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YOUnite PROJECT Final Report

Research and Workshop Results

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1. Executive Summary

1.1 What we did

The Hunter Research Foundation's YOUnite Project embarked on a journey to:

- examine what barriers young people in the Hunter face that prevent them from successfully transitioning from school to adult life, and also begin to determine what actions are required to address these barriers
- shine a spotlight on the issues facing young people as they transition to adulthood and independent living
- engage young people in as many aspects of the research as possible, both as participants and researchers and to encourage their development and self-determination
- obtain the views of the community and businesses on these issues
- provide an opportunity for those working with young people to be involved in the research and to foster and promote greater collaboration and coordination.

1.2 How we did it

We used a mixed method design, selecting activities specifically to suit each target group to ensure a good cross-representation of views. Key activities involved are provided in Table 1.

Table 1: Key YOUnite research activities

Activity	Target	Number of participants
Stakeholder workshop	Practitioners working with young people	12
Focus groups	Young people aged 14-18 and 19-25	28
Telephone interviews	Hunter and Upper Hunter residents and businesses	1,200
Face-to-face interviews	Young people aged 13-25	540
YOUnite Summit	Research apprentices	3
Summit workshop	Participants aged between 13-25	60+
Stakeholder workshop	Practitioners working with young people	17

1.3 What we found

Overall, some young people, particularly those who are academically oriented, who have a clear idea of the type of work they would like to do and who have support within their immediate family and social network, are able to make a successful transition to adulthood. Unfortunately, for those who do not have ready access to this support, who are less academically inclined or who do not have any idea what they would like to do when they leave school, the transition to adulthood is both daunting and wrought with difficulties and barriers to success.

1.3.1 Barriers

The main barriers to successfully transitioning to adulthood identified by young people of the Hunter were:

- The stress of the Higher School Certificate and its lack of relevance to non-academic students
- A lack of alternative pathways (other than the HCS) for non-academic students
- A lack of life and entrepreneurial skills taught at school
- Not knowing what they wanted to do when they finished school
- Not knowing what work opportunities were available in their local area
- An inability to organise work experience for themselves
- An inability to secure work

It is clear from the views expressed by young people that these barriers are having real impacts on their aspirations, wellbeing and outlook on life. In addition to these barriers, young people and Hunter residents also identified key areas that would benefit from more focused attention. These are summarised below:

1.3.2 Government policy

The findings indicate that there are many issues with the current government policy relating to school completion that need to be addressed. Overall, the value placed on the HSC as a major stepping-stone to success is eroding amongst the younger generation and this changing attitude amongst young people resonates with the views of businesses, 80 per cent of whom said they would employ someone without their HSC. Clearly, there needs to be a review of the impact this policy is having on young people.

1.3.3 Broadening the HSC

Rather than throw the baby out with the bathwater, young people would like to see adjustments to the HSC to make it work for them. They would like the focus on the HSC to be less blinkered in order to reduce the stress and pressure placed on young people to perform well. They would like the inclusion of life skills and practical skills in subjects to enhance their employability and a separate stream for students who are trade-oriented. It is hoped that these adjustments will help keep ALL young people engaged at school until Year 12, particularly those who were less academically inclined and who may not need the HSC for their future career options.

1.3.4 Getting more support

The results also highlighted that preparation for post school choices is not implemented uniformly across schools and there is room for improvement. While some schools are doing it well, others are lagging behind. Overall, students wanted more opportunities to explore what they wanted to do when they finished school that includes a clearer understanding of a wide range of career options and pathways. Having lots of choice was seen as being good but confusing and meant that students needed more help to narrow down the most appropriate choices.

1.3.5 Career advisors

Career advisors were singled out as having a key role to play in removing some of the barriers to success. However, it was also acknowledged that careers advisors should not have classroom duties but should have access to sufficient resources and support to undertake their job. Students needed their careers advisors to be more visible, more accommodating to different types of students and be able to provide greater up-to-date relevant information on the latest jobs, occupations, growth industries, work opportunities in the local area, bridging courses, scholarships and financial support to students. They also needed time to mentor students through the various choices.

1.3.6 Life and entrepreneurial skills

A key theme that arose throughout the YOUNite project was the need to incorporate life skills into the high school curriculum and to teach students how to start their own business. It is envisaged that such a move would prepare students for life as an adult and allow them to convert their passion into a source of income rather than working for an organisation doing work that they may not enjoy.

1.4 Ideas for action

Many potential solutions to the problems were also discussed by both young people and the key stakeholders who were engaged with YOUNite.

1.4.1 Enhancing support and funding for career advisors

- Giving careers advisors their own professional standing (association)
- Creating a portal for careers advisors to link them with their peers and to offer professional development.

1.4.2 Greater exposure to different pathways from school to work

- Invite more ex-students to return to schools to talk about their journey
- Use social media to identify suitable and willing Hunter alumni who can deliver inspiring and informative presentations about their journey from school to work
- Highlight alternative pathways to success
- Organise this as a network of schools rather than individual schools so more students would benefit. Regional school meetings could be a good starting point for such a program.

1.4.3 Hunter job guide website

- Showcasing ALL available Hunter-based positions – needs to start with a scoping exercise of what is already available and find ways to bring all the data together into the one website
- Portal needs to be designed by young people for young people
- In addition to a job vacancy section, the website also needs to include 'how to' guides for resume writing, interview tips, application writing and contact phone numbers for assistance.

1.4.4 Mentoring programs

- Specifically, university students or industry partners as mentors
- Can be individual or in group mentoring
- Students were clear that they want a peer mentor i.e. someone relatively close in age
- The university would have to be involved to get students registered and the program would ideally commence with a few pilot schools in 2-3 locations before it is rolled out across the region.

1.4.5 More pathways available and promoted in high school

- Rebranding of vocational pathways as legitimate and worthwhile
- Promoting entrepreneurial paths and how to start a small business and make such information more readily accessible to young people
- Lobbying government to implement policy change to ensure vocational training is available and cost effective.

1.4.6 Enhance volunteering opportunities

- Identifying a legal framework including sorting out insurances, WHS issues and minimising administrative burden to workplaces taking on volunteers
- Information on volunteer opportunities needs to be centrally located so young people can easily access the information
- A marketing campaign to highlight the beneficial nature of volunteering to future employment prospects.

1.4.7 Greater work experience/student placement opportunities offered to University students

- Work experiences opportunities written into University course curriculums
- Clear induction processes developed and implemented so students are not seen as a burden. Dialogue between Universities and industry will ensure that the needs of all three parties (University, industry and students) are met.
- Decrease current student workloads to encourage work experience
- A starting point would be the Work Integrated Learning section to see how work experience placements might be expanded across a broader range of courses (Arts, Sciences, Maths etc.).

1.4.8 Create a one-stop Work Hub for Hunter Youth

- Suggestions include a mobile hub such as a bus or van that moves around the Region including shopping centres and sporting or cultural events
- Create links with local labour markets and employers
- Coordinate a guest speaker calendar with inspirational and informative local business people/employers telling 'their story'
- Service hosted by experienced and qualified careers advisors/youth workers
- Offer all the support young people need to find work
- Keep a register of participants to measure return on investment.

The YOUNite research also highlighted that key stakeholders such as governments, parents, employers and young people have differing views about successful transition from school to independent adult life. Greater dialogue to reach a shared understanding of what is required to help young people negotiate this challenging time in their lives will have benefits for all parties, especially young people themselves.

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Dr Clare Hogue and Shanthi Ramanathan

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2. Introduction

In response to a strong regional community need, Hunter Research Foundation (HRF) conducted its YOUnite Youth Project in 2014 and 2015, as part of its Social Research program targeting regional resilience. This report presents the findings from the YOUnite project.

2.1 Background

2.1.1 The International and National Context

The 2013 *UNICEF Report on Child Wellbeing in Rich Countries*¹ attempts to rate 29 of the OECD countries on a set of wellbeing indicators for children – with education being a key dimension. Educational wellbeing comprises three components:

- educational achievement at age 15,
- participation in further education and non-participation in education,
- employment or training between the ages of 15 and 19.

Australia ranks fifth on the first measure – the ability of 15 year olds to apply basic literacy, numeracy, and scientific skills to the management of everyday life. Our performance drops dramatically on the second indicator – participation in further education. The proportion of Australian 15-19 year olds still in education (79%) places Australia 27th out of the 29 OECD nations, with the top five countries enrolling more than 90 per cent of their 15-19 year olds. Similarly, Australia's NEET (not in education, employment or training) percentage of 8.3 per cent places us 24th amongst the 29 OECD nations, some with a NEET percentage under 3 per cent.

A report created by ARACY² from a variety of sources, including the UNICEF Report, confirms that for most of the indicators including participation in employment and education of young people, Indigenous Australians perform significantly poorer than the Australian average and far worse than most of the OECD countries.

Clearly the transition to paid work is dependent not only on skills and qualifications acquired in school but also on the employment and training opportunities available thereafter. Nonetheless, the transition to earning a living and independent adulthood is one of the important outcomes of education and is a critical stage in the life of every young person.

So why, when our performance on basic education is so high is Australia under-performing in this area? Why are so many of our young people between the ages of 15 and 19 not in study or work? How can young Australians be better supported to remain engaged in school for longer or transition successfully to further training, education or meaningful employment? Improving Australia's performance on these measures is crucial for the future health, wealth and wellbeing of our young people.

¹ UNICEF Office of Research (2013). 'Child Well-being in Rich Countries: A comparative overview', Innocenti Report Card 11, UNICEF Office of Research, Florence.

² Australia Research Alliance for Children and Youth (2013), "Report Card- The wellbeing of Young Australians, ACACY, Sydney.

2.1.2 The Regional Context

A similar scenario is currently playing out in the Hunter. A report released by the Regional Australia Institute³ ranks the Hunter sixth on technical qualifications and 19th for University qualifications out of the 55 regions in Australia, placing the Hunter in the top half of the league table on these two indicators. However, our ranking drops significantly to 28th for level of youth unemployment, 35th for level of welfare dependence, and 37th in terms of the proportion of early school leavers, placing us in the bottom half of all Australian regions on these measures of progress.

So what can organisations, governments, the community and individuals living and working in the Hunter do to help our young people stay engaged in education for longer and effectively transition into the workforce? How can we develop an educated and motivated workforce that will minimise the burden on our welfare system, help us ensure a bright future for the Region and a good life for its residents? How can we collaborate with our young people to help them reach their full potential?

A preliminary scan of the different sectors (education, training, employment, welfare, industry, local government, not-for-profit, indigenous, community services, health, law enforcement) that interface with young people in the Hunter reveals a critical mass of individuals, groups and organisations actively working in this area. Their programs, policies and practices reflect a common goal of helping young people in the Hunter to thrive, secure a future and reach their full potential. There appears to be a significant amount of goodwill and a plethora of programs available to assist young people to negotiate transition from education to employment.

So why are we not reaping the rewards of these interventions and services in terms of those critical measures – employment, welfare dependence, school completion and transition to work? What is working and more importantly what isn't working? Where are we missing the mark? Where are the gaps in our response?

2.1.3 The research question

The HRF is passionate about improving the health, wealth and happiness of Hunter residents by providing insights that will help move the Region forward. In order to understand what is currently happening for young people in terms of transitioning from school to adult life, the HRF, in partnership with key stakeholders, the community, and most importantly, young people, dedicated its resources to answering the following key research question:

What are barriers to young people in the Hunter successfully transitioning from school to adult life?

Sub-questions for young people include:

- What constitutes success/a good life to young people in the Hunter?
- What are some of their long-term goals and aspirations?
- What (if anything) is preventing them from achieving their dreams and aspirations?
- Do they understand the different pathways to achieving their dreams?
- What do young people in the Hunter believe constitutes an effective transition from schooling to adult life?

Equally important to HRF was understanding how young people's perceptions, ideologies and attitudes to work, life and success sit alongside:

- What key stakeholders in the region think of young people
- What their parents want for them
- What current governments expect from them
- What Hunter employers are looking for
- What Hunter leaders believe is needed for the future success of the region

HRF researchers designed a six-stage process to explore these issues. Rather than discrete components, each stage was part of a process of creating a shared understanding and agenda around the issue of young people transitioning from school. The project was designed to deliver insights and identify gaps in our current thinking and response and start to influence a positive change in how we support and empower young people of the Hunter. Details of the six stages are presented in the next chapter.



3. Methods

The HRF adopted a comprehensive research methodology incorporating six separate but interrelated activities, aimed at understanding the barriers young people in the Hunter face when transitioning from school to independent adult life. The methods included both qualitative and quantitative research activities, and are discussed in detail below.

3.1 Stakeholder Group Workshop

This first stage of the project involved a workshop with key stakeholders, held at the HRF office on 27 August 2014, to gain their informed views regarding the barriers young people face. Attendees included youth sector workers, educators as well as community members. A list of attendees is provided as Appendix I. Both the HRF-led Stakeholder group and another dialogue of like-minded individuals organised by the Reach Foundation in Muswellbrook on 8 October 2014 identified similar gaps in services and programs targeting young people. More early intervention for young people at risk, greater development and nurturing of entrepreneurial and general life skills and giving young people a voice in decision making were consistently raised as areas of greatest need. HRF staff also met with staff from Oasis in Hamilton and The Place at Charlestown Square to discuss the YOUnite program and seek their input.

Issues raised by the stakeholder group were used, in part, to inform topics to be canvassed in the focus groups with young people.

3.2 Focus Groups

Two focus groups were conducted by HRF facilitators to explore the issues faced by young people when navigating post-school choices. One focus group comprised young people aged between 14 and 18 (predominantly still at high school) and one with those aged between 19 and 25 (who had completed their secondary schooling). There were approximately 10 participants in each focus group with a good mix of males and females. Participants were recruited via existing networks using snowball sampling. For example, when a young person was recruited they were asked if they knew anyone else in their age group who would be interested in participating.

The results from the focus groups are integrated into the findings presented in this report and were used to inform the questions in the telephone and face-to-face surveys discussed below. A copy of the focus group question guides are provided in Appendix I – 1st Workshop Attendees.

3.3 Telephone Surveys

The HRF interviewing team conducted 1,200 telephone surveys with residents and businesses in the Hunter Region in early December 2014. This was achieved by including questions specific to the YOUnite project in the HRF's quarterly Omnibus Survey series. Details of each survey are provided below:

Table 2 YOUnite Telephone surveys

Group	Number	Response rate
Residents of the Hunter Region as a whole	300	74%
Residents of Singleton, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter	300	73%
Businesses in the Hunter Region as a whole	300	82%
Businesses in Singleton, Muswellbrook and the Upper Hunter	300	91%

The formula used by the HVRF for calculating the response rate is:

$$\frac{\text{Completed interviews}}{\text{Completed interviews} + \text{terminated} + \text{household refusals} + \text{personal refusals}}$$

The HRF Household Omnibus Survey Series randomly selects a member of the household aged 18 or over to participate. The household must have a landline telephone or a listed mobile number to be part of the sample. This means that, predominantly, the respondents to the survey were not young people themselves. Participants in the Business Omnibus Survey were the owners or managers of the business called. In both the Hunter and Upper Hunter, a large proportion of these were small to medium enterprises and/or family-owned businesses.

A copy of the survey questions appears in Appendix III – Omnibus Questions.

3.4 Face-to-Face Surveys

Six young people (aged between 18 and 25 who had completed their secondary schooling) were recruited via existing networks and employed as trainees to undertake face-to-face interviews with young people across the Hunter in January 2015. This timing was specifically selected to maximise the potential of finding young people due to the following factors:

- Students (secondary, post school, University and TAFE) would be on holidays and would have returned from 'schoolies'
- Young people would be more likely to be active after the Christmas and New Year period which is more likely to be quarantined for family time.

The six trainee interviewers participated in a training day at HRF to:

- familiarise themselves with the survey content and technology,
- learn face-to-face interviewing techniques and
- understand WHS requirements for undertaking fieldwork in both sheltered and non-enclosed areas

Interviews were conducted during the day and into the evening to ensure young people in employment would be able to participate. The interviewers used hand-held tablets pre-programmed with the questionnaire. Two HRF researchers and one programmer were on call to all YOUNite interviewers for the duration of the data collection. A total of 540 interviews with young people aged between 13 and 25 were completed. Surveys were undertaken at the following locations across the region:

- Bar Beach Skate Park
- Stocklands and Greater Union, Glendale
- Beaumont Street, Hamilton
- Lambton Pool
- Charlestown Square
- Newcastle Beach/foreshore
- Newcastle Library/Civic Park
- Newcastle free CBD bus
- Green Hills Shopping Centre
- Westfield Kotara
- Marketown shops/McDonalds
- Newcastle Mall
- Darby Street, Cooks Hill
- Wallsend Skate Park
- Cessnock Youth Centre
- Raymond Terrace Shopping Centre
- Muswellbrook Town Centre
- Maitland Mall
- Maitland Pool
- Train route to and from Newcastle and Maitland railway stations (including platforms)
- OASIS Hunter, Hamilton (OASIS Hunter counsellors interviewed clients of the service, not the YOUNite interviewing team).

A complete list of the suburbs survey participants resided in is provided in Appendix IV – Face-to-Face Suburbs.

There were two separate question routes programmed into the hand-held tablets, one for those who were still at high school and one for those who had completed high school. The survey questions are provided in Appendix V – Face-to-Face Questions.

3.5 Not-for-profit surveys

Grace McLean, Founder of NFP Connect distributed paper-based-surveys on behalf of HRF to ten not-for-profit businesses in the Hunter Region. While the sample size was too small to generalise about the not-for-profit sector, it enabled HRF to add some depth to the results obtained through the business surveys.

A copy of the not-for-profit survey questions is provided in Appendix VI – NFP Survey Questions.

3.6 Summit Workshop

The last component of the research was to provide the results of the research back to young people and for them to workshop ideas for potential solutions to the issues raised and strategies for improving the transition experience for young people of the Hunter. The 60 plus young people who participated in the workshop self-selected into one of six facilitated groups aligned with sub themes arising from the results presented earlier in the day. These sub themes were:

- HSC – Ticket to Success or Highly Stressful Cocoon (Stress and the “Other” Stream)
- HSC – Ticket to Success or Highly Stressful Cocoon (Life Skills)
- Support – Super or Sucks (Knowing Yourself)
- Support – Super or Sucks (Knowing What is Out There)
- Wonderful World of Work or Wishful Thinking (Work Experience)
- Wonderful World of Work or Wishful Thinking (Getting Work).

The key and prompting questions used by each group’s facilitator are provided in Appendix VII – Workshop discussion guides.

3.7 Community engagement

In addition to the six research activities, two community forums were conducted; one at the commencement and one at the conclusion of the research component of the project to ensure the Hunter community was kept abreast of the YOUNite initiative and its outcomes.

At the commencement of the research, HRF hosted a panel discussion on re-connecting young people to study, work and community, held at HRF’s Community Lecture event at Newcastle City Hall on 20 October 2014. The free event, sponsored by Port Waratah Coal Services was attended by more than 450 people and featured keynote speaker Hugh Mackay speaking about his book *The Art of Belonging* followed by a panel discussion and Q&A type session with three young people who followed a less conventional pathway between school and independent adulthood :

- Sam Lewis – young entrepreneur who left school at year 11 before developing a unique business philosophy that empowers young people with entrepreneurial spirit
- Teline Cowdrey – single mother who dropped out of school and following a Reach Foundation camp was able to get her life back on track and is now helping other young people as a facilitator with the Reach Foundation
- Sophie Hedges – Young Citizen of the Year in 2011, Sophie uses her skills as a chef to mentor young people and is very active in the community including being the founding member of the Cessnock Youth Entertainment Committee

The results of the research were presented at a Hunter YOUnite Summit, held on Wednesday, 25 February 2015 at Maitland Town Hall. A total of 130 people attended the Summit - a mix of stakeholders and young people. The event was sponsored by Hunter Valley Training Company and Port Waratah Coal Services with support from the Bloomfield Group and the Reach Foundation. The YOUnite Summit received excellent coverage in both the print and broadcast media. It was facilitated by Reach Foundation leader Adam Daniel and featured Genevieve Clay-Smith, NSW Young Australian of the Year and the three young HRF trainee researchers who presented the project's findings around the following key themes:

- The HSC – its relevance and contribution to life after school
- Support – adequacy of practical and emotional support provided to young people to make informed choices about their future
- Work – availability of work experience, work opportunities and support to obtain work.

Through a branding exercise which included the development of the name YOUnite and a logo, HRF made concerted effort to engage young people in the project. HRF staff were able to reach 300 young people via the HRF YOUnite Facebook group page and established an Instagram account, aimed at attracting young Hunter people to help inform the project and offer their opinions around their futures as well as keep them abreast of developments.

3.8 Presentation of results

The tables presented in the Results Chapter following indicate which source the data was taken from:

- Headings 'Hunter' or 'Upper Hunter' indicate that the data is from the Hunter and Upper Hunter Omnibus surveys
- Headings 'Hunter bus' and 'UH bus' indicate the data is from the Hunter and Upper Hunter business surveys
- Headings 'Still at school' and 'Finished school' indicate that the data is from the face-to-face surveys
- Focus group comments are interspersed throughout and are *italicised*.



4. Results

The results presented here were compiled by the HRF's three young analysts (Katy Shultz, Gabbi Innes and Jason Hickson). The results and data from the various research activities are compiled and presented thematically below for ease of interpretation. The three main themes that emerged from the data were:

- The High School Certificate – should it be compulsory, is it a ticket to future success, is it for everyone or is it just a very stressful undertaking for young people?
- Navigating the maze of post-school options – is the support that is currently available sufficient or does more need to be done? What about life skills?
- One in five Hunter youth completing school in 2015 could be facing unemployment. What can be done to turn things around? What can be done to help young people be gainfully employed?

4.1 HSC – Ticket to Success or Highly Stressful Cocoon? – By Katy Schultz

Finishing high school and obtaining a High School Certificate (HSC) has long been commended as the path to individual success and economic progress. The YOUnite project measured attitudes to the current government policy and set out to test the hypothesis that the HSC is important and adequately prepares young people for the challenges ahead.

4.1.1 Attitudes to current policy

The current government policy requires all students to complete Year 12 unless they have 30 hours of paid work. Overall, views of the groups we surveyed towards this policy varied with agreement rising with age

(see Table 3. This suggests that the importance placed on completing the HSC is waning amongst the younger generation which is at variance with current government policy.

Many young people who participated in the focus groups expressed the idea that school is not for everyone and that those who would like to enter a trade or TAFE, should be allowed to.

“The people who are forced to stay and do not wish to often want to rebel and ruin it for others because they have no interest in being there.” – Focus group participant

Table 3: Agree or strongly agree that students should complete year 12

Group	Agree that students should stay and complete year 12
Still at school	48%
Finished school and under 25	63%
Hunter residents	75%
Upper Hunter residents	79%

4.1.2 Value of the HSC

This lukewarm sentiment about the government policy carried over into views about the value of the HSC. Views about the value of the HSC for future employment were polarised. Several focus group participants believe that the HSC was becoming more important to employers while others thought that practical abilities and other factors such as community involvement were equally important.

“A piece of paper doesn’t tell people much. Employers want to know how you handle a situation.” – Focus group participant

On the other hand

“There’s a boy in our class who has an apprenticeship but they didn’t want to start him until he had his HSC.” – Focus group participant

As shown in Table 4, the results from the various surveys indicate that the majority of residents (70-80%) in the Hunter and Upper Hunter believed that doing well at the HSC had a moderate or major impact on future employment. Proportionally fewer young people currently still at school (63%) felt the same way and this proportion dropped further amongst those who had finished school (49%). This suggests that the value placed on the HSC is eroding amongst the younger generation, particularly amongst those who have recently finished school.

Table 4: Impact of HSC on future employment

Group	Doing well in the HSC has a major or moderate impact on their future employment
Still at school	63%
Finished school	49%
Hunter residents	70%
Upper Hunter	80%

This view expressed by half the younger generation who have just entered the workforce finds resonance within the business sector in the Hunter. Business leaders suggest that doing well or even completing the HSC is not as important as residents and some young people think. Eighty per cent of businesses said they would consider employing a young person who had not completed their HSC (Table 5). The finding suggests that at the very least, the government needs to review the current policy and commit resources to seeing how the HSC can be a better stepping stone to future employment.

Table 5: Employing a young person without HSC

Would you consider employing a young person who had not completed their HSC?		
	Hunter business	UH business
Yes	79.0%	79.0%
No	19.0%	18.0%
Don't know	2.0%	3.0%

Further attitudes regarding the HSC that emerged during the focus group discussions with young people are provided below and reflect the polarisation of views on the matter:

"I am personally against holding people in school. It isn't about you or your efforts; it is all about your class, your school and your state. Forcing people to do courses to get an ATAR is frustrating. The system is too rigid and makes you ineligible for an ATAR if you do too many TVET courses. Open Foundation is a better pathway, why was high school needed in the first place?" – Focus group participant

"My friend has terrible HSC results but great promotions and jobs. It does vary on industry though, some places you need that Uni qualification." – Focus group participant

"Employers are looking for applicants with ATAR's now to highlight higher thinking and more ability." – Focus group participant

"There's a boy in our class who has apprenticeship but they didn't want to start him until he had his HSC." – Focus group participant

The following section highlights young people's experiences of the HSC.

4.1.3 HSC – the experience

Many participants in the focus group of 19-24 year olds believed that the HSC was highly stressful. Some of these views are recounted below.

"I don't think Uni was ever as stressful as the HSC." – Focus group participant

"I found the HSC really stressful. Extremely long hours" – Focus group participant

"I have friends who have done apprenticeships, then gone to Uni and have still been successful without the stress of the HSC being felt." – Focus group participant

Some also expressed doubts about its effectiveness in preparing them for later life and resented the emphasis placed on the HSC.

"I think there needs to be a strong, institutional cross-societal focus on changing the perception of the HSC as being thrust up on a pinnacle and also thrusting kids up towards it. Many kids get the bends on the way up and fall away. They are left by the wayside and there is a lot of talent and skills potentially going to waste because our focus is so blinkered on the HSC." – Focus group participant

"I am so over science. I did a lot of maths and science courses. I had a passion for it, but teachers were too heavy and I lost passion...I was sort of pushed into maths and sciences by others." - Focus group participant

“I was told if I get the marks I will be fine. I had to go to the GP for objective opinion about my health. He informed me about other options to success outside of the HSC. There is so much pressure placed on performing in the HSC in terms of it becoming a barrier for young people growing up and becoming a part of the workforce.” – Focus group participant

Young people suggested several ways to improve the HSC to make it more relevant and valuable to young people like themselves.

4.1.4 Suggested improvements to the HSC

Several focus group participants suggested adjustments to the HSC to make it more useful. This included the use of practical skills in subjects to enhance students’ employment prospects and a separate stream for students who are trade oriented.

“They really need to look at having two separate tasks and if you pursue Uni, focus on this stream to give you an ATAR. And also offer a stream of courses that offer life skills so that you can survive in the world until you reach a point where you are able to decide what it is that you want to do. Be it a small business, or Uni or whatever.” – Focus group participant

4.2 Support – Is It Super or Does It Suck? – By Gabbi Innes

Navigating the maze of post-school options in a rapidly-changing world can be daunting. Are young people in the Hunter getting the practical and emotional support they want and need in this challenging environment?

4.2.1 Pathways after school/post-school options

As Table 6 indicates, forty-four per cent of respondents who had completed their schooling stated that they had known what they wanted to do when they left school.

Table 6: Aspirations when finished school

Did you know what you wanted to do when you finished school?	Finished school
Yes	44%
No	55%
Don't know	2%

At the time of the survey, 70 per cent of these young people (who knew what they wanted to do when they finished school) had achieved their aspirations or were doing what they had chosen (see Table 7)

Table 7: Progress with pathway choice

Are you currently doing that or have finished that?	Finished school
Yes (Currently Doing)	58%
Finished	12%
Did Not Start	11%
Have not started yet	18%

The most commonly desired post-school aspirations for this group were (Table 8):

- Working (either full or part-time) (59%)
- University (either full or part-time) (49%)
- Taking a gap year (22%)

Please note that respondents could nominate more than one option. For example, someone could say that they wanted to work part-time and attend University on a full-time basis.

Table 8: Pathways when leaving school

What did you want to do (when you left school)?	Still at High School	Finished	Total
University (Full time)	39%	56%	44%
Work (Part time)	34%	30%	33%
Work (Full time)	21%	40%	26%
Take a gap year	25%	15%	22%
TAFE (Full time)	16%	21%	17%
Other formal training (e.g. apprenticeship)	16%	21%	17%
University (Part-time)	5%	4%	5%
TAFE (Part time)	4%	4%	4%
Start a business	1%	2%	1%

Interestingly, only 1 per cent of respondents nominated 'start a business' as something they would like to do after school, whereas the entrepreneurial path was discussed in more detail by the participants in the focus groups. Some of these comments are provided below.

"I think the perception of your own business is misguided. We aren't teaching people what going into business looks like. It can be as simple as an ABN and a business card." – Focus group participant

"My contracting here and there is great. I can do stuff at home when it suits me." – Focus group participant

"I think a lot of people haven't had the idea made open to them. My high school careers expo was all about Uni or mining companies. There was nothing about small business. There are negative connotations about it." – Focus group participant

"I think careers advisors need to educate people about ABNs, and get people an ABN as well as a TFN. The ABN should have more positive connotations than a TFN." – Focus group participant

As shown in Table 9, the most commonly cited initiatives that schools could implement to help students figure out what they wanted to do when they finished school were:

- More information about the different pathways and careers available (53 %)
- Coordinating relevant work experience (44%)
- Provision of workshops presenting the different types of careers (41%)

Table 9: Assistance with post-school decision making

TWO things that schools could have offered that would have helped you figure out what you wanted to do when you finished school?	Still at High School	Finished	Total
More guidance about post school options	50%	57%	53%
Coordinating relevant work experience (e.g. work placements)	47%	41%	44%
Provision of workshops about different types of careers	42%	39%	41%
An audit of your talents, interests and aptitudes	28%	26%	27%
Provision of mentors	15%	20%	17%
Don't know	15%	10%	12%

Participants in the 14 to 18 years focus group suggested that it would be beneficial for schools to highlight the career paths that can evolve/progress from certain subject selections. This way, students can begin to consider the subjects they find most interesting, and the pathways available in that area of interest.

"Having a lot of choice is good, but can be confusing. Limitation can be helpful too. Knowing what you like and don't like is also good." – Focus group participant

4.2.2 Preparation for post-school pathway choice

Approximately 75 per cent of young people who had finished school felt prepared for their post-school pathway choice. In contrast, only 34 per cent of young people still at high school felt prepared for what they want to do after school. This could indicate that preparation for post-school choices is not as well implemented in schools as it should be (see Table 10).

Table 10: Preparation of pathway choice

Do/Did- you feel prepared for your choice?	Still at High School	Finished	Total
Yes	34%	75%	46%
No	53%	23%	44%
Don't know	12%	3%	9%

In general, the wider Hunter community acknowledged that more information and assistance could be provided to young people about post school options. As shown in Table 11, more respondents felt that there was *not enough*, information and assistance than those who felt there was the *right amount*.

Table 11: Information about post-school options

		Hunter	Upper Hunter
Information for young people about the different pathways they can follow after they've finished school	Not enough	52.0%	42.1%
	Right amount	31.9%	41.1%
Assistance for young people to help them decide what might be the best options given their circumstances, skills, abilities and interests	Not enough	60.7%	52.1%
	Right amount	23.5%	31.7%

Table 12 indicates that 'Advice from either parents or friends or relatives' (89%) was what most helped prepare the greatest proportion of those who felt ready for their post-school choices, followed by 'teachers' (38%) and 'work experience (paid or unpaid)' (34%).

Table 12: Source of support for pathway choice

What most helped you feel prepared (for your choice)?	Still at High School	Finished	Total
Advice from parents	52%	49%	51%
Advice from friend or other relative (informal mentoring)	33%	44%	38%
Teacher/s	33%	35%	34%
Work experience (paid or unpaid)	30%	32%	31%
School guidance counsellor	25%	26%	26%
Lots of study	11%	19%	14%
Mentoring (formal)	5%	7%	6%
Taking personal initiative	4%	4%	4%
Desire to leave school or area	1%		1%
Money	1%		1%

Table 13 indicates that for those who felt unprepared for post-school life nominated the following supports as the best remedies:

- School guidance counsellor (50%)
- Work experience (paid or unpaid) (38%)
- Teachers (34%)

Table 13: Source of more support for pathway choice

What would have helped you feel more prepared?	Still at High School	Finished	Total
School guidance counsellor	48%	59%	50%
Work experience (paid or unpaid)	41%	21%	38%
Teacher/s	36%	21%	34%
Advice from parents	32%	14%	29%
Mentoring (formal)	18%	28%	19%

Advice from friend or other relative (informal mentoring)	14%		12%
Lots of study	11%	17%	12%
Taking personal initiative	1%	3%	1%
Money	1%		1%

Greater assistance through their school years, through the provision of programs aimed at guiding and helping young people with these decisions, could give students a clearer idea of the pathways available, and which of these are best suited to the individual.

“Some people lack initiative, they need encouragement to find a career path.” – Focus group participant

4.2.3 Role models/ need for mentors

The focus groups revealed that for majority of participants, family members were the most common role models for young people. They agreed that positive influence is important for young people, with good role models being passionate, engaging and reliable in nature. However, some young people described the challenge of finding positive role models, especially in low socio-economic areas, and suggested that positive mentor programs would be invaluable during the period of transition from schooling into adult life.

“In my socio-economic situation geographically, it is hard to find good role models to help project yourself further in life.” – Focus group participant

As shown in Table 14, the two qualities nominated by respondents as most important in a person they would seek support from were:

- Has been through a similar situation themselves (49%)
- Is a qualified youth worker/counsellor/psychologist (38%)

For those still in high school, ‘is a peer (within a 5 year age bracket as you)’ was another highly nominated option, which should be considered if schools were to incorporate mentor initiatives for students during this time of transition.

Table 14: Types of support for young people

If you needed support to find a solution to an issue or challenge you are facing, which two of the following would be most important to you?	Still at High School	Finished	Total
Has been through a similar situation themselves	49%	49%	49%
Is a qualified youth worker/counsellor/psychologist	36%	41%	38%
Is known to you	36%	36%	36%
Is a peer (within a 5 year age bracket)	36%	28%	32%
Shares common interests or activities to you	31%	26%	28%
Is of the same sex as you	5%	8%	7%
Is NOT known to you	3%	5%	4%
Is NOT of the same sex as you	3%	3%	3%

4.2.4 School teachers/Guidance counsellors

The focus group responses suggest that school guidance counsellors/careers advisors need to be more visible in the school environment and more accommodating to a range of students. Participants indicated that careers advisors should provide clear, up-to-date information, and should have a good knowledge of, and show support for, all of the pathways available post-school, not only a select few. While some schools have excellent careers programs, others are unfortunately not nearly as successful.

“Having energy and resources is important for better careers advisors.” – Focus group participant

Some young people conveyed that their careers counsellor had little information or guidance to offer, and that they were rarely seen around the school. Whilst other participants stated that their careers counsellor focused solely on the TAFE and apprenticeship pathway, rather than the University pathway, or vice versa.

“My school had the perception that Uni was the only way. There should be more help for people who do not or cannot go to Uni. Uni may not be their thing.” – Focus group participant

“My careers advisor made me feel like a burden. Here, just take this form and read it and come and see me if you are interested. They were very dismissive.” – Focus group participant

“I do not even recall having one.” – Focus group participant

“I can’t remember mine doing much either.” – Focus group participant

Participants also suggested that school guidance counsellors could better assist young people in securing employment by presenting upcoming job opportunities in the Hunter, and conducting resumé and interview workshops for students.

4.2.5 Life skills

Table 15 indicates that, when it comes to information and assistance with life skills:

- Almost nine in ten young people interviewed, felt that there was not enough provision of assistance with life skills such as doing tax or starting a business

Table 15: Assistance with life skills

Provision of assistance with life skills such as doing tax or starting a business (Still at high school)	
Not enough	89%
The right amount	11%
Too much	1%

The focus group responses mirrored these results, with many participants proposing that it would be very useful if life skills were taught in high school. In this way, all young people could have a good understanding of things such as changing a tire, doing tax, starting a business, as well as what superannuation is and how it works.

“I think life skills should have been taught in high school. I can write essays, but I can’t do my tax. It isn’t practical.” – Focus group participant

Overall, young people felt that more provision of information and assistance navigating post school options, as well as practical advice regarding life skills would make the transition to post school life easier.

4.3 The Wonderful World of Work or Wishful Thinking? – By Jason Hickson

With one-in-five Hunter young people leaving school in 2015 potentially facing unemployment, are there ways in which we can improve employment prospects for young Hunter people?

4.3.1 Opportunities for work

Within the Hunter, youth unemployment has grown significantly in recent years. Despite this, young people were mixed in their perceptions about their prospects for work and viable careers locally. Some participants felt that there were opportunities that did exist for them locally.

“There is work I want to do here, yes.” – Focus group participant

While the outlook of others was not as positive...

“Work around here is less and less available.” – Focus group participant

“I think overall, Newcastle lacks opportunities that Sydney and Melbourne have.” - Focus group participant

Table 16 outlines the perceptions regarding opportunities for work for young people in the Hunter.

Table 16: Level of employment opportunities for young people in the Hunter

Group	Proportion who believe that there are currently <u>not enough</u> work opportunities for young people in the Hunter doing what they want/ staying in the area if they want
Still at school	45%
Finished school and under 25	36%
Hunter residents	67%
Upper Hunter residents	70%
Hunter businesses	57%

Many young people additionally expressed a desire to return to work in the Hunter later in life if opportunities did not exist for them in the near future.

“I’d always come back, but it depends on my occupation and where it takes me” and “I prefer to stay around here in Newcastle.” - Focus group participant

“I agree about concerns over Newcastle. We need the development to help job growth catch up to population growth. The wider Hunter needs it to. I love Newcastle. It is my home and I will finish my life here. Maybe not all my career here though.” – Focus group participant

Subsequently, it would be beneficial to see a greater and more diverse array of local employment opportunities for young people. The lack of local opportunities was addressed by focus group participants, who posed that one solution to the problem could be the fast tracking of Newcastle City and in particular, the construction and expansion of the City University campus.

“Expanding the University in the City is good though.” - Focus group participant

“Yes, but it (the University expansion) is too slow though.” - Focus group participant

Those young people who felt that there were not currently sufficient work opportunities available in the Hunter, were asked to identify those opportunities they wished to pursue. Fields of design, engineering and science, arts, media and information and communications technology were the most common responses. The perceived lack of opportunities in these areas could be alleviated by diversification of employment avenues for young people.

4.3.2 Work Experience

Triangulation of the data suggests that there may be a disconnect between businesses and young people with respect to work experience. Many focus group respondents believed that there was little or no opportunity within high school to undertake work experience, and that work experience was not sufficiently credited.

“My high school had no opportunity for work experience” – Focus group participant

“I went to two schools but they had no option for work experience. We should provide more credit for work experience participation too.” – Focus group participant

In contrast, eight out of the 10 not-for-profit and for-profit organisations who were surveyed, and 45 per cent all businesses stated that they offer work experience opportunities for young people. A possible explanation for the lower proportion in the second group is that many of those businesses were sole traders and small family businesses that may preclude many of them from being able to offer work experience.

4.3.3 Requirements for work

Seventy per cent of Hunter businesses have employed or currently employ or currently employ young people under 25.

Table 17: Have you employed young people?

Do you currently, or have you in the past, employed any young people aged between 15 and 24 years?		
	Hunter Bus	UH Bus
Yes	71.7%	73.0%
No	27.7%	26.3%
Don't know	0.6%	0.7%

As you can see by the shaded cells in Table 18, approximately 70 per cent of both Hunter and Upper Hunter residents found both TAFE and University qualifications of moderate or major importance with regard to future employment prospects. These views about the importance of these educational qualifications were largely shared by young people.

Table 18: Impact of University and TAFE qualifications on future employment prospects

Impact on young people future employment:		Hunter	Upper Hunter	Still at High School	Finished High School
Get a University degree	No impact at all	5.9%	9.9%	5%	2%
	Minor impact	16.9%	19.3%	22%	22%
	Moderate impact	38.9%	35.3%	29%	28%
	Major impact	34.8%	32.2%	44%	49%
Get a TAFE qualification	No impact at all	2.4%	1.0%	3%	2%
	Minor impact	12.9%	12.4%	19%	24%
	Moderate impact	41.7%	39.5%	47%	50%
	Major impact	40.8%	45.0%	31%	24%

However, responses were not as clear-cut amongst focus group participants. Some suggested that employers were also interested in other aspects of a person whereas some felt that a qualification was paramount in their preferred field of work. This suggests that there are a myriad of employment options and young people need to be informed about the different requirements and pathways to these options.

“Depends on the industry like retail and stuff, you don’t need any qualifications.” – Focus group participant

“I went to an interview and they rejected my resume and were only interested in me as a person, in who I am and what kind of person I am. I was really shocked.” – Focus group participant

“My friend has terrible HSC results but great promotions and jobs. It does vary on industry though, some places you need that Uni qualification.” – Focus group participant

“It’s not that people don’t need to go to Uni, but that there are other pathways available to people to get to Uni other than the HSC. Marks aren’t just the important bit, community involvement is important too. HD students aren’t getting jobs because they lack the community involvement.” – Focus group participant

“The promotion of jobs at the careers expo is dominated by mining and big business. There isn’t much variety there. No small business or more menial job promotion.” Focus group participant



5. Summit Workshop Results

The outcomes of the YOUNite Summit workshop with young people held on 25 February 2015 are presented in this chapter, grouped under the six sub-themes. The outcomes are also grouped by industry group/sector for those who might be interested in looking only at the ideas that are relevant to their sub-group (e.g. schools, employment, higher education, youth services).

5.1 HSC- Stress and the Other

What can be done to reduce HSC stress on young people of the Hunter?

- For schools and parents to focus on the process of learning rather than the end result
- To be allowed to experience a course for themselves and make up their own mind rather than being told what subjects to do
- To be able to do the subjects they want, irrespective of which line it appears on the timetable – more flexible curriculums
- To be told about bridging courses as another pathway to University
- To choose what they are passionate about rather than what gives them good marks
- For schools to stop orienting career choices to money rather than what someone loves
- For teachers not to ridicule their students' choices and passions
- Removal of the unreasonable expectation that students should know what they want to do when they leave school
- More helpful careers lessons for those that do not know what they want to do when they leave
- A more open-minded society that allows young people an opportunity to try different pathways.

What more can be done to engage students to stay at school?

- Offer more creative pathways rather than just academic pathways
- Have more "Big Picture Schools"
- Make maths more practical and relevant in years 9 and 10 when its compulsory
- Integrate TAFE and schools in Year 10, advertise TAFE more at schools and make it more accessible
- Provide courses that suit students learning styles more, such as correspondence courses

5.2 Life Skills

What important life skills Hunter youth want?

- Tax, banking, cooking, how to use technology, how to change a car tyre, social skills and how to make friends, fitness, self- motivation, face to face communication, how to take steps to achieve goals, budgeting, personal safety, self-defence, maintaining positive relationships, dealing with stress, meditation, self-expression of emotion e.g. bullying.
- Having mentor-led group sessions on how to study, how to find a job and how to improve their wellbeing. Being involved in group projects to teach practical skills .
- Learning about other cultures and learning more languages to match a range of employability, including sign language
- Mentors to be University students or people whom they could relate to
- They wanted the life skills not to be tested in a formal assessment and for there to be no pressure so they are free to explore learning
- If there was to be any assessment they wanted peer assessment or to be offered guidance to self-correct and focus on positive self-improvement
- Life skills to be goal-focused and tailored to individuals and be automatically integrated into PDHPE

5.3 Knowing Yourself

What support do Hunter youth need to work out what they want to do when they finish school?

- More workshops to explore their interests and more taster lessons to work out what a subject is really about before they commit to it
- Personalised learning environments and a strengths-based approach to learning
- Help to pursue their personal goals and passions rather than fitting into a subject mould
- “Social inspiring discussion days” (like the YOUnite Summit) involving mentors, university students, where they can gather idea and grow and plan
- Removal of stigma related to the creative industries which reinforces the culture of unpaid people in the arts
- Having something to fall bank on rather than putting all their eggs in one basket
- Having ex-students return to schools to talk about their journey
- Having career advisors than can provide industry advice and knowledge
- Being provided with case studies of alternate pathways, including realistic advice and narratives. Having half- day sessions to discuss transition at school.

- Starting the process in junior school with a compulsory monthly check in with career advisor to continue into senior school and to make transition planning part of the curriculum
- Creating social learning hubs and opportunities within the wider community
- Best if opportunities were offered through school but can be difficult to fit into with curriculum. If organised by school it would not conflict with study.
- Other initiatives like building portfolios, more opportunities to get rewards, work experience and volunteering to increase networks and build skills
- On line forums and using online opportunities. Social media helps with this. Would be great if there was a community portal for work experience opportunities.
- Formal education should promote more pathways and flexibility if you want to change degrees/courses (in case you get it wrong!).

5.4 Knowing What is Out There

What support do Hunter youth need to understand what work opportunities are out there?

- Having excellent career advisors/careers counsellors who can provide career advice and present ALL the potential pathways
- Information about apprenticeships, particularly for hands-on trades (e.g. boilermaker)
- Taught how to research for information about career options
- Being provided with job guides which include job descriptions, pay scales and pathways to get there
- Taking their own initiative to seek open universities' on line careers advice rather than being spoon-fed in school and having to work things out for ourselves post school
- Bullseye documents
- Careers expos with a wider range of careers, including those at university
- Mentors could be young (more connected) or older (dynamic)
- There should be a subject called "careers" in Year 10, run once a fortnight to provide information on careers including independent research and guidance
- There should be a place to go in the Hunter for young people where they can get information about the different career opportunities available in the Region. It could offer face to face assistance, online assistance, someone to talk to, young people talking to young people, encourage Initiative.
- Maximise the use of online resources for young people such as a job guide website
- Understanding what financial support is available for pursuing different careers e.g. scholarships available, government support etc.
- Careers advertisements like the Defence advertisements.

5.5 Work Experience

What sort of support do young people need to obtain work experience?

- A reduction in the bureaucratic processes and paperwork required to do work experience
- More information about work experience opportunities including a dedicated website for the Hunter
- Ensuring age is not a barrier to work experience
- More recognition of work experience from schools including being allowed to complete work experience in school time
- School should encourage and provide options/lists to businesses/careers that would be open to having work experience
- Should be a requirement that you need to complete work experience in school because it is so valuable
- More communication between schools and businesses as this ultimately effects student opportunity
- University to offer work experience and start as early as possible
- Young people do not desire payment or even any acknowledgement with a certificate because they are gaining so much in knowledge and new skills.

5.6 Getting Work

What sort of support do young people need to get a job?

- All jobs listed on one website (types of jobs and how to get them)
- Having ongoing contact with potential employers both at school and University
- Ongoing contact from careers counsellors about available jobs
- Resume-writing workshops at school and an opportunity to take their resumes around to prospective employers
- Interview practice at school and it needs to be fairly marked. Being taught interview techniques
- Barriers to finding work include transport, relying on parents for transport, high University workload, lack of time and stiff competition.
- Having a mentor to help you with the entire process of job seeking
- Careers evening where you can meet someone who does what you want to do and get tips on what to do to get a job in a particular industry
- Peer/industry mentoring and workshops on preparing yourself for interviews.

This last section presents the ideas that came from Summit participants who were over 25.

5.7 From the “not-so-youthful”

- Other ideas (from the not so youthful)
- Many university degrees (particularly honours degrees) have a requirement to undertake a 6 month unit of study to help explore/refine areas of professional interest/specialisation before commencing your dissertation
- The most useful subject in my degree – and something that could be applied to senior high school studies
- Introduce a program similar to the NEIS Program into schools and create partnerships with business, school, community groups and students that will trigger new business and ideas for sustainable partnerships that will give students life and business skills
- Industry tours for teachers and career advisors to keep them ‘in touch’ with the world outside of the school grounds
- More mentors in schools who have industry experience to assist students with career paths and choice
- Parents need to be educated on what is available to their children i.e.: SBAT’s, SBT’s, UNI, TAFE
- More volunteering for students – create partnerships with not for profit
- Mandatory Year 11 and 12 to have resumes and career profiling and clear alternate pathways for students
- Embrace adult learning styles into Year 11 and 12 to support the transition better from school to higher learning (Pedagogy -> Andragogy)
- Re-educate the teachers in current workforce – needs to reduce/change the stigma/misconception that success comes to those who go university and the thought that (trades/vocational careers) are for those ‘not so bright’. Statistics currently show a 40% deficit in supply of suitability trained workers. 63% - jobs that require a VET qualification. 21% suitable qualified (VET) workers.
- Life skills run the risk of falling between the cracks of high school and family – confidence to pursue our passions through training and work comes from our evolving life skills
- Education and inclusion of VOC outside of school should not be left to principal’s discretion. External providers in some instances do not have access to students to educate them on pathways. It should be policy not personal choice of the school
- Link in with employment services – have them come in to schools to teach job search skills.

Below are the same outcomes grouped in a manner that is more conducive to carriage and implementation by the different sectors although many of the ideas have wide appeal and relevance to several different sectors.

Consolidated outcomes from the YOUnite Summit by sector

<p>Educational providers</p>	<p>Schools</p>	<p>Selecting subjects:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Allow students to experience a course for themselves, offer more taster lessons to work out what the subject is really about and an opportunity to make up their own mind • Have more flexible curriculums so they can do the subjects they want, irrespective of which line it appears on the timetable • Offer courses about other cultures and more languages (including sign language) to match a range of employability options <p>Learning styles</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Provide courses that suit different learning styles such as correspondence courses • Offer personalised learning environments and a strengths-based approach to learning • Create group projects to teach student's practical skills about working in a team. <p>Life skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Make life skills goal-focused, tailored to individual needs and automatically integrated into PDHPE . • Potential topics include: tax, banking, cooking, technology, changing a car tyre, social skills and communication, fitness, self- motivation, planning, budgeting, safety and self-defence, maintaining positive relationships, dealing with stress, meditation, dealing with bullying • If assessment needed, should be peer assessment or being offered guidance to self-correct and focus on positive self-improvement. <p>Careers advisors and career choice</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Employ excellent career advisors who can provide industry advice and knowledge, present ALL potential pathways and information about bridging courses • Invite ex-students to return to school to talk about their journey • Provide case studies of alternate pathways to success including realistic advice and narratives.
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		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Organise half-day sessions to discuss transition from school. • Develop a subject called “careers” in Year 10, run once a fortnight to provide information on careers including independent research and guidance • Publicise financial support that is available pursuing different careers e.g. scholarships available, government support etc. • Work experience • Offer more information about work experience opportunities including providing lists of businesses that would be open to having work experience. • Offer greater recognition of work experience and allow students to complete work experience in school time. <p>Job finding skills</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Facilitate contact between potential employers and students • Organise resume-writing workshops at school • Provide students with opportunities to showcase their resumes around to businesses • Teach interview techniques and offer interview practice at school that is fairly marked.
	Higher education institutions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Ensure that information about bridging courses is readily available. • Start-up mentoring programs that will allow University students to mentor high school students. • Organise “social inspiring discussion days” (like the YOUNite Summit) involving mentors and university students, where young people can gather ideas, grow and plan their future. • Promote more pathways and flexibility for young people who want to change degrees/courses (in case they get it wrong!) • Participate in careers expos with a wider range of careers • Offer work experience to students and start this as early as possible in their degree program • Facilitate ongoing contact with potential employers for University students • Reduce University workload to encourage more work experience.
Youth sector (NFPs)		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Coordinate mentor-led group sessions on how to study, how to find a job and how to improve their wellbeing.

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create social learning hubs and similar opportunities within the wider community • Facilitate other initiatives like building portfolios, offer work experience and volunteering to increase young people's networks and build their skills. • Host on-line forums including social media, a community portal for work experience opportunities and a job guide website • Have a place to go in the Hunter for young people where they can get information about the different career opportunities available in the Region. It could offer face-to-face assistance, online assistance, career advice, young people talking to young people, encourage Initiative. • Host a careers evening where young people can meet someone who does what they want to do and get tips on how to get a job in a particular industry • Teach life skills such as tax, banking, cooking, how to use technology, how to change a car tyre, social skills and how to make friends, fitness, self- motivation, face to face communication, how to take steps to achieve goals, budgeting, personal safety, self-defence, maintaining positive relationships, dealing with stress, meditation, self-expression of emotion e.g. bullying,
Government departments	Department of education	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Promote and offer more creative pathways through high school rather than just academic pathways. • Create more "Big Picture Schools" in the Hunter. • Make the maths curriculum more practical and relevant in years 9 and 10 when it is a compulsory subject. • Integrate TAFE and schools in Year 10 and advertise TAFE courses more at schools and make them more accessible. • Start the process of career planning in junior school with a compulsory monthly check in with career advisors to continue into senior school and make transition planning part of the curriculum. • Offer greater recognition of work experience as part of school. Make it a requirement and allow students to complete work experience in school time.
	Department of employment	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Create a "World of Work" hub in the Hunter for young people to obtain information about different career opportunities available, face to face assistance, online assistance and

		<p>encouragement</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Maximise the use of online resources for young people such as a job guide website for the Region • Providing job guides to young people that include job descriptions, pay scales and pathways to get there. • Advertise financial support that is available for pursuing different careers e.g. scholarships available, government support etc. • Streamline, simplify and reduce the bureaucratic processes and paperwork required to do work experience • Improve transport infrastructure to areas where there are concentrations of work opportunities • Organise careers evenings for young people to meet someone from a particular industry and obtain tips on how to get a job in that industry
Business and industry		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Remove the stigma related to the creative industries which reinforces the culture that people who work in the arts are largely unpaid • Encourage ex-students to return to schools to talk about their journey • Provide career advisors with sound industry advice and knowledge • Offer work experience and volunteering opportunities for young people to increase their networks and build skills. • Provide information about apprenticeships, particularly for hands-on trades (e.g. boilermaker) • Participate in careers expos including those at university • Consider having careers advertisements like the Defence Force advertisements • Engage in more communication with schools as this ultimately affects student opportunity • Be involved in interview practice at schools and teaching interview techniques • Offer industry mentoring and workshops to prepare young people for job interviews
For consideration		<p>Young people want...</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Schools and parents to focus on the process of learning rather than just the end result (i.e. marks) • To choose subjects and courses they are passionate about rather than what gives them

		<p>good marks and help to pursue their personal goals and passions rather than fitting into a subject/career choice mould</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Schools to stop orienting career advice around careers that pay well rather than encouraging students to pursue something they love• Teachers not to ridicule students choices and passions• Removal of the unreasonable expectation that students should know what they want to do when they leave school• A more open-minded society that allows young people an opportunity to try different pathways.
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6. Stakeholder Workshop - Outcomes

To achieve tangible outcomes from our research it is imperative that those who work with young people move some of the recommendations forward. To that end, the HRF invited our initial stakeholder group, along with other relevant participants from around the Hunter, to workshop the outcomes from the YOUNite Summit. The overarching aim of the stakeholder workshop was to develop action plans around some of the ideas put forward at the Summit to assist getting the ball rolling in improving the transition from school to adult life for young people in our region. This stakeholder workshop was held at the HRF offices in May 2015. A list of the attendees is provided in Appendix VIII – Stakeholder Workshop Attendees.

6.1 Workshop process

The stakeholder workshop was facilitated by HRF researchers and YOUNite project leaders Shanthi Ramanathan and Clare Hogue. The workshop was conducted using the ‘sticky dot’ technique. This technique is a prioritisation exercise that enables participants to synthesise a large amount of information and, in this case, prioritise items that can be actionable in the shorter or longer term. The steps involved in this process are provided below:

- The tables of consolidated outcomes gathered at the YOUNite Summit (provided in Summit Workshop Results) were placed on a wall, and participants were given 10 minutes to read and understand the feedback given by the young Summit attendees.
- Each individual in the Stakeholder group was given five sticky dots to place next to ideas on the consolidated outcome sheets. They could put as many as they liked on an idea or spread them around. Participants were asked to think about the following when placing their dots;
 - New/novel – Is the idea already being done? Is there something already starting that we can help enhance?
 - Actionable – Can it be done? Is it a reasonable idea?
 - Magnitude – How many young people is it going to impact positively in the Hunter if it gets off the ground?
 - Appeal – Would it have appeal to potential partners and funders?
 - Sustainable – Is it something that can be sustained without too much ongoing investment?
- After the participants placed their dots, they broke into small groups to develop action plans to guide implementation of the ideas that received the most dots. A total of eight action plans were developed.

- The plans developed were associated with the following eight ideas:
 - Career advisors – more industry specific advice and knowledge, present all pathways, more information about bridging courses, scholarships and financial support.
 - Ex-students returning to talk about their journey – inspiring, informative, alternative pathways.
 - Hunter job guide website – showcasing ALL available Hunter-based positions
 - Mentoring programs – Uni students to mentor high school OR industry mentor programs, other peers.
 - More creative pathways in high school – too much focus on academic pathways
 - Volunteering – More opportunities, more information available, clear process, part of building a portfolio.
 - Work experience – offered at Uni, start early, encourage contact with potential employers, reduce Uni workload to encourage work experience.
 - Work Hub – Hunter based that provides face-to-face assistance, careers advice, on-line assistance, peers providing support, encourages initiative.

The action plans that were developed are provided in the tables on the following pages.
 Note: When particular individuals were identified by name, this is denoted by the statement 'individual identified by name'.

Table 19: Action plan - career advisors

<p>Prioritised Actionable Item: Career advisors – More industry specific advice and knowledge, present all pathways, more info about bridging courses, scholarships, financial support</p>
<p>How can we make this happen?</p> <p>What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?</p>
<p><u>*Qualifier</u> – Some schools do this really well, others not so well</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Careers Advisors role recognised as a job in itself/a profession - They need more time, hard to do the job properly if also a classroom teacher
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Input from outside of school, more of a community feel - A hub for Careers Advisors to link with their peers – community type portal for professional development - The hub could be administered from a community base - This happens in other industries , e.g. business associations
<p>CAA Career Advisors Association (state)</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Subset for Hunter – bolster current group, bring in broader network e.g. business, local government, other stakeholders</p> <p style="text-align: center;">↓</p> <p>Advocate for better recognition and funding to create full-time career advisor roles</p>
<p>Find out how career advisors could be better supporters</p>
<p>Who would benefit?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students - Staff - Schools - Families
<p>Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!</p>
<p>CAA Careers Advisors Association</p> <p>Schools</p>

Table 20: Action plan - Ex-students returning to schools

Prioritised Actionable Item: Ex-students returning to talk about their journey – inspiring, informative, alternative pathways
How can we make this happen? What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?
This would need to be individual school driven
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Get students together in a forum so that they can discuss how this could happen in their school – tap into the regional schools meeting - Tap into already existing networks of schools
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Look at discussing with local people who have succeeded and do motivational talks at multiple high schools, not just limited to the high school they are from
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Social media connections through past student Facebook pages, alumni's. - By connecting online you could gauge the interest of past students
Who would benefit?
Not identified
Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - [individual identified by name] from Maitland Grossman has done before - Cessnock schools (public and private) already meet and discuss together.

Table 21: Action plan - Hunter job guide website

<p>Prioritised Actionable Item: Hunter job guide website – showcasing ALL available Hunter-based positions</p>
<p>How can we make this happen? What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Coordinated website – pick a location - Youth oriented - Youth Hunter job search - Youth job vacancy board
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - What already exists – scoping exercise
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Website include ‘how to’ guides for resumes, interview tips, applications, phone numbers
<p>Who would benefit?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - All young people looking for work - Parents - Employers
<p>Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Job jump, CareerHub, Seek, Indeed, Azuna, workable, Job Quest - Hunter strategic committee - [individual identified by name] - [individual identified by name]

Table 22: Action plan - Mentoring programs

Prioritised Actionable Item: Mentoring programs – Uni students to mentor high school OR industry mentor programs, other peers
How can we make this happen?
What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?
- Contacting community liaison of University to get students involved (Youi)
- Consult with schools, young people, career advisors re needs of their schools. - Group mentoring/individuals – age group of mentees
Source funding options <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Corporations - Government - Local businesses wanting to give back and lift profile Needs to be sold the right way
- Target a pilot school (s) in various locations (2-3 locations)
Who would benefit?
- Young people - Mentors – Uni students- industry professionals
Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!
- Youi - Australian Industry Group - Hunter Mechanical Employers Network - Industry groups/associations Already working on this (in and out of schools) - Hunter Youth Mentor Collaborative - Mentors For Our Schools - Plan It Youth - State government pilot Yr 8 & 9 across Hunter LGAs this year (YWCA) - The Place, Charlestown Community Centre ‘study space’ – effective program, able to be duplicated in other areas. Yr 11 & 12 students & Uni/industry mentors. Weekly.

Table 23: Action plan - More creative pathways in high schools

Prioritised Actionable Item: More creative pathways in high school – too much focus on academic pathways
How can we make this happen?
What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?
- Rebranding of vocational pathways as legitimate/worthwhile
- Information on entrepreneurial paths/small business how to get started
- Shift the value of all pathways, not just a focus on university
- Change to curriculum/legislation to ensure vocational training available and cost effective - lobby government
- Creation of a work hub
Who would benefit?
- Students interested in starting own business - Students not interested (or not yet) in university
Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!
- Schools - Curriculum change - More opportunity for TAFE/Uni/apprentices etc. to visit and chat to students

Table 24: Action plan - Volunteering

<p>Prioritised Actionable Item: Volunteering – More opportunities, More information available, clear process, part of building a portfolio</p>
<p>How can we make this happen?</p> <p>What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Can occur where 'not for profit' or if part of a course curriculum - Need to identify a legal frame work
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Develop courses in schools and Uni with work experience opportunity or part of curriculum, e.g. VET subjects
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify courses that already have a work experience component
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Identify opportunities in industry - Put in one central area, e.g. sports clubs, charity, social etc.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Insurance implications for schools/Uni/participating organisation, e.g. accident insurance
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Marketing campaign to make volunteering cool
<p>Who would benefit?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Organisations - schools - sporting clubs - charities - students
<p>Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - More discussion needed - [individual identified by name] – legal framework

Table 25: Action plan - Work hub

<p>Prioritised Actionable Item: Work hub – Hunter based that provides face to face assistance, careers advice, on line assistance peers providing support, encourages initiative</p>
<p>How can we make this happen?</p> <p>What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Could be mobile, e.g. bus/van - Create database of those who use
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Localised; links with local labour markets and employers - Keep a register of participants so you can measure return on investment
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Staffed/hosted by experienced and qualified careers advisors/youth workers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Guest speaker calendar with inspirational and informative local business people/employers telling 'their story'
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Link services - Up to date resources
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Access to career support services, e.g. interview prep and aptitude/skills matching to careers - Locate at shopping centres/sporting events
<p>Who would benefit?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Young people who don't have family/social support to plan careers - Parents - Community - Young people who don't have access to internet/capacity to navigate online information - Employers looking to recruit
<p>Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Integration with AASH and/or other mentor contacts - Industry professionals - Schools - Careers services - Local councils - Philanthropic funding (Mary Rivers)

- TAFE/Uni
- Knights
- Westfield

Table 26: Action plan - Work experience

<p>Prioritised Actionable Item: Work experience – offered at Uni, start early, encourage contact with potential employers, reduce Uni workload to encourage work experience</p>
<p>How can we make this happen?</p> <p>What specific steps and associated tasks need to happen to get the ball rolling?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Talk to Uni/ Work Integrated Learning Well [individual identified by name] to see how it might be expanded across a broader range of courses (Arts, Sciences, Maths etc.) - Write work experience opportunity into course curriculums
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Induction process before walking into a business/can't be a burden to business - Talk with the other stakeholders (businesses) – need to ensure they are benefiting
<p>Who would benefit?</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Students - University - Business
<p>Who could be involved in making this happen? Be as specific as you can; organisations, agencies, partnerships etc. If you can identify an individual by name, great!</p>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - University – Coordinator(s) Work Integrated Learning Well [individuals identified by name]



7. Conclusion

The YOUnite Project wanted to find out what barriers there were to young people in the Hunter successfully transitioning from school to adult life and what could be done to address these barriers.

7.7 Main barriers to successful transition

The main barriers identified by young people of the Hunter were:

- The stress of the Higher School Certificate
- A lack of engagement to stay at school and complete Year 12
- A lack of life skills
- Not knowing what they wanted to do when they finished school
- Not knowing what work opportunities were available in their area
- An inability to organise work experience for themselves
- An inability to secure work

7.8 What young people need

What young people wanted most was for:

- A reduction in stress and pressure placed on young people and a change in perceptions that the HSC was the ONLY path to future success
- More to be done to keep ALL young people engaged at school till Year 12, particularly those who were less academically inclined and who may not need the HSC for their future career options
- Life skills to be taught at school to ensure young people are best placed to negotiate adulthood
- More opportunities within school to explore what they wanted to do when they finished school including a clearer understanding of a wide range of career options and pathways
- Assistance knowing what work opportunities were available in their local area so they could better plan for their future
- Greater support finding work experience opportunities so they could trial out what they wanted to do when they left school
- Greater support with job hunting and securing a job.

7.9 Ideas for how these needs can be met

Many ideas for addressing these needs were proposed and discussed during the YOUnite Summit but the eight ideas that resonated with the YOUnite Stakeholder group and that were deemed most likely to find traction are presented here.

Enhancing support and funding for career advisors – Careers Advisors need to have their own professional standing and be acknowledged as performing a vital function in high schools, rather than as teachers who have an adjunct “career advisor role” to play. A portal for careers advisors should be created to link them with their peers and to offer professional development. This would ensure that ALL careers advisors have industry specific advice and knowledge, be able to present all pathways, and offer more information about bridging courses, scholarships and financial support to students.

Getting ex-students to return to talk about their school to work journey – Using social media to identify suitable and willing Hunter alumni who can deliver inspiring and informative presentations about their journey from school to work, and showcase alternative pathways to success. This could be coordinated as a network of schools rather than individual schools so more students would benefit. Regional school meetings could be a good starting point for such a program.

Hunter job guide website showcasing ALL available Hunter-based positions – Needs to start with a scoping exercise of what is already available and find ways to bring all the data together into the one website which needs to be designed by young people for young people. In addition to a job vacancy section, the website also needs to include ‘how to’ guides for resume writing, interview tips, application writing and contact phone numbers for assistance.

Mentoring programs with University students or industry partners to mentor high school students either individually or in groups – Students were clear that they want a peer mentor i.e. someone relatively close in age. Such a program will require funding from local businesses, philanthropic organisations or government. Newcastle University would have to be involved to get students registered and the program would ideally commence with a few pilot schools in 2-3 locations before it is rolled out across the region.

Create more creative pathways in high school – This will require a rebranding of vocational pathways as legitimate and worthwhile; promoting entrepreneurial paths and how to start a small business and make such information more readily accessible to young people; and lobbying government to implement policy change to ensure vocational training is available and cost effective.

Enhance volunteering for young people as a legitimate means of trialling different workplaces – Key steps include identifying a legal framework including sorting out insurances, WHS issues and minimising administrative burden to workplaces taking on young volunteers. Information on opportunities needs to be centrally located so young people can easily access the information. A marketing campaign to highlight the beneficial nature of volunteering to future employment prospects and enhancing ones portfolio would also be beneficial.

Greater work experience/student placement opportunities offered to University students – Educational institutions should ensure work experiences opportunities are written into University course curriculums. This will ensure that students start thinking about work early and also encourages contact with potential employers. Clear induction processes need to be developed and implemented so students are not seen as a burden. Dialogue between Universities and industry will ensure that the needs of all three parties (University, industry and students) are met. Universities may need to decrease current student workloads to encourage work experience. A starting point would be the Work Integrated Learning section to see how work experience placements might be expanded across a broader range of courses (Arts, Sciences, Maths etc.).

Create a one-stop shop (Work Hub) for Hunter Youth – This could be a mobile hub such as a bus or van that moved around the Region including shopping centres and sporting or cultural events. The service would create links with local labour markets and employers and coordinate a guest speaker calendar with inspirational and informative local business people/employers telling 'their story'. The service would be hosted by experienced and qualified careers advisors/youth workers and be able to offer all the support young people need to find work including access to career support services, e.g. interview prep and aptitude/skills matching to careers, workshops on resume writing, links to support services and up-to-date resources. The Service would need to keep a register of participants to measure return on investment

The YOUNITE research also highlighted that key stakeholders such as governments, parents, employers and young people have differing views about successful transition from school to independent adult life. Greater dialogue to reach a shared understanding of what is required to help young people negotiate this challenging time in their lives will have benefits for all parties, especially young people themselves.



Appendix I – 1st Workshop Attendees

Name	Surname	Company	Position
Robert	Russell	Aboriginal Employment Strategy	Program Manager
John	Purcell	Career Links	General Manager
Sharon	Webb	CentreLink	Area Manager
Lakin	Agnew	Reach Foundation	Program Manager, Hunter
Astrid	Gearin	Samaritans	Community Youth Development Project
April	Carlin	TAFE NSW	Manager Learner Services
Tamara	Blakemore	The University of Newcastle	Lecturer
Rosemary	Bradford	The University of Newcastle	Senior Administrative Officer
Jennifer	Moody	NSW Department of Education	Regional Director
Youth			
Maigan	Thompson	Hunter Research Foundation	Staff
Simon	Chiu	The University of Newcastle	Student



Appendix II – Focus Group Questions

Focus group question route – (14-18 year olds)

The overarching research question we want to understand is “What are barriers to young people in the Hunter transitioning effectively from education to employment”. Could you keep that in mind as we have our discussion today?

We know that some of these questions may not be directly applicable to you. When this is the case can you think of people you know who might have had those experiences?

Let’s start with a general chat about how you would define a successful life for yourself in the future.

1. We know that success means different things to different people. What is most important to you when you think of what kind a life you would like to lead as you get older? PROMPTS: earning lots of money; further education, different types of employment opportunities?
2. What kind of work do you think you would enjoy, do you see yourself able to get the education required for it/ is this type of employment available in the Hunter?
3. Do you have in mind one particular path you would like to follow, or do you see yourself exploring several different pathways?
4. Do you feel that you are exposed to enough information through school or elsewhere about different options you may want to pursue as you move from school to further education or work?
5. Do you see yourself staying in the Hunter as you get older? Why/why not? What opportunities do you think are available elsewhere that aren’t in the Hunter?
6. What do you think would help young people the most with deciding what options they might want to pursue? PROMPTS: Programs, mentors, careers advisors.
7. Do you think that it is more difficult for some young people than others to succeed in the way they want to, however they define it? Why? What makes it more difficult for them? What can be done differently to help them?
8. Do you see anything preventing you from achieving your dreams? What? How?
9. We’ve just been talking about things that might be impediments to you, what would help make it easier?
10. What can schools do to help people follow the right path for them? Are there programs, courses or subjects that schools should offer to help people who might be struggling with deciding what they want to do and how to go about achieving those goals?

11. Do schools do enough to support students personally as well as academically? What would make this better?
12. What can the wider community do to help young people move from school to further training or work they find rewarding? PROMPTS: Community spaces/programs for young people, government initiatives, mentors.
13. [IF NOT ALREADY RAISED IN THE DISCUSSION ABOUT GOALS] Can you see yourself starting your own business? Why/why not? Do you think there is enough information provided to you at school or elsewhere if this is something you would like to pursue?
14. Do you feel that there are unrealistic expectations put on young people regarding the choices they may make post school? Why/why not?
15. Overall, how do you feel about the next few years of your life? PROMPTS: excited, worried, apprehensive, prepared?

Focus group question route – (19-24 year olds)

The overarching research question we want to understand is “What are barriers to young people in the Hunter transitioning effectively from education to employment”. Could you keep that in mind as we have our discussion today?

We know that some of these questions may not be directly applicable to you. When this is the case can you think of people you know who might have had those experiences?

Let's start with a general chat about how you would define a successful life for yourself in the future.

1. We know that success means different things to different people. What is most important to you when you think of what kind a life you would like to lead as you get older? PROMPTS: earning lots of money; further education, different types of employment opportunities?
2. What kind of work do you think you would enjoy, do you see yourself able to get the education required for it/ is this type of employment available in the Hunter?
3. Do you see yourself as being on the right path to succeed the way you want to?
4. Do you have in mind one particular path you would like to follow, or do you see yourself exploring several different pathways?
5. [For those who feel they are on the right path] What/who assisted or supported you in making the choices you have? [For those who feel they've yet to find their path] What would be most helpful to you to work out what direction you might want to go in and how to get there? What is making this challenging for you?
6. When you were at school, do you feel that there was enough information about options you might have as you moved from school to further education or work and how to explore them?

7. What can schools do to help people find the right path for them? Are there programs, courses or subjects that schools should offer to help people who might be struggling with deciding what they want to do and how to go about achieving those goals?
8. What should schools do differently to make post school transitions easier?
9. Do you see yourself staying in the Hunter as you get older? Why/why not? What opportunities do you think are available elsewhere that aren't in the Hunter?
10. What do you think would help young people the most with deciding what options they might want to pursue? PROMPTS: Programs, mentors, careers advisors.
11. Do you think that it is more difficult for some young people than others to succeed in the way they want to, however they define it? Why? What makes it more difficult for them? What can be done differently to help them?
12. Do you see anything preventing you from achieving your dreams? What? How?
13. We've just been talking about things that might be impediments to you, what would help make it easier?
14. Do schools do enough to support students personally as well as academically? What would make this better?
15. What can the wider community do to help young people move from school to further training or work they find rewarding? PROMPTS: Community spaces/programs for young people, government initiatives, mentors.
16. [IF NOT ALREADY RAISED IN THE DISCUSSION ABOUT GOALS] Can you see yourself starting your own business? Why/why not? Do you think there was enough information provided to you at school or elsewhere about pursuing an entrepreneurial path?
17. Do you feel that there are unrealistic expectations put on young people regarding the choices they may make post school? Why/why not?
18. Overall, how do you feel about the next few years of your life? PROMPTS: excited, worried, apprehensive, prepared? Why?



Appendix III – Omnibus Questions

Hunter and Upper Hunter Residential Omnibus

Now we'd like to ask you some questions about young people aged between 15-24 years in the Hunter.

1. Do you think that there are enough employment opportunities in the Hunter Region for young people to stay in the area if they want to?

Yes/No/DK

2. Can you please tell me if you Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree or Strongly agree that all young people have to stay at school until year 12 unless they have 30 hours of work per week?

3. On a scale ranging from no impact at all, a minor impact, a moderate impact or a major impact, how much of an impact on young people's future employment prospects is it for young people to: [RANDOMISE]

Do well at the HSC

Get a University degree

Get a TAFE qualification

4. Do you think that there is not enough, the right amount or too much: [RANDOMISE]
Information for young people about the different pathways they can follow after they've finished school
Assistance for young people to help them decide what might be the best options given their circumstances, skills, abilities and interests
Provision of assistance with life skills such as doing tax or starting a business

Hunter and Upper Hunter Business Omnibus

1. Do you think that there are enough employment opportunities in the Hunter Region for young people to stay in the area if they want to?

Yes/No/DK

2. Do you currently, or have you in the past, employed any young people aged between 15 and 24 years?

Yes/No/DK

If q2=no, ask Q2A

2a. Why not? [OPEN ENDED]

If q2= yes ask q2b

2b. Overall, how positive has your experience been employing young people. Would it be:

Not at all positive

Slightly positive

Moderately positive

Very positive, or

Extremely positive

3. Do you currently offer work experience to young people?

Yes/No/DK

4. Would you consider employing a young person who had not completed their HSC?

Yes/No/DK



Appendix IV – Face-to-Face Suburbs

Table 27 details the suburbs participants in the face-to-face survey resided in at the time of interview.

Table 27: Suburbs respondents came from in face-to-face survey

What suburb do you live in?		
Abermain	Gateshead	Mt Hutton
Adamstown Heights	Georgetown	Nelson Bay
Argenton	Gillieston Heights	New Lambton
Ashtonfield	Glen Oak	New Lambton Heights
Bar beach	Glendale	Newcastle
Barnsley	Gosforth	Oakhampton Heights
Belmont	Greta	Oribah
Belmont North	Hamilton	Paterson
Beresfield	Hexham	Randwick
Birmingham Gardens	Hillsborough	Raymond Terrace
Bishops Bridge	Hinton	Rutherford
Black Hill	Islington	Salamander Bay
Blackalls Park	Jesmond	Sandgate
Bolton Point	Jewells	Scone
Bolwarra	Junction	Seaham
Bolwarra Heights	Kahibah	Singleton
Branxton	Kotara	Speers Point
Broadmeadow	Kurri Kurri	Stockton
Callahan	Lake Haven	Tarro
Cameron Park	Lambton	Tenambit
Cardiff	Lemon Tree Passage	Tanilba bay
Carrington	Lisarow	The Hill
Caves Beach	Lorn	Thornton
Cessnock	Lower Belford	Tighes Hill
Charlestown	Macquarie Hills	Tingira Heights
Chisholm	Maitland	Valentine
Clarence Town	Maryland	Wallsend
Cooks Hill	Maryville	Wangi Wangi
Dubbo	Mayfield	Waratah
Duckenfield	Medowie	Warners Bay
Dudley	Merewether	Warrabrook
Dungog	Merewether Heights	Whitebridge
East Maitland	Metford	Wickham
Edgeworth	Millers Forrest	Windale
Eleebana	Mindaribba	Windella
Elmore vale	Minmi	Woodberry
Fletcher	Morpeth	Woodrising
Garden Suburb	Mount View	Homeless



Appendix V – Face-to-Face Questions

Are you still at high school or have you finished high school?

What suburb do you live in?

Gender

Age group

Still at school questions

Do you think that you'll stay in the Hunter region after you've finished school? Y/N

Do you think that there will be work opportunities for you in the Hunter doing what you want to do as you get older? Y/N

What would you like to do in the first two years after you finish school? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

University (Full time)

#University (Part-time)

TAFE (Full time)

TAFE (Part time)

Other formal training (e.g. apprenticeship)

Work (Full time)

#Work (Part time)

Take a gap year

Start a business

Do you feel prepared for your choice? Y/N

If yes prepared

What has most helped you feel prepared? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

School guidance counsellor

Teacher/s

Advice from parents

#Advice from friend or other relative (informal mentoring)

Work experience (paid or unpaid)

Lots of study

Mentoring (formal)

If no, not prepared

What would help you feel more prepared? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

School guidance counsellor

Teacher/s

Advice from parents

#Advice from friend or other relative (informal mentoring)

Work experience (Paid or unpaid)

Lots of study

Mentoring (formal)

What are two things that schools could offer that would help you figure out what you want to do when you've finished school? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

- # More guidance about post school options
- # An audit of your talents, interests and aptitudes to match them with possible careers.
- # Coordinating relevant work experience (e.g. work placements)
- # Provision of mentors
- # Provision of workshops about different types of careers and what each one requires

Can you please tell me if you Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree or Strongly agree that all young people have to stay at school until year 12 unless they have 30 hours of work per week?

On a scale ranging from no impact at all, a minor impact, a moderate impact or a major impact, how much of an impact on young people's future employment prospects is it to:
[RANDOMISE]

- # Do well at the HSC
- # Get a University degree
- # Get a TAFE qualification

At the school you go to, do you think that there is not enough, the right amount or too much:
[RANDOMISE]

- # Information for young people about the different pathways they can follow after they've finished school
- # Assistance for young people to help them decide what might be the best options given their circumstances, skills, abilities and interests
- # Provision of assistance with life skills such as doing tax or starting a business

How often are you involved in activities that benefit or assist your community? For example, bringing in your neighbour's rubbish bin, giving or lending money to someone in need, donating used clothes or volunteering at a community centre.

Never/sometimes/often

If you needed support to find a solution to an issue or challenge you are facing, which of the following qualities about the person you seek help from would be most important to you? (Top 2) [Randomise]

That the person providing the support...

- # shares common interests or activities to you
- # is a peer (within a 5 year age bracket)
- # has been through a similar situation themselves
- # is a qualified youth worker/counsellor/psychologist
- # is known to you
- # is NOT known to you
- # is of the same sex as you
- # is NOT of the same sex as you

Post-school questions

Do you think that there are currently work opportunities in the Hunter doing what you want to do. Y/N

If no

What work would you like to do that you think is not available in the Hunter. [open ended]

Did you know what you wanted to do when you finished school? Y/N

If yes

What was it? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

University (Full time)

#University (Part-time)

TAFE (Full time)

TAFE (Part time)

Other formal training (e.g. apprenticeship)

Work (Full time)

#Work (Part time)

Take a gap year

Start a business

Are you currently do that or have finished that? Y/N

Did you feel prepared for your choice? Y/N

If yes prepared

What most helped you feel prepared? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

School guidance counsellor

Teacher/s

Advice from parents

#Advice from friend or other relative (informal mentoring)

Work experience (paid or unpaid)

Lots of study

Mentoring (formal)

If no, not prepared

What would have helped you feel more prepared? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

School guidance counsellor

Teacher/s

Advice from parents

#Advice from friend or other relative (informal mentoring)

Work experience (Paid or unpaid)

Lots of study

Mentoring (formal)

What were two things that schools could have offered that would help you figure out what you wanted to do when you finished school? [Open ended – use codes if applicable]

More guidance about post school options

An audit of your talents, interests and aptitudes to match them with possible careers.

Coordinating relevant work experience (e.g. work placements)

Provision of mentors

Provision of workshops about different types of careers and what each one requires

Can you please tell me if you Strongly disagree, Disagree, Neither agree nor disagree, Agree or Strongly agree that all young people have to stay at school until year 12 unless they have 30 hours of work per week?

On a scale ranging from no impact at all, a minor impact, a moderate impact or a major impact, how much of an impact on young people's future employment prospects is it to:
[RANDOMISE]

Do well at the HSC

Get a University degree

Get a TAFE qualification

How often are you involved in activities that benefit or assist your community? For example, bringing in your neighbour's rubbish bin, giving or lending money to someone in need, donating used clothes or volunteering at a community centre.

Never/sometimes/often

If you needed support to find a solution to an issue or challenge you are facing, which of the following qualities about the person you seek help from would be most important to you? (Top 2) [Randomise]

That the person providing the support...

shares common interests or activities to you

is a peer (within a 5 year age bracket)

has been through a similar situation themselves

is a qualified youth worker/counsellor/psychologist

is known to you

is NOT known to you

is of the same sex as you

is NOT of the same sex as you



Appendix VI – NFP Survey Questions

No. Employees:		No. Volunteers:
Type of Org:		
Position held		
How many staff does your organisation have who are under 25 years?		
Would you like more, the same, or less staff in that age group?		
Why?		
What do you see as the biggest impediment to NFPs employing young people under the age of 25?		
Does your organisations have volunteers?		
Approximately how many volunteers would your organisation have under 25 years?		
What do you think is the biggest impediment to your organisation attracting volunteers under 25?		
Is there a pathway in your organisation (formal or informal) for young people to transition from being a volunteer to being employed?		
Does your organisation offer work placements to young people?		



Appendix VII – Workshop discussion guides

Main theme	HSC – Ticket to success or Highly Stressful Cocoon
Sub-theme	Stress and the “other” stream
Key questions	How can we make staying at school more relevant and engaging to “non-academic” students? How can we make the HSC experience less stressful overall?
Prompting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• What would the non-ATAR stream look like? What subjects would be offered? How would they be assessed and accredited?• How would it translate to work? Who would drive this change?• Are there current examples – locally, nationally, internationally?• What can we do to reduce stress for HSC students?• What can we do to change perceptions about the HSC being the ONLY ticket to success? The pinnacle?• Who can help us change these perceptions?

Main theme	HSC – Ticket to success or Highly Stressful Cocoon
Sub-theme	Life skills
Key questions	What life skills do you think are important to learn at school?
Prompting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • How would this content be delivered? In class or after class? Would there be an assessment process? If so, how would you be assessed? • What years would these skills be taught – Years 11 & 12 or earlier? • Who would teach these skills? Current teachers or different teachers? • Would all students be offered these life skills? Would it be optional or compulsory? • How would these life skills translate into better employment prospects? • Would this change be implemented at a school level, regionally, State or nationally? • Who can help us make this change?

Main theme	Support- Super or sucks
Sub-theme	Knowing yourself
Key questions	How can you best be assisted to find out what post-school options would best suit your strengths, talents, passions and personality?
Prompting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Is it talking to somebody about it one-on-one? • Or is it doing a quiz and then following up with a chat? • Would hearing how other young people found their way help? • What about doing it in a workshop situation with a group of other students? • Or would you do it during a class at school? • What year would you undertake such an activity? • What would you like the final outcome? • A list of occupations/careers you or something else? • Would you like someone to talk you through your options?

Main theme	Support- Super or sucks
Sub-theme	Knowing what is out there
Key questions	<p>What career advice do you currently receive?</p> <p>Where are you getting the information from?</p> <p>Where are the gaps?</p>
Prompting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What else do you want/need? • Are you clear about the different pathways to your career choice? • Are you clear about entry requirements? E.g. compulsory subjects etc.? • How would you prefer the information presented to you? Hard copy? Online? Face-to-face? • What about career expos? Site visits? • Would having someone from the industry talk to you help? • What about information about higher education (Uni/TAFE) that you may need for your career choice? • Should work placements/internships be offered to everyone?

Main theme	Wonderful world of work or wishful thinking?
Sub-theme	Work experience
Key questions	How can we improve the way work experience operates in the Hunter?
Prompting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What is the current system at your school/previous school? • Is it working? If yes, what is that system – who runs it, how do you access it? • If no, what would be the features of a good system? • What year should work experience begin? • How often should it be offered? How long would a stint go for? • Would the school organise it or just make the referral? • Would you expect to be paid or would it be voluntary? • How would you like work experience to be credited and valued by schools?

Main theme	Wonderful world of work or wishful thinking?
Sub-theme	Getting work
Key questions	What support do you need to help you find work?
Prompting questions	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • What assistance do you need to find information about available jobs/vacancies? Where do you currently go? What else would be helpful? • Do you require support writing a resume? How would this best be provided? • Do you need assistance to write a letter seeking employment (even when there may not be a position advertised)? How can this be provided? • Would arranging mock interviews be useful to you? • Would a mentor be useful to help you with this process? Do you have a mentor? Do you know how to get a mentor? • Once you secure work, what are possible barriers to you working? E.g. Transport? What could be done to assist you?



Appendix VIII – Stakeholder Workshop Attendees

Table 28: Stakeholder workshop attendees

Name	Organisation
Lakin Agnew	Youth Development
James Campbell	Port Stephens Council
Bron Dyason	Maitland/Dungog Community Youth Development Project
Kate Gemmell	University of Newcastle
Brad Harris	The Bloomfield Group
Amanda Hazell	Jobfind Centres Australia
Jennifer Jackson	Youth Off The Streets
Andrew Licata	University of Newcastle
Lee Osborne	Maitland Grossmann High School
John Purcell	Career Links
Amber Stewart	Newcastle City Council
Carmel Tapley	Catholic Schools Office (Education Officer - Secondary)
Shelley Wilson	The Place, Charlestown Community Centre
Duncan Burck	NSW Business Chamber + Rotary
Dan Beck	Australian Business Apprenticeships Centre
Verona Marsh	TAFE