

WHAT DO WE KNOW ABOUT

Disengaged young people and ACE



Approximately 21% of young women and 30% of young men fail to complete Year 12 by the time they are 19 years old.



1 in 4 young Australians leave school without completing Year 12. This is at a time when widespread economic changes and fewer low skilled jobs put pressure on young people to be better qualified for work in changing economy.

Not completing school is a major problem because those young people who don't complete Year 12 or equivalent have lower incomes and higher rates of unemployment.

Attracting young people back to education and training can significantly improve their chances of finding work and taking on further study and training.

FACTS AND FIGURES

Approximately 21% of young women and 30% of young men fail to complete Year 12 or equivalent by the time they are 19 years old. Completing school or VET is affected by whether a student attends an urban, regional or remote school, whether or not they come from socio-economically disadvantaged backgrounds and whether or not they are Indigenous.

The rates of young people completing school are uneven and some young people are more vulnerable than others, particularly:

- Indigenous young people whose school completion rate is 44% compared to 75% for their non Indigenous peers
- Young people in country Australia. 43% of young people from rural and 56% from remote areas complete school compared to 78% of students in major cities
- 61% of the most disadvantaged young people complete school, compared to 89% of the most advantaged.

COMPOUNDING DISADVANTAGE

Many young people experience periods of not being in education, employment or training (NEET) after they leave school and before they make the transition to work. However, those who are NEET for six months or more are at increased risk of further unemployment and poorer education outcomes once they reach their early 20s. Those whose schooling has been disrupted by factors such as homelessness, learning or behavioural difficulties, mental illness or addiction are particularly vulnerable.

ACE AS A PATHWAY TO RE-ENGAGEMENT

Adult and community education (ACE) has a successful record of attracting young people back to learning. The young people who enrol in ACE programs tend to be early school leavers, unemployed, underemployed, or in low-paid or insecure jobs.

ACE courses and programs suitable for young people include Year 12 alternatives, study and job seeking skills, foundation skills and vocational qualifications.

Young people who take part in ACE programs say they are attracted by the quality of relationships between staff and students; the flexible delivery modes and opportunities for personal autonomy.

Those who associate education with negative school experiences can feel anxious about the prospect of returning to study. ACE is a welcome contrast for young people disenchanted by mainstream education.

ACE environments are suitable for reluctant learners because they are accessible, community-based, warm and welcoming, relaxed and non-threatening – in other words, unlike the schools that many students remember.

ACE provides an avenue through which young people can re-engage in education, improve their confidence, skills and future prospects.

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