are Australian born. However an expansive representation of other nationalities are in the student make-up - (in descending order of representation) China, Sri Lanka, Iran, and singularly representation from New Zealand, Bangladesh, Afghanistan, Botswana, India, Brunei, Taiwan, America, Malaysia, Greece, Bosnia, South Korea, Hong Kong and Bahrain. Two students nominated themselves as being of Aboriginal origin.

**B: New South Wales**

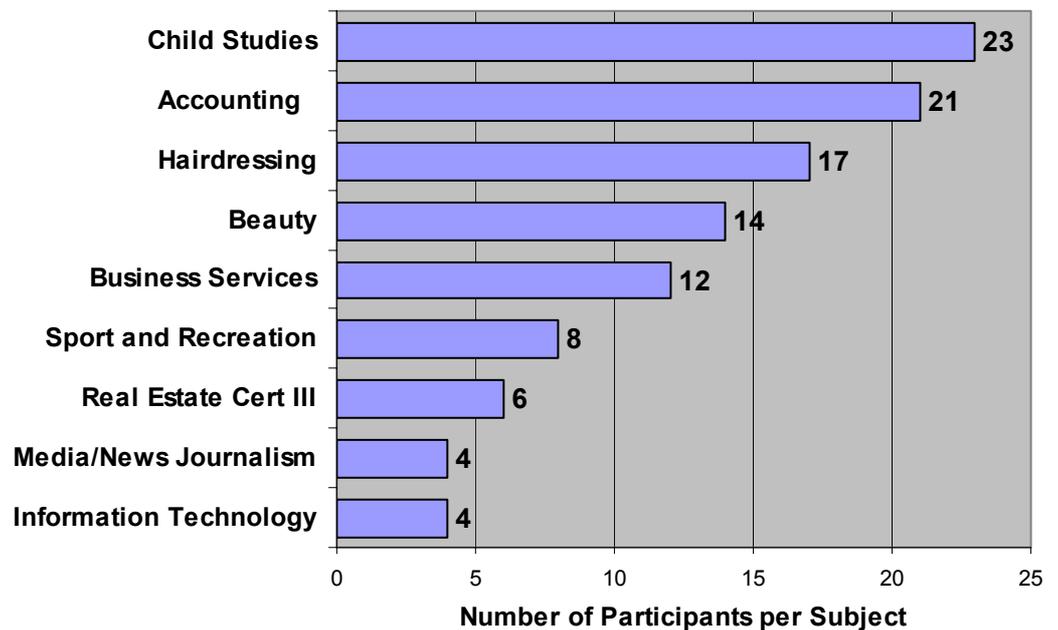
The majority of girls nominated English as the language spoken at home. Other languages spoken were: Chinese, Persian, Armenian, Cantonese and Korean, Greek, Sri Lankan, Bengali, Tamil, Serbian, Arabic and Indonesian.

Few of the girls stated that they had a disability.

The girls' employment histories are relevant to this research. 60% were in paid casual employment working between 4 and 19 hours per week. The majority worked as shop assistants 33% including fast food service, 20% were supermarket checkout operators, 17% worked in Hospitality. Other identified work included receptionist/secretary, table waiting, hairdressing, swimming instructor, real estate agency and one student worked as a party hostess. One student worked 50 hours per week, perhaps in a family business although this was not stated.

It is interesting to note that in this sample, Australian born girls were more likely to be in paid employment (70%). Of those born outside Australia only 47% had employment, with girls from Asian countries less likely to have casual work.

The course areas undertaken by the researched population of students are shown in Figure B2. 45% of participants were studying Child Studies, Hairdressing or Beauty. Six per cent of students were completing a traineeship in their subject.



**Figure B2. TVET Subject Studied by Participants (NSW)**

Three of these course areas (Beauty, Child Studies and Hairdressing) have either completely female participation or nearly so, and over the past 3 years the student intake in these TVET courses has increased. Accounting, Business and News Media are also female dominated, while Real Estate Sport and Recreation and Information Technology are male dominated.

A factor not explored in course selection is geographical - distances travelled by students, and transport routes. A course has to be accessible to be a realistic consideration or choice to a student. Also some schools (a minority) request students selecting TVET to have a full complement of school delivered Units/subjects as well as the Unit weighting of their VET subject, resulting in heavier study and timetable loads. For many students this may operate as a disincentive, and act to eliminate VET selection unless it is delivered directly by the schools.

## B: New South Wales

### Girls Future Working Lives and how they found out about work

What girls like and what interests them is a powerful motivator to promote their learning about the world of work. VET subjects provide opportunities additional to school organised work experience, and casual employment to learn more about possible career paths.

The directions the girls saw ahead for them were traditional female areas of work. Over half the girls nominated child care, beauty, teaching, business and hairdressing as potential or even most likely career paths for their futures. Figure B3 (see over page) displays some of the range of participants' future career choices. Small numbers nominated real estate, law, accounting, welfare industry, health and sport, and tourism.

Single participants (not shown in Figure B3) named dancing, retail, and animal care, as their career choice and one girl chose raising a family. Although there was a group of girls in the sample undertaking IT one only nominated this industry as a future career direction from the responses in the questionnaire, and none indicated their intention to pursue IT in the focus group.

Dominating the reasons for career path selection are comments such as 'I like it', its fun and enjoyable', I enjoy (named area...)''. Examples that link interest levels and the liking of a subject can be demonstrated with a sample of answers - those who nominated child care. The majority told us they 'loved children, and working with them', many said they 'were good at taking care of them' and liked to see children develop. A few however who said they had selected this area for their work experience found that this influenced them positively to see this as a career direction and TAFE and parents were mentioned as helping them come to this decision.

Girls who identified the Beauty industry as a preferred career path chose this because it interests them, but also indicated that other students/friends or family had given them encouragement. 'Pampering myself and others' and working with people, and the non-academic focus were also mentioned.

Beside the high levels of personal interest expressed by the girls as reasons for identifying a career area for their futures - other motivators were expressed: e.g. meeting people, area identified as having future potential, family pressures, capable of doing it, and money.

### Career Information

The majority of the girls (90%) informed us that they felt they were familiar with the type of work involved in their career choice. These girls nominated their schools, in particular their Careers Advisors (62%), as their major source of information, but friends rated highly also (47%) and it must be concluded that *girls talk* is a significant information network and exchange. Advice from their parents rated 37%, slightly above gaining information about work from the media (30%) and the internet (27%). Other sources of information given were 'private course', TAFE, 'people who work in the business', teachers, 'open days at uni', and 'my work'.

When asked what further information they would like to help them decide on their future, the girls however had many queries. Overwhelmingly, students wanted to know what was involved in the career they were interested in and how much money they could expect to make. They also especially wanted to know course details and the qualifications they needed. Others were interested in how they could get into the post school course, pathways other than university, where they could go with the career, the location of study or work places, the marks they needed to get into university, the environment they would be working in, the course costs and how to gain work experience in the area.

Also mentioned were the benefits of the job, related fields they could get into, the hours they would be working, opportunities, what suited them, job market trends and an interest in having someone from the industry talk and share their experiences with them.

Almost all of the girls had access to a Careers Advisor at school, and over half of the girls (55%) said that their Careers Advisor helped them with general advice and guidance. Some (11%) stated that they were not sure whether the Careers Advisor had helped them, and a similar number stated they did not feel their Advisor helped them with their future career choices.

*(I chose this)  
...because I like it*

*Money is hard to  
earn, easy to spend*

B: New South Wales

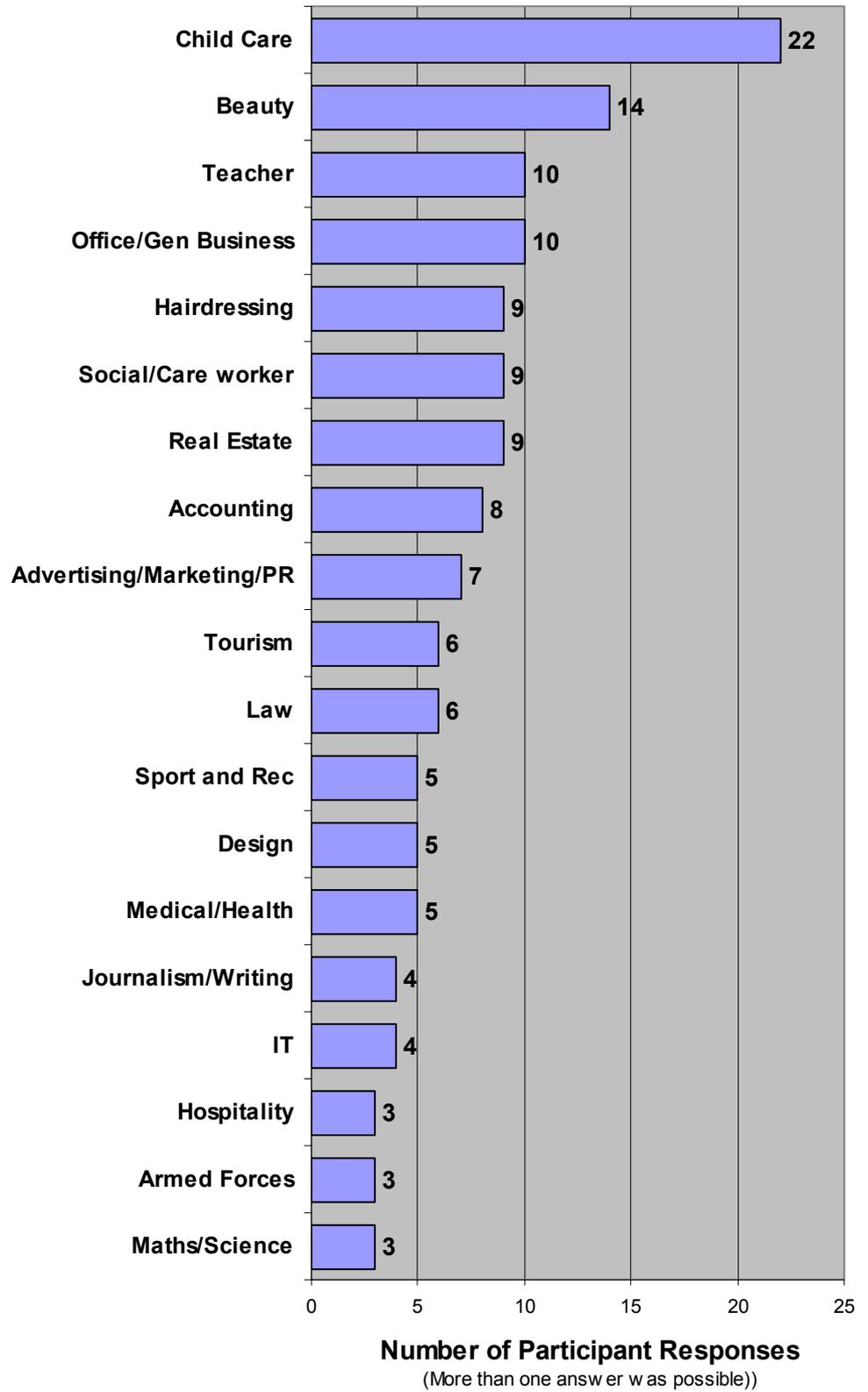


Figure B4. Participants' Future Career Choices (NSW)

## B: New South Wales

### Further Study

The confidence level in their stated career remained high when asked of their future study plans. Most of the girls (90%) stated they intended to do further studies in their nominated career area. Of these girls, 65% wanted to study at TAFE, 48% of students nominated wanting to study at university, and other named places of study were nominated including a small number of private colleges.

### Work Experience

The majority of students 76% had undertaken work experience either as part of their TAFE or school courses. Of the students who had completed work experience, 26% had done so in the hospitality industry, 15% in child care, 9% in clerical/ receptionist/secretarial work. Also popular was a hair salon, beauty salon, real estate, retail and primary school teaching (each 3%).

Of those students who had not undertaken work experience nearly half said they had not yet had the opportunity, 18% had not had the time, other answers concerned; 'doing a course instead', 'organisation was too complicated', 'they didn't get round to it', 'insurance expenses', 'they don't want to', 'can't find anything suitable' and 'they get into trouble' so are not allowed to go'.

One third of the respondents had chosen their work experience based on their own interest (32%). Others stated their work experience was organised by TAFE (17%), school (11%), Family (10%), Careers Advisor (8%), 7% approached the workplace themselves, and 5% chose it because it was easy to get to from their home.

When asked what they had learnt from the work experience, 39% of students mentioned learning specific skills to the job they tried. Also rated highly (24%) was learning about the workplace and the industry in general. 10% said they had learnt skills in working with others and communicating in the workplace, and 6% learnt about customer service. Some respondents (7%) recognised that the job they tried was not the career they wanted, and a similar percentage felt they had learnt little, and 3% learnt that work was hard.

### Learning about work through the VET experience

#### Access to Information on the TVET Course

The girls were asked which information sources enabled them to select their TVET course. Schools and school staff particularly Careers Advisors were found to be significant sources or filters of information for girls seeking VET course options, nominated by 65% and 70% of the respondents respectively. Another 20% sought information via the TAFE web site or Handbook and friends rated nearly as highly. Parents were not seen as highly valuable sources of information, nor their employers.

Students credited themselves with making their own decisions about undertaking their VET course but the family influence family rose here, indicating that girls discussed their decisions at home. Friends rated less highly and other influences were minor, with schools scoring very low in influence, except where timetable issues were a consideration.

The majority of students were in the course of their choice and they stated that this was based on their interest and liking of the area, with 72% of students attracted to working in the industry of their VET course.

While it is pleasing to consider that girls are satisfied with their VET course selection and what they are gaining from it, there was a flimsy connection to the 'value' of this field of study in the work place. Almost three quarters of students (73%) had no relevant information on the job availability in their VET course area. Of the students who did have relevant information and chose to answer this question, one third said their information came from their Careers Advisor or school, 12% found information from the internet, and almost as many received information from friends, people in the industry and brochures/handbooks. Family, TAFE and the newspaper rated about 7% each.

When asked how this knowledge effected their decision to pursue a career in the area of their TVET course over half saw this lack had no effect, and 11% saying it makes their decisions difficult.

*30% of students said they had information on pay rates and salary ranges in the area of their VET course but the majority (70%) did not.*

*Responses from the girls:*

*It does not affect me.*

*Pay is not that good, however if you enjoy your occupation it shouldn't matter. I want to be financially stable and not knowing the pay is throwing me off making a final decision.*

*Has a great affect where I would not choose to pursue a career.*

B: New South Wales

Looking more closely at a course area - Hairdressing, the majority (59%) felt they did not have information on job availability. Of the 8 students who identified whether this lack of information affected them, 2 said it would make them 'have second thoughts', 3 mentioned that 'if the pay is good, it doesn't matter', 1 said it did not affect them, 1 said information was not available and another said they only received general information.

In Beauty, a significant 86% of students did not have information on job availability. 4 students said it did not affect them, 2 said it reduced their options, 2 had reduced interest and 1 was more interested. In Accounting, again significantly, 90% of students did not have job availability information. Of the 4 IT students who answered this question 2 knew about job availability and 2 did not.

A similar pattern emerged with the question on pay rates. In Hairdressing, only 47% answered this question, of those, 63% said they had no information on pay rates. In Beauty, only 4 students answered this question; 3 did not have information on pay rates and 1 did. For Accounting, from 7 students, 4 did not have pay rate information and 3 did. In IT, the 2 students that answered the question did not know about pay rates. Figure B4 (below) gives a breakdown of the NSW participants' knowledge of job availability and pay rates by Vet course area studied.

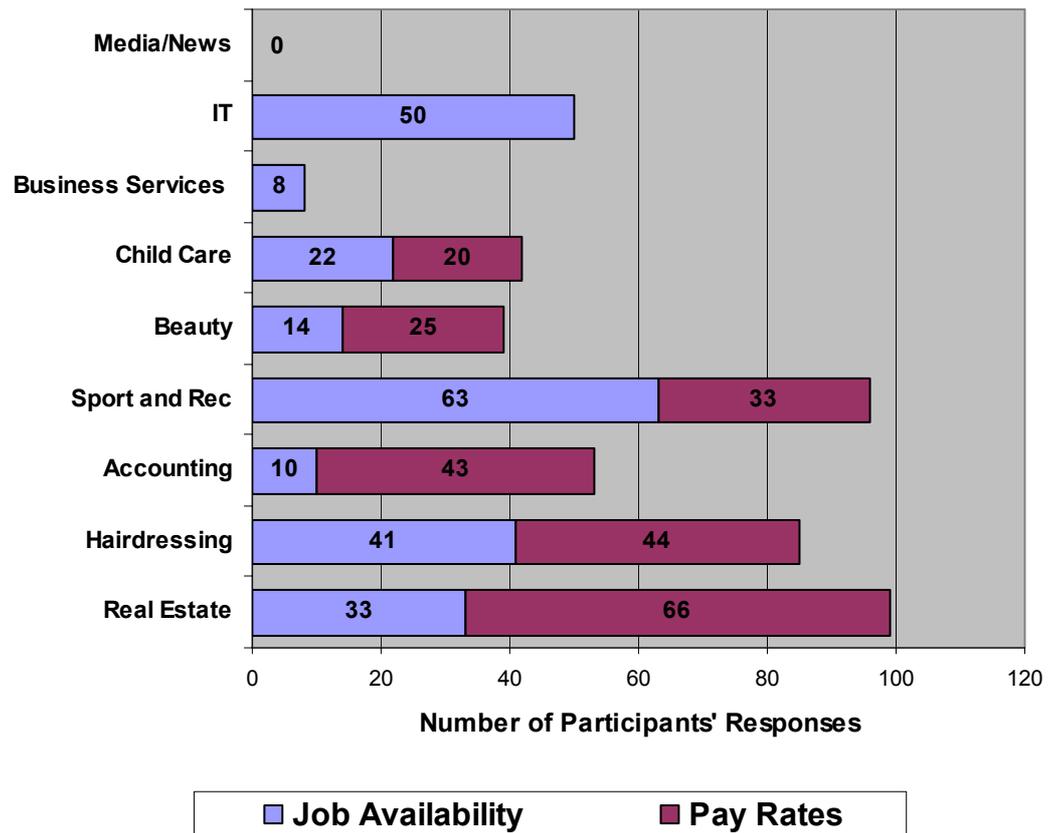


Figure B4. Knowledge of Job Availability and Pay Rates by Course (NSW)

Current data from the *Australian Jobs Update: July 2004* indicate that many of these areas do not have 'very good job prospects for the end of this decade the exception being hairdressing, which is listed as being the only trade with 'very good prospects' but which also attracted a comment re poorer earnings compared to many other areas. Accounting was also listed as having very good job prospects. Information Technology was identified as having 'good prospects' for the end of the decade. Other fields are considered service jobs and may involve high levels of casualised employment and low rates of pay.

## B: New South Wales

Again using the *Average Weekly Earnings: Australia* data only one of the above areas - real estate (property and business services) was identified as providing remuneration levels higher than average of the total workforce overall. However, several areas such as Sport and Recreation, Beauty, Child Care were identified as cultural/recreational, health and personal care services, which provide lower than average remuneration.

Referring back to the comments included from a small number of girls, the relevance of this information to them is - in their views - varied. Yet it is actually of considerable relevance to girls and young women to ensure they are in fact informed of the considerations involved in pursuing fields of study based on their preferences if, in fact, they lead to a unsustainable lifestyles.

### **Educational Aspirations, Future Career Path and Relevance of VET**

Two thirds of the respondents intended to continue their study in their chosen VET area in the future. Almost a similar number of respondents said they would follow their VET course into the industry area using the course as a career path.

Enjoyment or liking the course was a major motivator influencing future plans and was the reason given by one quarter of the student sample. A similar number of girls responded that job/career opportunities were the motivating factors to continue their study in their chosen VET area. The remaining third who did not wish to continue their VET studies stated *not* liking their course as their reason not to continue.

91% of the girls felt the knowledge and/or skills they gained from the course would be useful or relevant in the future, citing reasons such as 'useful for career prospects', and 'useful for everyday life'. VET also scored highly in terms of relevance to the future when compared to relevance to school subjects. Furthermore, the girls could see benefits for their school and future study plans as they were already using the content or felt it was giving them a head start for other study or for part time work.

*The course I'm completing is a basic skills one that I will need in everyday life as well as if I need a job in that area*

Around 80% of students felt TVET learning was more relevant than their school subjects and 70% felt that TVET supported their future goals.

*Very relevant - my school subjects aren't relevant*

*VET learning is better compared to subjects at school because VET is more hands on and VET is more relevant than school*

*VET course is what I want to learn*

*Extremely relevant, honestly I don't try as much as I do at TAFE because I know I need and want this.*

A closer examination into several course areas shows that:

- In Hairdressing, 53% wanted to do further study in the area, 29% did not and 18% were unsure.
- In Beauty, 50% wanted to do further study in the area, 43% did not and 1 student was unsure.
- In Accounting, 75% wanted to do further study in the area and 25% did not.

Thinking further into the future the girls were asked to envisage what they intended to be doing in the next 5 years and in the main the girls saw themselves either working or studying, with a few considering travel. Asked if VET supported their goals 70% of students said yes.

*I enjoy (the VET course) and think I could have some skills in it*

*My choice, (I) want to get into real estate; (I) thought this would be a good starting point.*

*My interest with the course and industry and wanting to get a head start in the industry while still at school.*

## B: New South Wales

### Conclusion

The girls in this study demonstrated considerable confidence and positivity in linking their VET experiences to their future work and study plans. This strength is also displayed in their satisfaction with following study and career routes based on enjoyment and utilising 'what they like' as a strong motivator. Girls were also studying in the course area of their choice, with only some exceptions. Work experience followed similar choice patterns to courses. For the majority of girls personal interest was their main influence, while some girls were influenced by their family and friends. As in their casual employment experience, work experience provides opportunities to learn skills specific to the job, learn about the workplace generally and about working with others.

The participants' high level of satisfaction with the VET study experience is of considerable importance, as are the connections they perceive between the VET experience and its value to their futures.

In addition the high scores displayed by girls wanting to pursue their industry area identified through their VET course area, as an area of future study indicates they consider they are already making career path progress. Comments also indicated some girls can see skills transferability from both work experience, their own casual employment, school study and VET study for future study and work application.

However of utmost relevance is the lack of information on job availability and pay rates of their chosen industry area. The majority of girls were uninformed. There was little demonstration that they had received any guidance into how the industry area of personal interest would provide economic security. There was certainly no evidence of any understandings of the implications of gender in relation to field of study or work force patterns and what this would mean to them as an individual. These girls were not making connections between the pursuit of areas of personal interest and job outcomes - whether the area would provide them with a job, or what the conditions of that job would be like. Although the girls are demonstrating that they perceive themselves to be on a career path, there appears to be widespread failure to support these girls to move towards an economically sustainable future. There is no evidence of proactive use of employment forecasts or job growth data to inform girls' choices.

Many girls participating in VET while at school are electing industry areas where they are at risk of low remuneration because these areas are traditional areas of work for women. It appears from this case study that this knowledge will be relevant to some young women and may in fact assist them to assess whether a potential career route can provide them with the future lifestyle they want - or can afford. Moving on from the individual level, this factor has long term considerations due to the disproportionate burden of casualisation borne by Australian women.

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C: Queensland

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## Introduction

This report provides information to the research project and represents the perspectives of some girls from Queensland who are undertaking VET subjects and associated activities whilst attending school. Information was gathered using a questionnaire to ascertain the basis of choices made re VET subject selection and whether this has a close relationship with the aspirations the students have regarding career choice.

## Context

The Queensland Government's *Education and Training Reforms for the Future - A White Paper* addresses the area of young people and their preparation for the world of work today and in the future. In the White Paper, those reforms addressing the senior years of schooling are intended to give young people greater opportunities in further education and employment - '*The Queensland Government's vision for the Smart State means educating and skilling people so they can compete for and create jobs, in emerging industries ...*'. The commitment of the Government is to '*ensure that more young people who undertake vocational education and training in schools achieve qualifications that are highly regarded by industry*'

On the one hand it is acknowledged that VET in schools is strong in this state with approximately 60% of students studying at least one VET subject. '*Queensland has performed strongly in the provision of a wide range of VET options for young people in schools with over 390 schools in Queensland registered as training providers and with student enrolments in VET qualifications well above the Australian average*'. There remains however the startling fact that '*in this state there are 10,000 young people who are not in school, not in training and not in work*'.

These statistics do not indicate a gender breakdown, and it is difficult to find evidence of any investigation into the gender aspects of the statistics above. Therefore this research focusing on girls and young women in VET, has the potential to add to the knowledge held by policy makers concerning the reforms relating to choices, perceptions of careers and preparation for work. The findings also have potential to provide useful information related to the propositions, recommendations and subsequent activities established by the Queensland Studies Authority that have emerged as a result of the commissioned White Paper.

Propositions 1 and 4 and selected recommendations are pertinent to the context of this research.

**Proposition 1:** *Students should have access to a range of VET options across current and emerging industries that support them in their choice of pathways.*

### Recommendations:

- 1.1 *To keep pace with the rapidly changing needs of current and emerging industries, QSA and DET need to continually monitor, develop and implement policy and practices which support education and training providers to meet the needs of students.*
- 1.6 *School sectors should ensure provision of adequate support arrangements for VET in schools such as: relevant and affordable professional development for school personnel, comprehensive and forward looking implementation plans for delivering VET, continual administrative support in the form of a help desk (email, website and telephone) and publications (guidelines, templates and support materials), and*

**Proposition 4:** *To make informed education and training choices students will have to be supported through a number of processes.*

### Recommendations:

- 4.4 *teachers and career counsellors should regularly update their knowledge of current industry requirements and practices*
- 4.5 *teachers need to maintain industry knowledge and skills*

## C: Queensland

The recommendations above will require significant support for implementation from Government, employing authorities and school leadership. Successful implementation may exert considerable influence on the participation of girls in VET in Queensland schools.

### **Methodology**

In order to collect the information, the questionnaire designed at national level for the research project was used as the primary source of data collection. Schools were selected on a convenience sampling basis influenced by location, the presence of a recognised VET program in their curriculum and a high participation of girls undertaking VET subjects. All schools were in the southeast corner of the State.

Permission was obtained from Queensland Educational Authorities in order to invite participation from the school in this research. School Administration (Principal or Deputy Principal) was approached for their interest in the research and permission for the school to be involved. Once this was obtained, discussions were held with the VET Coordinators from the selected schools regarding the purpose and intentions of the project and to gain their support in facilitating the process with their students.

The voluntary nature of participation was discussed, and privacy issues in terms of identification of individual students who complete the questionnaire were clarified. An information and consent form was also developed for use by the school with the participating students and/or their carers. The research assistant offered to facilitate the completion of the questionnaire at the school and in some instances this offer was accepted. Where this occurred, it enabled the research assistant to provide a first hand introduction to the purpose of the questionnaire, to give reassurance on privacy aspects, and to offer clarification on any questionnaire question as requested. It also assisted the research assistant to gain a deeper understanding of the views being expressed by the questionnaire respondents.

99 young women were surveyed as per a 5 page, four section questionnaire covering demographics and background information, future working life, access to information on VET course, educational aspirations, future career path and relevance of VET. All the young women were studying their VET course whilst enrolled at school. Students from both co-educational and all girls' schools, Catholic and Government schools were surveyed.

Analysis of the completed questionnaire was undertaken by using the quantitative data and observation of the written comments for trends and insights. The following conceptual categories were used to organise the data analysis:

**Demographic detail and background information** (age, place of residence, year level)

**Future Working Life** (career choices, information about careers, further study and work)

**Access to Information** (VET courses currently being undertaken, information sources for course selection, the reasons for the choice of VET courses and information about the particular VET and the availability, conditions and other information regarding jobs in the area of study), and  
**Education Aspirations, Career Paths and Relevance of VET.**

The research assistant worked with two executive members of the Association of Women Educators in order that findings from the data analysis be examined for validity, trends and issues, and for conclusions to be confirmed.

Specific to the Queensland data is the fact that all respondents were attending school and are younger - in the 15/16 age group - than those in the NSW and SA cohort of this study. Some were undertaking a school based traineeship as part of their VET studies and a majority were working either as part of work experience through their school VET course or in paid or unpaid part time jobs.

C: Queensland

The Report Findings

Demographic Data/Background Information

- All the girls lived in the South East corner of Queensland (Brisbane and the Gold Coast). Two students were boarders in Brisbane originally coming from Mirrarrie in North Queensland and Warialda in Northern New South Wales.
- 3.1% of the girls were aged 15 at the time of the questionnaire, 34% were aged 16, 57% were aged 17 and 5.2% were aged 18. (See Figure C1 below.)
- 48.5% of the students were in Year 11 and 51.5% were in Year 12.

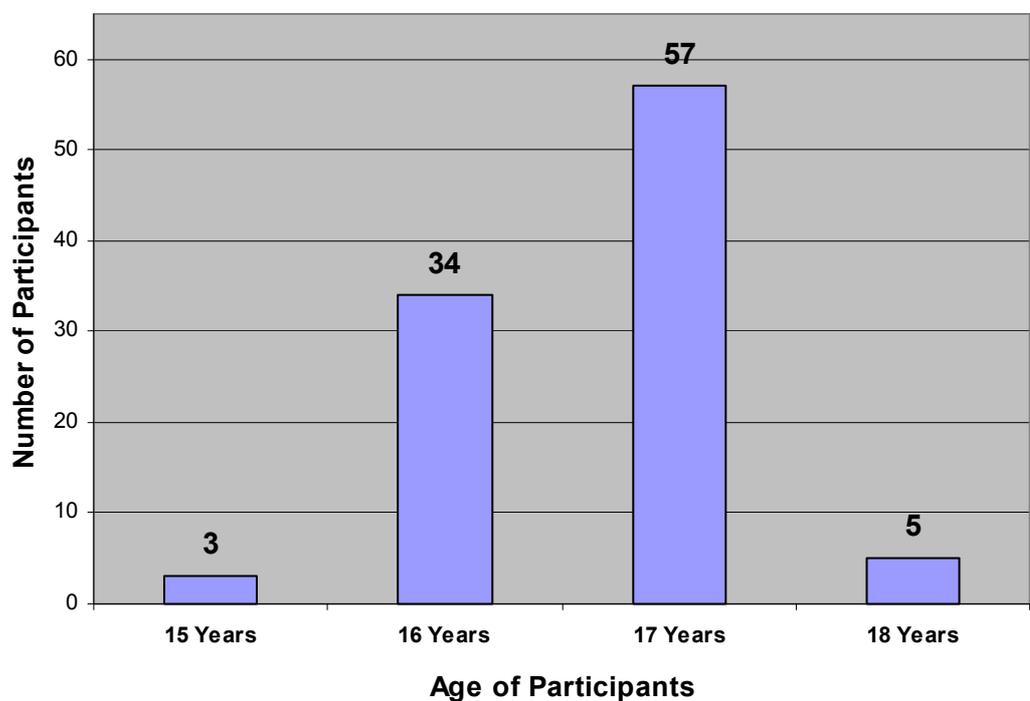


Figure C1. Age of TVET Participants (QLD)

Nationality

- 83 students were born in Australia. Of the students not born in Australia 9 were born in New Zealand and 2 were born in the USA, 2 were born in England and there was one student born Fiji, one in Papua New Guinea and one in Ireland.
- In 93 homes, English was the main language spoken. Other languages spoken were Samoan, Pidgin and Lebanese. 3 students did not answer this question.
- 94 students had permanent residency in Australia.
- 5 students nominated themselves as being of Aboriginal origin.

Disability

7 students considered themselves to have a disability. The disabilities identified were hearing (1), vision (2), intellectual (2), medical condition (1), and learning (1).

C: Queensland

**Employment**

- 71.76% of students were in paid employment. Some students did not identify on what basis they were employed (16%) but of those who did all were employed on a part time/casual basis.
- 26.1% of students were working in retail, 23.1% in food service (eg fast food, or as waitstaff), 18.8% were cashiers (mostly at Supermarkets), 11.6% in hospitality (eg at a bar or in a hotel), 4.3% did office work, 4.3% were teacher aide trainees, 2 students worked in hairdressing, one student was an aged care worker, one other ran children’s birthday parties and another worked at a carnival. Some students worked more than one job.
- All students from the Gold Coast school worked.
- All students worked from 6 to 25 hours a week. 3 students worked up to 30 hours, and one worked 30 plus hours

**Future Working Life  
 Career Choice**

Students were asked what career they would like to pursue when they finished school. The responses are shown in Figure C2 below. Some students gave more than one answer and two students did not answer.

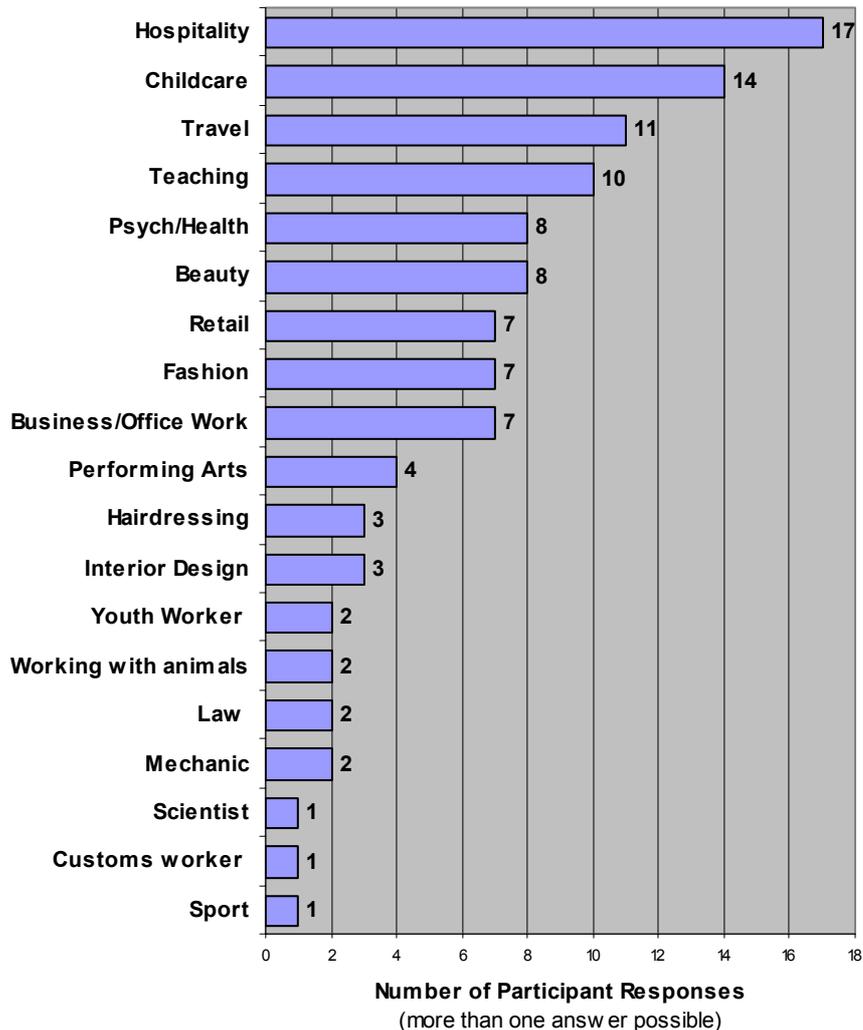


Figure C2. Participants’ Future Career Choices (QLD)

## C: Queensland

### Career Information

- 86% of students knew about the type of work involved in their career choice.
- Of those who know what type of work was involved in their career choice 51.5% reported getting information from their school, 35.3% from careers advisors, 29.2% from their parents, 25.2% from friends, 22.2% from the internet, and 22.2% from other sources such as work experience, talking to people in the industry, reading and TAFE.
- Most commonly students wanted to know how to make it into a profession, do well and progress through it. They wanted to know what qualifications you needed (university, courses), how long they would take to achieve, how much they would cost, how to find work and other tips for doing well in the industry. They also wanted to know about rates of pay and ability for promotion and progression. None of the student mentioned job availability. Other things mentioned included the ups and downsides of jobs and what work they could expect to be doing.
- 31% of students did not answer this question or said they had enough career information.
- All students reported having career advisors at their school.
- 50.05% of students said that their career advisor helped them with general guidance, 21.5% said they had received specific advice or help with finding work and choosing subjects. 7.5% reported having received assistance in the form of booklets and notice boards, 7.5% said they had not found the guidance useful and 7.5% said they had not accessed the assistance of the guidance counsellor. 5.3% of the students did not answer this question.

### Further Study

- 88.8% of students said they intended to do further study in the area of their nominated career. Of these 64 % wanted to study at TAFE, 25.7% at Uni. Other places nominated were 'NIDA or an acting academy' 'traineeship' (2), 'private college', 'vocal training' and 'overseas'.

### Work Experience

- 83.6% of students had done work experience.
- Of those students who had done work experience 27% had done so in hospitality, 17% in retail, 19.7% in childcare, 12.44% in hair and beauty, 11.6% had done office work and 9.8% had been teacher aides. 7.4% had done other activities included working at Movie World, Parliament House, at a stable, at a theatre company, and at an animal clinic.
- Of the students who had not undertaken work experience 4 students said it was because they did not find anything that was relevant and which interested them. 3 students said it was not offered to them, 2 students did not want to miss school, one student had just started her VET course, another had recently changed schools, one student was sick a lot and one simply did not want to undertake work experience.
- In finding work experience nearly all students expressed their preferences on the basis on interest and the school arranged work experience for them. 8.8% of students said their school chose their work experience program for them and 5% of students arranged their work experience through friends or family. 2.5% of students arranged their work experience through their traineeships.

When asked what they learned, students gave the following responses:

- Learned about the area or industry generally - 31.1%
- Learned skills specific to the industry - 18.2%
- Communication and teamwork - 9.7%
- That work is not easy - 7.8%
- Menial tasks such as cleaning, unpacking boxes and washing dishes - 6.4%
- Customer service - 6.4%
- Not much - 5.1%
- That the job was right for them - 3.8%
- That the job was not right for them - 3.8%
- Work ethic - 2.5%
- To be patient 2.5%

*One student learned 'how cute babies are' and another learned 'that you can get bad employers who don't care about you'.*

## C: Queensland

### Access to Information on VET Courses

#### VET Course

- Of the students who listed what they were studying 16.4% were studying Business Communication and Technology, 16.4% Hospitality, 12.6% Community Services, 11.3% Early Childhood, 10.1% Vocational Education and Training, 8.8% Tourism, 6.3% Retail and there were 2.5% of students studying in each of the following areas - fashion, production and performance, computer applications, office administration and education support. There was one student studying Beauty Therapy and another studying Information Technology.
- All students were studying this course at school. 11 students were also studying at TAFE, 11 said they were also studying through another training provider, and 15 said they were studying at the place where they worked.
- 28 students said their course was part of a traineeship.

#### VET Information Access

The following types of information sources were given to the students to choose from and their spread of answers is as follows:

- 28.2% Careers Advisors
- 80.8% School
- 12.1% TAFE, Web, or Handbook.
- 8.1% Friends
- 6.1% Parent
- 5% Employer
- 3.1% of students mentioned their VET coordinator.

When asked what were the main things or people that influenced their decision to undertake their VET course, students mentioned the following factors:

- 29.5% - Interest in the field
- 21.8% - The skills gained, options provided and opportunities created
- 20.5% - Family
- 19.2% - Careers Advisors
- 8.9% - Style of learning within the course
- 6.4% - Did not want to take Queensland Studies Authority (QSA) subjects.
- 3.8% - Friends
- 3.8% - Unsure
- 2.5% - Employer or people at work.

#### VET Course Choice

- 70.6% of students were attracted to working in the industry of their VET course.
- 23.6% of students said there was another VET course they would rather be doing.

Other courses students said they would prefer to be doing were:

- 21% said they wanted to study Beauty, 15.7% Tourism, 15.7% Business Communication and Technology, 7.8% Fashion, 7.8% Drama, 7.8% were unsure and one student wanted to study in each of the following fields: Hairdressing, Hospitality and Information Technology.

The reasons why students chose their VET course were as follows:

- 36% - Interest in course/subject/industry
- 19.7% - To improve prospects/opportunities when leaving school
- 15.7% - Was a good experience.
- 9% - To gain knowledge in that industry
- 6% - It was compulsory part of subjects studied
- 6% - Enjoy it
- 6% - Preferred it to the Overall Position (OP relates to Tertiary Entrance ranking)
- 4.5% - For something to put on their resume
- 3% - For money.

*Other individually made comments were: 'money and experience', 'the fact that it would be easier to get into uni', a guest speaker at the school, and 'the toy baby'.*

*Other individual answers included 'needing a job', 'employer recommended it', 'it allowed me to reach my full potential', 'I got told to cos I can't read and write', and 'it provided more choice'.*

## C: Queensland

### VET Course Information including information about associated work

- 72.2% of students had no relevant information on job availability in their VET course area.
- Of those who did have information about job availability in their VET course area - 39.9% received the information from school, 14.2% from employers, 14.2% from TAFE or another training providers other than school, 5.7% from the internet, 5.7% from newspapers, 5.7% from Open Days or Career Expos, 5.7% from parents and 5.7% made their own enquiries from people within the industry.
- 20.9% of students had relevant information about the rates of pay in their industry.
- When asked how this information/lack of information affected their decision to pursue a career in the area of their choice, 69.9% of students said it did not affect their decision, 8.2% said they were not planning to pursue a career in the area of their VET course, 8.2% said that if they found out the pay was bad it could make them change their mind, 4.1% were unsure, 2.7% said the lack of knowledge was a concern, one student said her knowledge of the pay was good incentive and another said that it aided her decision.
- When asked what other information students would like to know about their VET course, 42.3% replied - 'nothing'; 17.9% said they would like to know what benefits they gained from the course and how the course could be applied; 5.1% said job availability; 2.5% said where to start; 2.5% what is expected of you by industry; 2.5% said further study (including overseas); and one student said 'pay'.

### Educational Aspirations, Future Career Path and Relevance of VET

#### Education

64.6% of students intended to continue studying in the area of their VET course. Of those students who did want to continue the reasons were

- 42.3% - Enjoy it, like it.
- 28.8% - Job Career opportunities
- 15.2% - Helped them in life generally, though not in their specific career.
- 8.4% - For further study
- 5.1% - For qualification.

Of those who did not want to continue the reasons were:

- 63.2% - Did not want a career in that area of study.
- 21% - Were not interested in the course or didn't like it
- 10.5% - Did not need to
- 5% - Wanted to leave school

#### Career Path/Future

- 54% of students said they would pursue a career in their VET course area. 33% would not and 8.8% were unsure.
- 94.5% of students felt that the knowledge and/or skill they gained from the course would be relevant and useful sometime in the future.
- Of the students who felt the knowledge and skills would be relevant and useful for the future
- 25.7% felt they had gained general knowledge and skills relevant to working life
- 19.6% felt the course could be useful in everyday life
- 18.1% felt it would help their career/job prospects in the near future
- 15.1% felt they had gained specific knowledge in the area of their VET course
- 13.6% felt they were more experienced as a result of the course
- 6% felt that the course provide a fall back career or could help pay their way through uni
- 4.5% said that the course provided a head start for further study.

#### Relevance of VET

Of those students who felt knowledge and skills would not be relevant, three gave reasons for their response. One thought the course would not get them anywhere, and another two did not want a career in the area they were studying. When asked how relevant to their future studying VET courses was compared with studying school subject's respondents said:

- 24.1% - very relevant
- 17% - relevant
- 24.1% - quite relevant
- 9.1% - not relevant
- 8% - not at all relevant

## C: Queensland

When asked what they would be doing in five years time, students responded as follows: 90.4% said they would be working; 27.6% said they would be studying. Other answers included travelling (4), getting married, bumming around and performing.

When asked to elaborate on this, 50.6% said they wanted to be working for someone else, 11.9% said they wanted to be studying at uni, 9.3% said they wanted to have their own business, 7.9% said they wanted to be studying at TAFE, 7.9% said they wanted to be travelling, 5.3% said they wanted to have a 'good' job, 3.9% said they wanted to be working part time while studying and 2.6% said they wanted to be having a family. Other answers included, 'earning money' being a writer or artist and dancing in JLo film clips.

69.5% said VET supported their goals, 17.3% said it didn't and 13% were unsure.

When asked if they would like to add any further comments 16.6% of students reiterated what they had said earlier, one student said she wished there were more traineeships, 3 others commented how good VET was, one said she was going to get married and another said they could not wait to be independent.

### Trends and issues from the Queensland Study

#### Demographics

All participants were enrolled in Years 11 and 12 at school and all were studying VET courses/subjects. 70% were employed in paid employment either as per part time or casual basis and their responses are based on the experience of working whilst undertaking school based VET subjects or courses.

#### Future Working Life

Emerging themes in this area were:

- Theme 1**      **Relevance and Usefulness of VET**  
*Generally respondents noted that VET was relevant and useful for future goals, with many indicating they were going to continue studying in this area or wanted a career in the area of their VET choices.*
- Theme 2**      **Strong ideas about their future careers**  
*The young women surveyed had strong ideas of what career they wanted, or the area in which they would like to seek work.*
- Theme 3**      **Female Orientation of Career Choices**  
*Of significance was the dominance of the traditional female orientation of career/work choice.*

The traditional female orientation of their work experience and future career aspirations gives support to the finding noted in the literature review concerning '*entrenched social conditioning that affects the way girls and young women approach their future career and life choices*'. It also gives weight to the view that '*current political agenda...attempts to steer women and girls into traditional institutionalised roles*'.

If the information and guidance they receive at school about work, part time work placement, VET subject choice and careers, is neither accurate nor broad enough to encourage students to think out of the box for their career aspirations, then *the gender blind focus* - and the resultant disadvantage identified in the literature review - will continue.

This has enormous implications for the quality of information, advice and guidance provided at school, and for the professional development and support provided for staff to enable them to 'make a difference' to the lives and aspirations of young women studying VET.

## C: Queensland

### Access to Information and Decision Making

#### **Theme 4 Lack of Information re Career Choice**

*Decisions regarding how the students make choices about career or work choice are based on what they would enjoy doing or what they have identified as being 'good at'.*

*This is positive in that pay or status does not seem to unduly influence perceived future career desires - but the lack of information about the breadth of career choices and what the careers involve (in terms of pathways, qualifications and the nature of work) may influence and limit decisions.*

*Students themselves identified the need to have more information in aspects such as: how to succeed in their chosen career, and how to apply their VET course for their future and maximise the outcomes*

The lack of information about the range of careers, the nature of work involved especially in 'non traditional' careers, the availability of jobs in careers, pay, pathways and preparation and qualifications, needs to be addressed. Further research regarding effective ways of addressing accuracy and access of such information is recommended.

Opportunities for young women in Queensland to participate in non traditional work roles, apprenticeships and traineeships may remain limited unless there are policies and joint educational and business projects which address the issue referred to above. (It is noted that the 'problems sometimes experienced by girls and young women in non traditional areas of work/ traineeships' in other studies may not be identified as a significant issue in Queensland because of the context where young women simply do not 'enter that field in work experience in the first place...')

#### **Theme 5 Work Experiences are generally positive**

*The majority of students had a positive view to work experience, learning skills specific to industry and gaining a greater understanding of what it is like to be in the workforce. A further benefit included an increase in 'self confidence'. However, in some cases the students were left to do menial tasks resulting in their experience being negative thus leaving them feeling exploited and disheartened. When asked to describe what she did for work experience one student replied: 'Was free labour unpacking boxes'. When asked what she learned another student wrote 'Nothing, proved I could wash dishes for 6 hours and now I'm in trouble cuz I don't go (to work experience) and you wonder why?'*

The education of the employer and their responsibilities may require addressing in those cases where the work is part of the work experience associated with the student's VET choices.

### Relevance of VET for the future

#### **Theme 6 VET was seen as relevant, influencing choices for further study and career pursuance**

*Overall, students felt positively about their future, VET and its relevance, indicating they were going to undertake further study in the area of their VET course and were to pursue a career in this area.*

This positive perception of VET was due to the fact that students believed it prepared them for a career. Even students who were not intending to pursue a career in the area of their VET course spoke positively of VET and its relevance to life skills and their applicability. All these factors had the effect of improving their prospects in life. This is summed up by one student who wrote about her course 'I enjoy it, it gives me a lot of experience to do different things in the future'

## C: Queensland

### Summary Comment regarding Trends

Although the perspectives (experiences, needs and aspirations) of the young women in the Queensland part of this research appear to be predominantly positive regarding VET, it should be noted that the sample was mostly from the metropolitan area where choices for VET study and work experiences may be broader than what could be expected from young women in regional and remote areas of the state. (Whilst this may not appear at first to support the reference to the 'broad-based and independent research that investigates the factors that impact on girls' vocational futures, from the perspective of the participants ...' (p. 9 of this report), it is suggested that data from a broader sample would be useful and perhaps the type of information that might arise from a focus group would give depth to this study).

The influence on VET choices and work experiences seem to rely heavily on the information gleaned from school. An implication could be that sources for information are knowledgeable, current and cognisant of all factors and issues that contribute to the quality of VET choices, work experience/employment and the long term affects on life and careers of young women.

This would require a long-term strategy and policies in the areas of VET to support choices being made for a fuller participation in the broad range of work options in the community. Policies and strategies to encourage partnerships between work places (employers) and educational institutions would also influence the VET choices, information and work experiences of young women for more complete participation in the world of work.

### Conclusions

#### Future Working Life

The young women surveyed had strong ideas of what career they wanted. Over 55% of students listed an exact job or profession they would like to have such as *'teacher'*, *'chef in the army'*, *'sales representative in the surf industry'* or *'beauty therapist'*. Over 40% of students listed a choice of jobs or an area in which they would like to work such as *'something with kids'* or *'mechanic or interior decorator'*.

It should be noted that a majority of girls had chosen careers in traditionally 'female' occupations.

The young women tended to base their decisions on what they enjoy and what they are good at. Information about the type of work involved in their career of choice was gained from a variety of sources with school being the main one of these.

Almost 90% of students were prepared to and intended to do further study. Around a quarter of students wanted to go to university.

The majority of students had a positive view to work experience, learning skills specific to industry and gaining a greater understanding of what it is like to be in the workforce. A further benefit included an increase in *'self confidence'*. However, in some cases the students were left to do menial tasks resulting in their experience being negative experience which left students feeling exploited and disheartened. When asked to describe what she did for work experience one student replied: *'Was free labour unpacking boxes'*. When asked what she learned another student wrote *'Nothing, proved I could wash dishes for 6 hours and now I'm in trouble cuz I don't go (to work experience) and you wonder why?'*

#### Access to Information

Students' main source of information was their school. Many students were attracted to their VET course because of a basic interest in an element of the course such as a love of cooking or liking children. Many others perceived that VET provided them with many opportunities and experiences that the school mainstream curriculum would not. 45% of students were influenced by family, friends, employers and their school. Guidance from school also played a large role. This involved differing levels of student contribution to their choices. Comments such as *'I needed a job and they came up with this'* to *'I liked working with children and my teacher had an opportunity to do a course so I did it'*.

## C: Queensland

While most students tended to have a strong idea of the nature of the work involved in their chosen career, over 70% of students had no relevant information on job availability and almost 80% had no relevant information on rates of pay in their VET area.

This would indicate that young women think less about economic security when making decisions about their careers and more about the nature of work. The students' responses to the question of whether they were concerned about the lack of information with regards to pay support such a claim. Some students did give a response such as *'If the pay is lousy I would change my mind'*, however approximately 70% were not concerned that they did not have information about pay or job availability and made comments such as- *'Pay makes no difference in what I want to do, I enjoy the creative side'*. Where students did want more information this was in the area of how to succeed in their chosen career, and about how to apply their VET course for their future and maximise the outcomes.

The Queensland Government's Education and Training Reform Framework (ETRF) has resulted in the establishment of a Career Information Service (a website and freecall service) for students by the Queensland Studies Authority. This has the potential to improve student access to information about career choices, conditions, and pathways. However in the context of the findings here, it is proposed that the attitudes toward work and careers are already well established before girls enter the senior years of schooling and make choices regarding VET studies and work placement. A more holistic approach to work education is thus recommended across the schooling years - an approach that may expand the gendered notions of work that currently exist in society, schools and young people.

The paper *'What's work ~ and what works? Work education and young women's pathways to securing a viable future'* examines the challenges for schools and poses the questions - *How should schools respond to these issues in relation to education for and about work? What changes are needed to the old "career guidance" approach? How should schools help students unpack the concept of work? How might they (schools) respond to persistent gender patterns in subject selection and the implications for students' post-school pathways? How might they (schools) help students develop an awareness of consequences for their future economic security of gendered choices in paid work?*

A number of critical factors that influence the economic security of women and which also shed light on the gendered issues arising in the VET in Schools research are also examined. These include: *Women and poverty, Women and paid work, The gendered distribution of paid work, Gender and unpaid work, the implications for education and training for girls and young women.* It makes recommendations for actions and a way forward and may contribute information for any policy making as a result of the findings within this report.

### Educational Aspirations, Future Career Path and Relevance of VET

Overall, students felt positively about their future, VET and its relevance. 95% of students felt that the knowledge and skills gained from VET would be relevant and useful at some time in the future. 65% of students felt that VET was either very relevant, relevant or quite relevant in terms of their future career path in comparison with school subjects.

Almost 70% of students thought that VET supported their goals. Just under 65% of girls were going to continue studying in the area of their VET course and 54% of students wanted a career in the area of their VET course.

This positive review of VET was due to the fact that students thought that it prepared them for a career. Even students who were not intending to pursue a career in the area of their VET course spoke positively of VET and its' relevance. This is because they enjoyed it, it gave them widely applicable skills or life skills and was generally a good experience. All these factors had the effect of improving their prospects in life. This is summed up by one student who wrote about her course *'I enjoy it, it gives me a lot of experience to do different things in the future'*.



D: Questionnaire

- 1.13 If you attend school, what year are you in at school? Yr 10  
Yr 11  
Yr 12
- 1.14 Do you do any paid work Yes  
No
- 1.15 If 'no' please go to next section, if 'yes' do you work: Full-time  
Part-time/Casual
- 1.16 Please describe the work you do?
- 1.17 How many hours do you work per week?

**Section B- Your future working Life**

- 2.1 What kind of career would you like to have when you leave school?
- 2.2 What made you choose this career?
- 2.3 Do you know about the type of work involved in this career? Yes  
No
- 2.4 If 'yes', where did you find out? School  
Career advisors  
Parents  
Friends  
Internet  
Media (eg TV, Radio)  
Other (Please Specify)
- 2.5 What kinds of things would you like to find out, to help you decide on your future career?
- 2.6 Is there career guidance at your school? Yes  
No
- 2.7 If 'yes', how does this help you in making decisions about your future career?
- 2.8 Do you intend to do more studies for the career in 2.1 above? Yes  
No
- 2.9 If yes, where? University  
TAFE  
Other (Please Specify)
- 2.10 Have you done any work experience programmes? Yes  
No
- 2.11 If 'yes', what did you do?
- 2.13 If no, please give reasons
- 2.13 Please explain how you chose your work experience programme
- 2.14 What did you learn from the work experience?

D: Questionnaire

**Section C- Access to Information on the VET Course**

3.1 Name of the VET course currently enrolled in

3.2 Where do you study this course?

- My own school
- A different school
- TAFE
- Another training provider
- The place where I work
- Via flexible delivery at school / home / library using the Internet, printed packages etc

3.3 Is this course part of a traineeship? Yes

No

3.4 How did you get the information about this course?

- Careers Advisors
- School
- Parents
- Friends
- TAFE web or handbook materials
- Another Training Provider
- My employer
- Other (Please Specify)

3.5 What were the main things (or people) that influenced you to choose this course?

3.6 Are you attracted to working in the industry of which your VET course is a part? Yes

No

3.7 Is there any other VET course that you would prefer to do instead of the course you are currently enrolled in? Yes (please specify)

No

3.8 Please give reasons why have you chosen to undertake this VET course

3.9 Do you have any relevant information on job availability in the area of your VET course

Yes

No

If "no", please go to question 3.12)

3.10 If yes, where did you get this information from?

3.11 Do you have information on pay rates and salary ranges applicable in the area of your VET course? Yes

No

3.12 How does this information/ lack of information in 3.11 above, affect your decision to pursue or not to pursue a career in the area of your VET course?

3.13 What else would you like to know about your VET course?



## E: About the Contributors

**Roselynn Anderson** has had thirty years experience in the education sector, in New Zealand and Queensland. She is presently working as a Special Education consultant in Brisbane. Roselynn is National Co-Convenor of the Association of Women Educators (AWE) and a member of Security4Women (S4W).

**Kate Boomer** is undertaking an Arts/Law degree at University of Queensland. She has an interest in politics and was working part time with the University of Queensland Student Union at the time of her participation in this research

**Elaine Butler** is a senior lecturer at University of South Australia, with a long-standing interest in education and training, women and work, and policy development. She is a member of Research Centre for Gender Studies, National Co-Convenor of WAVE (Women in Adult and Vocational Education Inc), and a member of S4W.

**Jeannie Daniels** is a Ph.D. candidate at the School of Education, University of South Australia. Previously a community-based adult educator, she is currently researching the experiences of women learners in the VET system.

**Virginia Mapedzahama** is a Ph. D. candidate at the University of South Australia. Her interests are in the area of gender and work-life balance, including cross-national, cross-cultural perspectives. She tutors and lectures in sociology on a sessional basis.

**Fran Ralston** is an Education Officer with Brisbane Catholic Education, Queensland, with a responsibility for special curriculum based projects and publications. Fran is a member of Association of Women Educators (AWE) and a member of S4W.

**Kimberley Turner-Zeller** is currently working in TAFE TVET programs in NSW. She is studying a Masters in Social Change and Development at The University of Newcastle. Kimberley also works part time as a social researcher.

**Robyn Woolley** is manager of the Institute Women's Strategy, Northern Sydney Institute, National Co-Convenor for WAVE (Women in Adult and Vocational Education Inc) and a member of S4W. She has a long interest and commitment to women in the vocational education and training sector. Robyn has contributed at the national level on educational issues regarding women and girls for some years.

## F: Research Brief

Lifelong learning is a global policy priority, adopted and promoted by OECD and European Union, amongst others (e.g. World Bank). This Policy is linked closely to the need for both initial and on-going vocationally oriented education and training, given the rapid shifts in the nature of work, technology (including ICTs), and changes associated with globalisation. Eurocentric policies in relation to lifelong learning have a strong on-going commitment to social inclusion, and so include as core business resources, policy and research efforts with a special emphasis on and for women, to ensure accessible and relevant provision of education and training, including work-related VET. Increasingly, this is also the case in many other industrialised and less industrialised countries.

Australia's ANTA (national) VET policy does not match this strong (best) practice focus. Equity related policy is directed in the first instance to indigenous Australians and to people with disabilities. Recently however, ANTA has released a support document for the new National Strategy (*Shaping our future: Australia's national Strategy for vocational education and training (VET) 2004- 2010*) viz., *Women: Shaping our future* (ANTA, March 2004).

In the past 3-5 years, there has been an increasing emphasis on the vocationalisation of education, especially at secondary school levels. This emphasis has been accompanied by the development and funding (federal and state) of policies with a specific focus on VET in Schools (VIS) and similar (VET in TAFE, work experience, schools becoming RTOs, traineeships from year 10 level and so on). Policies and programs have been delivered rapidly, especially at state levels, many without input from the benefit of in-depth knowledge of the VET system, including issues and policy development related to equity. For example, it is unclear whether data being collected is gender disaggregated, as a matter of course. There is now widespread concern that historical gendered patterns may be repeating themselves in the provision of such programs, with the potential to disadvantage young women in terms of career aspirations and long-term economic security, given the ad hoc nature of early choices relating to VIS/TVET.

The segmentation of women and girls' fields of study and workplace participation remains a concern due to the resulting pay differential that is well documented. While girls' participation in VET in Schools is high they are concentrated in course areas such as child studies, beauty and hairdressing, hospitality and business administration areas.

There is a dearth of research into young women's work aspirations, especially as they relate to VET and any VIS/TVET/VET experiences they may have. Similarly, there is a lack of relevant policy or guidelines for VIS educators in this area. Research is needed to provide primary data; to ascertain the basis of the career and VIS selections made by girls and young women, and whether they feel such educational choices and selection applies or 'fits' in with their future aspirations.

Security 4 Women commissioned WAVE (Women and Adult and Vocational Education) to undertake a research project that aims

- to identify how girls think and talk about their work aspirations;
- to identify where they get information and how/do they plan?
- to identify the complex set of factors leading to subject and occupation/industry related choices by girls who participate in VET in Schools
- to identify if workplace application/'fit' of their chosen subject is a motivator for the VET in Schools course selection
- to determine whether the learning experience is in fact a positive educational experience which would lead them to consider VET educational pathways post school

The proposed outcomes of this research project are:

- to provide a critical literature review re young women, VET and work, covering senior secondary school and school leavers;
- to develop recommendations on equity related policy for VIS/TVET, with a focus on young women.
- to develop recommendations for the conduct and provision of VIS/TVET programs for young women
- to develop recommendations re expansion of VET programs in schools and for young women out of school;
- collect data to contribute to larger scale research

## F: Research Brief

S4W will build on this platform to:

- raise community and government awareness about these factors, and advise in the development of government programmes,
- contribute to national policy reform agendas relevant to economic well-being for women
- enhance and improve results for women where need is indicated through consultation with other relevant bodies, organisations and departments

The same core questions will be used and examples of best practice sought for women's advancement for specific groups of women, for example

- Women returning to work, women requiring re-entry training and women in the workforce needing to up skill to enable career change, Older women
- Indigenous women accessing employment, recognising that women's issues are different to men's, analysing what counts as work
- Women in poverty including single mothers and refugee and immigrant women and girls, also exploring intergenerational poverty issues (could include families in VIEW Clubs Life Learning programme)
- Women in micro and small business